

Frank Scarborough

1947 - 2010

Crane and Access veteran Frank Scarborough, died suddenly on July 7th. He spent most of his working life with three major manufacturers, Grove, Snorkel and UpRight. Publisher Leigh Sparrow worked with Scarborough at both Grove and UpRight and knew him as both a work colleague and a friend. This is his personal and candid tribute to him.

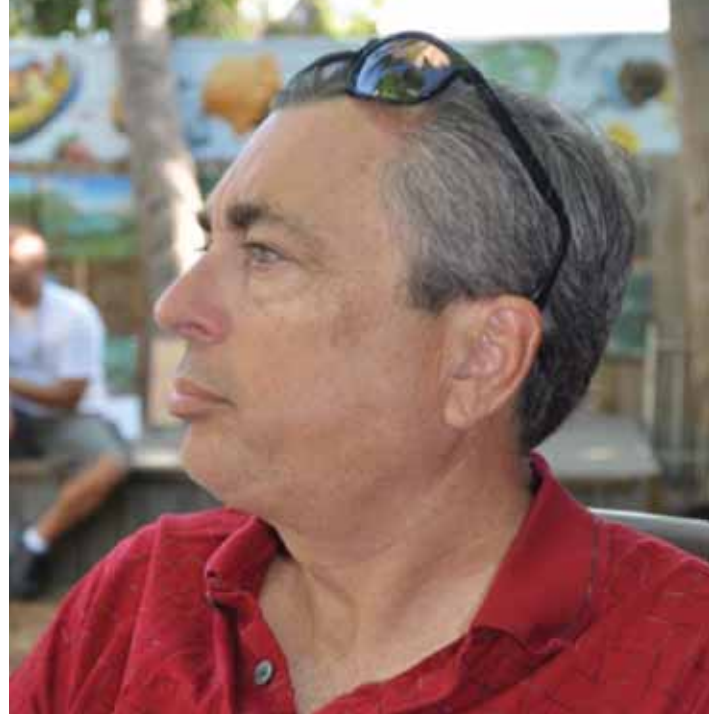
I cannot recall with certainty when I first met Frank Scarborough, which is odd given that we were to become such close friends. A Pennsylvania boy (although he was reportedly born in Baltimore, Maryland, he never spoke much about his early life) Frank joined Grove Manufacturing in Shady Grove, USA as a sales trainee in the fall of 1979. I was in the same programme but had transferred to Europe a few months earlier. I was not to return for almost six years and by the time I did Frank had a field-based job and I don't recall we met up, although we knew each other 'on paper'.

Frank joined Snorkel in 1986 as a district manager and became sales and marketing vice president fairly quickly. I vaguely recall what I think was our first meeting, it was a trade show in Europe, possibly the Hanover Fair. I have this hazy view of Frank as a lone person out in front a stand – we were introduced and we chatted, I seem to recall getting a cool reception.

Over the next few years we would meet as competitors at trade shows and began to warm to each other. Looking back it was probably after my move from Grove to UpRight, when we were closer competitors, that Frank became more open with me. Sometime in 1992 I heard the

news that Frank had parted company with Snorkel and I recall thinking how a major competitor had just lost a key asset. I called David Sargent, the president of UpRight to let him know, within days he called back to say that Frank was joining UpRight as vice president North American sales and marketing.

The next six or seven years were great ones for UpRight and Frank and I became firm friends. The more I knew him, the more I appreciated his qualities both in business and as a human being. Many years after we had become close he told me that I had cheated him out of the job he always wanted! Apparently, in late 1981 he'd been offered the job of district manager for France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland for Grove. However, the European management were opposed to an American with no European experience being imposed on them. The management back in Shady Grove were bound and determined to have 'one of their men' in such an important role. As a naive 26-year-old, I got the job on the basis of being the only candidate that was acceptable to both parties. While I was aware of the Euro-American spat, I was blissfully unaware that Frank or anyone else had been promised the job. To be honest Frank would have



done a far better job than I. Frank was supremely customer focused and a great 'people person'. He genuinely loved people and he loved selling products that he believed in. He would often say "I'm just a simple peddler", although he never wanted to be thought of as just that and had aspirations to do so much more. Sadly, at UpRight his abilities were restrained by those wanting to restrict his influence, thus he never had control of product support or – until it was too late – the export regions controlled from the US, such as South America and the Pacific Rim. Frank often underrated himself and rarely appreciated his importance within a company. He often acquiesced even when a decision being forced on him was wrong.

When bad decisions were foisted on Frank he would get very down about it and become obstructive. Over the last twelve years there had been several such periods, which would result in the same discussion between us which never resulted in anything. The sad thing is that in most such cases he was absolutely right and the bad decisions caused major – often permanent damage to the business. For me it was a rare fault, completely outweighed by his many qualities. Frank was honest as the day, genuine in the extreme, very good company and one of the best friends you could wish to have. After one such period Frank and UpRight parted company and he was out of work for some time and things were getting tight. It was about then that a group of investors purchased the remnants of Snorkel, with a plan to build out and sell off the inventory slowly, operate the parts business and then possibly

develop the property. They found however that there was still a great deal of goodwill for the brand and the market was picking up. They needed someone to 'front' the business and lead its revival.

Frank Scarborough was an inspired choice. He knew the company inside out and had something to prove. He joined Snorkel in 2003 as chief operating officer, moving back to St Joseph. The business blossomed and the Snorkel name was not only back, but growing far larger and faster than the investors had ever imagined. Frank began to get frustrated in that he did not have full control over some aspects of the business such as product development and rightfully felt that the company needed to develop more new products. When he thought that he was not getting anywhere with this he began to show signs of restlessness, so when Tanfield approached, along with other potential bidders, he was torn between what to recommend to the shareholders, wanting to keep the business independent but also appreciating that a new owner from within the industry might step up investment, while the existing owners could cash out at the top of the market. The Tanfield bid succeeded and he stayed on, possibly hoping that he would be offered a more senior post within the overall group. When production and other changes were proposed he went into one of his down periods, worrying that the reputation that had been carefully built up would be undone. A year after the takeover he left and aged 60 did consider retiring to Key West a place he loved and where he owned a small property.





Frank Scarborough in classic pose with Bill Jansink at the 2006 Platformer Days.

I don't think I have seen Frank since then (June 2008) but we kept in contact. He never talked of his latest job with American Crane and Tractor, preferring to talk about the crane and access industries, of friends and family – the very things he cared about most of all. We last spoke in mid-May and Frank said he was considering coming to Vertikal Days but never managed to make it. He was absolutely delighted with his first granddaughter Sofia, born earlier this year, although he said that he had had a health scare while visiting New York to see her for the first time. There were no further details forthcoming but that was typical of Frank.

His sudden death was a great shock for so many of us around the world who knew Frank, but most of all for his family. Frank's beloved wife, Bonnie, whom he married as a 19-year-old boy, was always very supportive of his work and was someone who liked people as much

as Frank did. Bonnie played an important role in his career and met all of his friends and most of his business colleagues and contacts. Our thoughts are very much with her and his daughters Leslie and Marielle, who reminds me so much of Frank.

I still find it hard to think that I will never see the old b***** again. I was very much hoping to spend many more good times with him in the years to come. It's not to be and the many, many fond memories I have of Frank will just have to suffice. The world is a far poorer place without him.

I'll miss you Frank.

Leigh – only surviving member of the BoB club

A Celebration of Life ceremony will be held for Frank Scarborough on Saturday July 17th at the St. Joseph Benton Club, 402, North 7th street, St Joseph Missouri, starting at 13:00

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