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Readers Letters



Mark,

I moved from cranes to earthmoving 33 years ago, but still get Cranes & Access. Thanks for allowing that, it is a great read.

Brother Richard's piece in your latest editorial was particularly poignant and indeed unexpected in a construction related publication. But it says so much about the new world that Covid 19 has imposed on us.

Let's hope the construction industry can survive this event and perhaps enter post-Corvid making good use of the new personal and communication skills that have been imposed on us.

I hope everyone stays safe and best wishes to Leigh, we shared an office in the long distant past.

Peter Cooper

Dear Sir,

Following your editorial it struck me of Charles Darwin's "On the origin of species" that "It is not the strongest of the species that survives nor the most intelligent, but the one more responsive to change".

Anon

Dear Leigh,

Having read the Mast Claiming article in the latest Cranes & Access I wanted to pass on my congratulations for the Toronto and other accidents report on page 23. It was highly refreshing to read how those interviewed - in particular James Gordon - were so candid, open and frank about what happened and how he had learnt from the mistakes that were made and changes made. This type of reporting provides a real service to the industry. The same can be said about the letter you published from Cathal McNally on page 72. I live in hope that other companies might be inspired by their lead and follow suit. We would have far fewer accidents, injuries and fatalities if they would. We might also then be able to attract more young people to join our ranks?

Let's see more of this type of reporting.

Geoff Singleton

It is unusual that companies or their managers are prepared to speak out so openly. All too often legal claims drag on for years preventing those involved from speaking out. In our report of a tower crane incident on page 24 reporter Saul Chernos struggled to find those who were prepared to speak out due to a number of legal cases still outstanding. We will strive to do more, but as this shows it is not easy.

Nicholas Davin remembered

The news on Vertikal.Net and in the last issue of the untimely passing of access industry veteran and past IPAF president Nicholas Davin generated many comments - here are just a few:

"When I worked at JLG in the late 80's, early 90's, I used to jump on the Stranraer to Larne ferry on the Monday and meet up with Nicholas. After our 'Ulster fry' we would go touring around visiting customers, enjoying a few drinks, some good steak and a good laugh. Truly one of the highlights of my early days in the access industry. Nicholas was a pleasure to be around. News travels slow sometimes, I'm in South Florida now and the sad news only just got to me. Nicholas was just a great, great man to be around. Very sad news.

Kevin OShea

Very sad to hear the news that another of the good guys has passed away Fond memories of a true gent. We shared the craic throughout the years. Usually we ended up saying that the rental rate for booms should be £10 a foot as of course was back in the day !!

RIP Nicholas and god bless you

Mike Evans

RIP Nicholas, always a highly respected competitor and adversary, the access industry has lost a remarkable character.

Julie Houston Smyth

The industry has lost a great access man - Nicholas was very much at the forefront of both developing the IPAF concept internationally, and as a perceptive and pro-active member of the JLG European distributor network during the 1990's and onwards - for which we other regional distributors at that time owe a debt of gratitude. It was always a pleasure to be in Nicholas' company and he will be greatly missed by all.

Paul Richards

RIP Mr Davin, a great inspiration. Somebody who always spoke his mind and was truly charming and hospitable with it. Thank-you.

Tim Whiteman.

RIP Nicholas.

A truly great character with a great wit and turn of phrase which I and his many friends in Ireland and overseas will miss. He contributed an enormous amount to the wellbeing and safety of the Access Industry through his involvement with IPAF as a former President and board member and also by being the first to introduce the concept of a country council to IPAF's then MD Paul Adorian and went on to chair IPAF's first country council in Ireland. This concept has been successfully replicated around the world by IPAF and was undoubtedly instrumental in changing IPAF from a UK based organisation to an international one. As well as being a worthy and respected competitor during my time in the rental business in Ireland I enjoyed many good nights with him when we shared time on the board of IPAF and at the many other overseas industry events. I am sure someone in JLG would know this, but he must be the longest serving continuous JLG dealer on the planet. Particularly fond memory of pasta night with Nicholas and Liza in Bologna many years ago. My heartfelt condolences to Liza, his children, brothers Andrew and David and the wider Davin family.

Ar dheis de go raib a anam

John Ball

Thank you for this lovely article and the kind words from friends in the industry, it means a lot to our family and Dad would have been pleased as punch to read them.

Elizabeth Davin



The following letter/obituary was received from ex IPAF managing director Paul Adorian regarding the sad passing of crane and access industry veteran and consultant Tim Watson in early April.

Tim Watson, 13 May 1950 - 3 April 2020

My first meeting with Tim Watson goes back to 1975 when he was employed by John Laing Construction Plant and Transport Services at Borehamwood as Senior Electrical Supervisor.

I was managing director of Laing subsidiary Elstree Plant Ltd (later EPL,) also based at Borehamwood, at a time when the company was steadily disposing of its fleet of heavy earthmoving equipment and reinvesting substantial sums into various types of powered access equipment, a field we had moved into in 1970. We relied heavily on our parent company's substantial workshop facilities for undertaking work relating to maintenance, modification and repair of a wide range of plant, and it was during this time that Tim and I had ever more frequent meetings and in those early days I was struck by his obvious understanding of the many mechanical problems we threw at him, relating in particular to our rapidly expanding aerial platform fleet.

Aerial platforms were developing in all shapes and sizes and we were importing a variety of machines from the USA and European based manufacturers. Electro-hydraulic control systems were in their infancy and there being no common international Standard for the design and construction of such machines at that time, we were continuously having to resolve technical issues which invariably needed an instant response when machines were broken down on site. I very soon realised that if Tim was given a problem to solve, one could rely totally not only on his ability to resolve the problem, but one knew it would happen with a high degree of immediacy.

Needless to say, a very close relationship built up and as our aerial lift fleet was expanding rapidly, as the idea of platform rental was being accepted by more and more industries all over the country, our depot network was also expanding, which resulted in the need for in-house management of the day to day maintenance of an ever-growing fleet and the problems encountered as we commenced manufacturing our own platforms. In 1977, Tim was promoted to manager of operations planning and Central Services for John Laing and later that year, I invited him to become the works manager for EPL International, where continued growth and demands from our newly introduced manufacturing division necessitated such an appointment. Tim performed this task very successfully and his enthusiasm and competence made a great impression on all who worked with him.

In 1979, he became technical services manager of EPL with responsibility for providing all technical advisory services. As the company grew and took on more and more responsibilities for new depots and its manufacture and sales activities, Tim became chief engineer. In 1984 he took on responsibility as chief engineer of the EPL for John Laing Construction's Central Plant Engineering Services. In 1988 he was appointed director of EPL engineering, EPL Plant and Access Hire, responsible for Central Plant Engineering Services, Quality Services, Safety Services, Fabrication Services and an electrical contracting business.

In 1995 he became engineering and services director



- Laing Plant and EPL Access. Laing Plant was the equipment organisation of Laing Construction that traded as EPL on the external market. His responsibilities included:

- Applications Engineering Department - for all lifting equipment used in the Laing Group
- Inspection and Testing Department - a UKAS accredited in-Service Inspection Body
- Safety Department - providing a safety service to Laing Plant and EPL Access
- Training Department - providing CITB CTA operator and safety training both internally and to the external market.
- Quality Department - Implementation and maintenance of quality system registered with BSI to ISO 9001.
- Servicing - the effective maintenance of the EPL Access fleet through a network of depots.
- Central Repair facility at St Neots - incorporating mechanical and electrical maintenance, fabrication and painting facilities.
- Representing the Laing group on industry bodies such as the CPA, IPAF and the British Standards Institution.

Looking at Tim's career between 1975 and 2001, it is fair to say that he enjoyed a meteoric rise within one of the UK's largest civil engineering contractors and few people that I have come across could have met the huge technical demands placed upon him. He was dealing with such a varied range of equipment, where problems large and small either in the workshop or in the field had to be solved, always as a matter of urgency. He had a remarkable ability to remain calm and polite in the face of adversity and was always able to not only to get on with people, but to remain polite with those who were not always prepared to be polite to him, a trait which stood him in good stead throughout his working life.

2001 saw the financial collapse of the John Laing Construction as a result of a number of major contracts taken on at tender prices which turned out to be far too low. Sadly, the company was sold to one of John Laing's subcontractors, O'Rourke, for a reputed £1, fortunately, that did not include EPL International, which was saved from possible disaster by a management buyout. Tim, with hindsight one can say, wisely decided not to participate in the buyout and very quickly found employment as engineering manager at Hewden Tower Cranes, with responsibility for providing applications and design

engineering services along with quality and safety liaison. I remember telephoning him when I heard of the Laing collapse, suggesting that he came and joined the notified body Powered Access Certification (PAC) which at that time was a subsidiary of IPAF. Tim had already become one of the leading technical experts on the use of tower cranes as John Laing Construction had operated its own fleet for many years, and he was responsible for their maintenance and safety. He indicated that he felt that the challenge within his new job would satisfy his enquiring mind. My parting words were, "if it does not work out, give me a call." About a year later I was overjoyed to receive that call which led to him joining PAC in September 2002 as a technical officer working with our technical director, the late John Hocking.

When I retired from IPAF in December 2003, I succeeded in buying PAC from the federation. Sadly, we lost John Hocking during the intervening period, but Tim's experience of the aerial platform industry had prepared him well for taking over as technical officer of a Notified Body, undertaking CE certification for aerial work platforms.

His previous involvement with platforms at EPL and his very considerable knowledge of tower cranes and mobile cranes equipped him perfectly for dealing with design approval on a huge variety of platforms. It required huge reserves of tact and diplomacy when dealing with engineers from the other side of the world who have never understood the workings of the European Commission. They often found it difficult to accept the rejection of some of their designs where they failed to meet some of the more stringent requirements. A great percentage of PAC's CE certification work has always been with North American based companies where until recently there has not been a fully worked out US Standard and where it could be said that the absence of such a Standard resulted in unnecessary accidents. Tim was a master at dealing with such situations as not only was he a very good listener, he also had the unusual ability to listen to people with whom he had to disagree on a particular technical point and then by skilful argument persuade the client to meet the requirements of a Standard and leave them thinking it was their own idea to meet with that particular requirement. This ability to convince an experienced engineer that he was wrong without actually having to state the position too bluntly was one of Tim's greatest



assets. One cannot afford to make mistakes with CE certification. The great skill was not in finding the errors but getting it right without offending the client.

Quite apart from his involvement with aerial work platforms, Tim Watson Consulting had equally demanding roles both in the world of cranes, providing a technical service to the CPA. His long experience and involvement with cranes, ranging from tower cranes, lattice and telescopic mobile and crawler cranes is almost certainly unparalleled, which is probably the reason why the Health & Safety Executive used to call upon his expertise following serious crane accidents or other technical problems where his knowledge and experience invariably guaranteed an appropriate response. One could say, without fear of contradiction, that in the fields of aerial platforms and cranes, Tim was the most highly qualified and experienced engineer in Europe and was regularly sought to give evidence as an expert witness in these two fields where prosecutions or legal disputes followed serious accidents.

The loss of Tim will leave a deep hole in two progressive industries, but it has also brought great sadness to his many colleagues and friends worldwide. Tim led a very full and organised life, befriended by almost all who met him, either socially or through business, and to the end he was one of those rare individuals whom you recognised within the first few minutes of meeting him, exuded charm, competence and courtesy. You knew instinctively that if he took on a commitment he would deliver in full and on time.

Having known Tim as a friend and colleague and worked with him for over 45 years, I know that he did manage to have a private life, living with Judy in the lovely Lincolnshire Wolds, where his pet chickens took his mind off his work. I feel that we have all lost someone who will be very difficult to replace in our thoughts and our lives.

My thoughts now go out to his wife, Judy and all the family.





Filip Deschrijvere 1971 - 2020

Filip Deschrijvere, managing director and owner of Belgian aerial lift sales and rental company Rentalift, died suddenly from heart failure on Monday, March 30th. He was only 48.

Deschrijvere and his wife Marleen De Leersnyder founded Rentalift in 2000 in the town of Izegem, due north of Kortrijk, close to Roeslare. The company is the Belgian dealer for Multitel truck mounted and spider lifts, as well as Jekko mini and spider cranes and Almac tracked booms and scissor lifts.

The company also runs a rental fleet of aerial work platforms, including booms, scissor lifts, truck mounts and telehandlers and is still managed by the couple with eight employees.

Dale Blackwell 1954 - 2020

Dale Blackwell, executive director of the California Rental Association and owner of Sacramento based Abba Dabba Rentals, passed away on April 17th, following complications from a severe traumatic brain injury, he was 65.



Abba Dabba Rents was established by Blackwell's father in 1957 and offers a wide range of equipment, including boom and scissor lifts and telehandlers from two locations. He was also president of the California Rental Association from 2003 to 2005 and an executive director for almost 15 years. He was also a strong supporter of the American Rental Association having sat on its Dues and its Political Action committees. He won the Region Nine Person of the Year award in 2002.

He is survived by his wife Victoria and five children, Kerri Costarella, Scott, Jeffrey, Randall and Jena, as well as his parents, Gene and Betty, siblings Bob, Dianne and Christine, and four grandchildren.

A celebration of life service will be held when possible at a future date.

Andrew Stewart R.I.P

Andy Stewart, national sales manager of Mantis Cranes UK passed away in mid April, having been suddenly taken ill in late January. In spite of the best efforts of his medical team he passed away 12 weeks later with his family at his bedside.

Stewart joined Mantis in 2013 as a regional sales executive becoming national sales manager in 2016. Having started out in retail in 1981 as a trainee with shoe company Oliver, he moved up through the ranks before joining electrical retailer Comet. Then in 1995 he switched to the material handling industry, becoming a sales manager with Forkway, moving on to Swire Material Handling a couple of years later, and then in 1998 Dawson Rentals where he remained for the next 14 years renting and leasing Toyota and Doosan fork trucks along with a range of aerial work platforms. After trying his hand with smoke alarms he joined Mantis and the tower crane industry and never looked back.

A statement from his colleagues said: "For those who knew Andy, you will remember his laughter, generosity and of course his passion for talking, not to mention Cranes. Andy had a great desire for life and breathed positivity in everything he did. Along with being a Family Man, Andy was described as a genuine people's person, he always appeared happiest when dealing with clients, staff or interacting with anyone who crossed his path. He was a devoted supporter of Tottenham Hotspur which evoked great rivalry with work pals."

"Having worked at Mantis for the last seven years, he was and will always be embedded into the Mantis family. He will be greatly missed as an employee, colleague and a true genuine friend. We would like to express our deepest sympathy and condolences to Andy's wife Janette, their children and extended family at this extremely difficult time."

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In these difficult times it is more important than ever to communicate with your customers, suppliers, remote workers and others and maintain confidence in your company and brand as well as highlighting plans and strategies.

This may appear challenging when the natural instinct is to 'hunker down' cut everything back and just get through the crisis, often sacrificing long built up reputations. But there are alternatives.

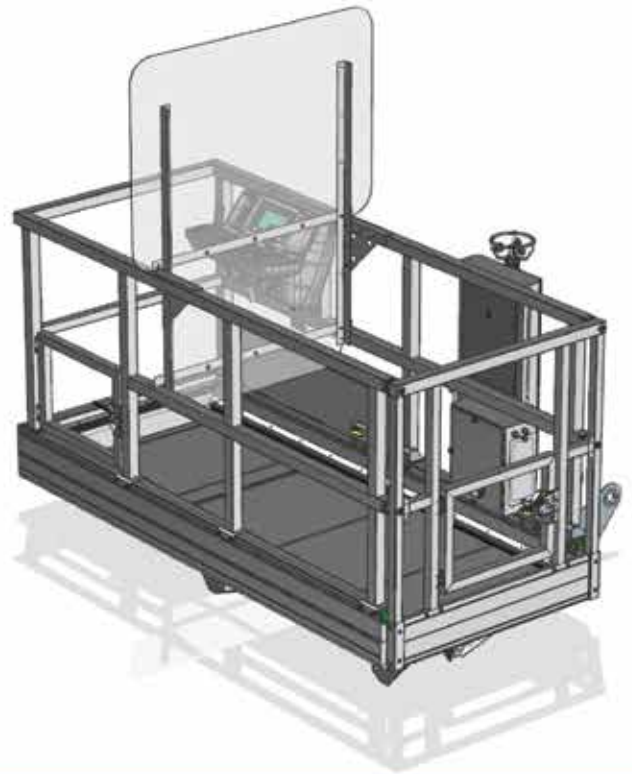
By working together in a constructive manner and understanding each other's concerns and challenges, companies and the industry as a whole can stay strong and in a far better position to bounce back when all this has passed, as it most certainly will.

The Vertikal Press will be here all through the crisis, continually reporting on the industry we love and breathe, continuing to publish the magazines and providing a daily news service via the Vertikal.net web portal. We are also open to all manner of ideas and ways in which we can help support you - our readers and customers.

In times of crisis, creativity, openness and maintaining your presence in the market wins the day. This is when a company's true colours, depth and quality shine through - and the weak are exposed. So, keep in touch. Keep sending your news and continue to work closely with suppliers and partners as well as your customers - they are all important.

We will work with you to make sure you can maintain your profile. If you need help in any area - from finding ways to continue your advertising programmes, to assistance with editorial/news items - we are here to help.

The Vertikal Team, Leigh, Nicole, Keng, Pam, Clare, Mark, Rüdiger, Lee, Alex, Ed, Poppy and our fantastic contractors - Brett, Roland, Anja, Rob and Saul.



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