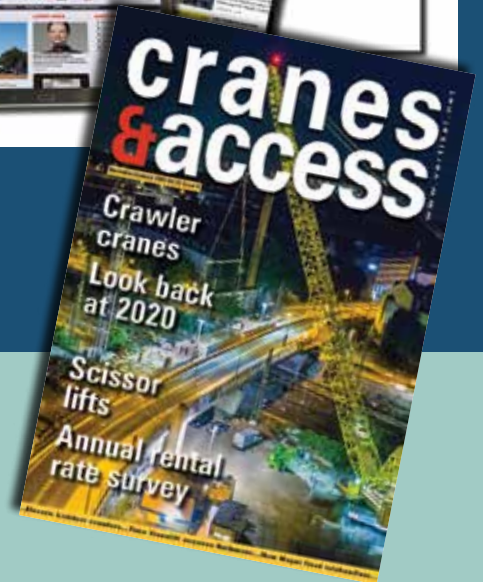


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# Readers Letters

C&A

letters



*The following is more of opinion piece but sent in as a letter and for us 'hits the nail on the head' and raises an increasingly important point. It would be very good to hear from more of you on this subject so we will also post it on the Vertikal website where it can be commented on directly.*

## Social Media?

We bought our first mobile phone in 1987, that's the one, the brick with the 'hernia' battery if you opted for 16 hours of battery life instead of eight. We had one on trial from a local supplier, as the whole idea was in its infancy, and a trial wasn't unusual. Bill, (Ellis) never afraid of progress and foresight, decided we'll make our phone number known to some key suppliers and customers and if we get any work from that we'll buy it.

In those days we were working all over the country, pre-cast concrete and steel erecting. Some work came in and we were also able to sort some issues on site without stopping everything and having to drive to the nearest phone box laden with 10p coins. So £1,750 later the phone was ours!

The phones were gathering pace rapidly, soon our now seemingly old fashioned phone was selling for £250.00 and we added a second to fit in the crane that travelled the country and was starting to go out on hire. The benefits of having the phones were quickly apparent, so another crane another phone, this time £25, but we kept the same 'old' phone kits, so they were interchangeable in our vehicles.

Our lads at the time, 'had a go' with the phone, more as a novelty than anything, if we were working away any private calls were still made from our digs or from call boxes after work.

Scroll forwards 33 years, the phones have advanced beyond all recognition. We had a customer a few years ago who erected radio masts. He had the opportunity to erect masts for the Orange phone network but couldn't see why anyone would want to have a telephone in their pocket 24/7 and declined the work, sticking to the 'safer bet' of his usual work!

Modern phones, not even phones but 'handheld devices' are undoubtedly a triumph of technology with endless benefits and uses, but then the ironically named, social media arrived, often the most antisocial use of these devices. Again, lots of benefits and quite frankly the unbelievable ability to speak to and see someone simultaneously, on the other side of the world, stuff that we conjured up in our minds when I was at school. I have family that live abroad and can send a message instantly, unfortunately long gone are handwritten letters and the excitement of a long awaited reply.

I'm not old fashioned, stuck in the past or afraid of change but here's the issue. In my opinion these handheld devices have turned into an epidemic of unbelievable proportions with the way some of our work forces use them unnecessarily during working hours.

I've had conversations with lots of business owners in all sorts of trades and they all tell the same tale, "phones always stuck to his ear" or "if you can get him off his phone". I know some sites have phone zones, phone use outside of which is prohibited. Should this now be a standard site regulation akin to other health and safety requirements like hard hats, protective footwear etc. and enforced in the same way? Surely, we can't let the brilliance of this technology be a hindrance to our own services and skills.

However much we drum it into them, we can't police our staff when they are on a customer's site so maybe the sites should help uphold this. Genuine necessary calls for reasons such as breakdowns, site issues or alterations to a hire term, can usually be made, with permission, in a few minutes. Each to their own but Snap chatting or Facebooking what you had for breakfast is not only unnecessary during working hours, it seems to me, a bit odd!

Yes, I've written this on a handheld device, yes, I've posted updates and information about our company and services on Facebook and LinkedIn and why not, that's what it's there for. But surely there's a time and a place for everything and during the whole of lifting operations of any sort on site big or small, in my opinion, isn't it?

I know the old school that may read this might feel they are being tarred with the same brush, and probably couldn't care less about social media, it's not meant as a sweeping statement, but there is a problem emerging in the construction industry that I for one would like to see contained.

There's some graffiti on a wall in Gloucester next to the image of Albert Einstein that reads; Smart Phones, Stupid People!

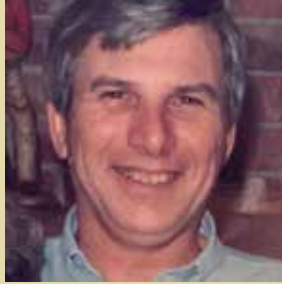
Simon Ellis

Ellis Crane Hire – UK



**Ira 'Dean' Riley 1940 – 2020**

**Sad news reached us in December of the death of Dean Riley, the former Grove district manager and sales training manager based at the company's Shady Grove facility in Pennsylvania in the 1970s and 80s. He passed away peacefully at the Homewood Retirement Centre, Williamsport, on November 23rd.**



Dean Riley was born in Fort Ashby, West Virginia, and attended Frostburg State University followed by the University of Houston. He graduated in 1965 and went on to serve in the United States Marine Corps Reserves.

He initially worked for Grove in the fire ladder and rescue business, at a time when the company still produced farm wagons, tilt-bed truck bodies and fire ladders... as well as cranes. He was involved in the buyout of the Grove fire ladder/rescue platform business in the early 1970s, becoming the president of Ladder Towers Incorporated as it was renamed. He returned to Grove as sales training manager in the late 1970s with the responsibility for training new district managers, organising customer visitors to the factory, sales training courses for dealers and major customers as well as factory based customer events and was also involved in the production of marketing materials including corporate films.

After leaving Grove, he ran a business selling antiques, just one of his many passions, but then went back into the equipment business working for Grove dealers JW Burris and then Anderson Equipment from where he retired in 1999. He is survived by his wife Susan, daughters Leissa and Amy, and son Bruce. He also has seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Dean Riley was certainly a character and was as honest as the day is long. He was always ready to share his thoughts openly – in fact he was completely unable to hide his

feelings but was always upbeat and never lingered too long on any disappointments. He was thoughtful, inciteful, and a great mentor to hundreds of young people, both at Grove and for the number of clubs and associations that he served as a volunteer. He would have made a brilliant and inspirational teacher, although he may not have had quite the right approach for running a company, if so that would have been one of his very few failings.

At times he could come across as slightly cavalier in his approach, but he was a 'can doer' and nothing was impossible. He was always 'thinking outside of the box' although his unorthodox methods for getting things done may not always have endeared him to the 'powers that be', in fact some considered him to be something of a loose cannon and there may have been some basis for this, but every organisation worth its weight needs at least one person like Dean Riley – managing them is perhaps another matter altogether.

He must have caused his immediate marketing services superior, Bert Major, more than a few headaches and high blood pressure, but he was undoubtedly brilliant, full of enthusiasm and he did get things done. If I were to sum up an image of Dean in his prime, it would be Indiana Jones. Dean Riley was a mentor to me during my most formative years although I only worked for him for 18 months, but I am glad and deeply honoured to have known him.

Leigh Sparrow

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, the family has said that it will honour his life at a celebration when it is safe to do so. They have also sent their thanks the nursing staff and aides of the Homewood Retirement Center. He also requested that his body be donated to medical science.

Memorial donations can be made in his name to the local Habitat for Humanity Washington County Humane Society and/or the Reach Shelter of Hagerstown.

**André Martin 1924 - 2021**

**André Martin, a veteran of the French crane rental industry and founder of Transport Martin Levage has died, he was 96. Martin and his wife Adrienne started out in 1957 running a fuel station in Cap d'Agde near Beziers in the south of France, and then in 1968 they bought an ex-US army Austin Western wrecker crane on a three axle 6x6 Reo truck in order to add another side to their business. Over the following years they expanded the crane and recovery business and began looking at new cranes, starting with the classic Haulotte GH12, the cornerstone of many French crane rental companies. Martin Levage continued to grow steadily and even made the odd acquisition purchasing Ancre Levage along the way.**

The couple eventually passed the business on to the second generation of the family, in the form of son Joel and daughter Isabelle, although André remained involved on a daily basis and only stepped down as a director in October. Today the business runs a fleet of around 30 cranes with capacities up to 300 tonnes from locations in Agde, Nîmes, Montpellier, Sète and Béziers.



*Adrienne and André Martin with their first crane - an Austin Western - photo courtesy JDL*