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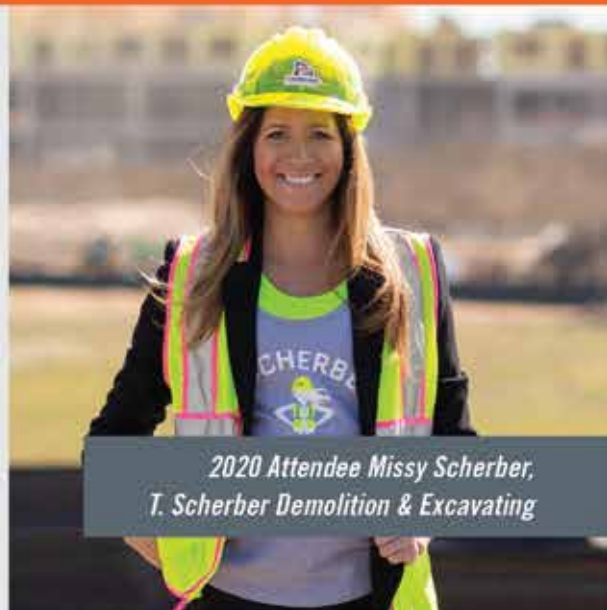
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# READERS LETTERS

## ARNOLD GARDEMANN 1949-2022

We have only just learnt of the sad death of one of the pioneers of the German powered access rental market, Arnold Gardemann. The long-time managing director of Gardemann Arbeitsbühnen passed away on May 19th at the age of 72.

Arnold Gardemann played the major role in converting the Alpen, North Rhine Westphalia based Gardemann industrial painting company into a leading national player in the self-propelled and truck mounted aerial lift market.

He set extremely high standards for quality and sustainability well before it became a thing, while putting safety at the forefront. In 2001 Gardemann became the first company in the world to purchase the world's first 100 metre aerial work platform - the Ruthmann TTS1000 - sensing the potential for higher truck mounted lifts.

After selling his business Arnold agreed to be a judge in the annual Vertikal Check at Platformers Days, which checked the specifications of a different machine type and size each year against the performance claimed in the manufacturer's specifications. Each judge would then highlight what they liked and disliked about each machine and the judging panel would choose a 'best of breed'. He was an avid and effective participant. The organiser Rüdiger Kopf who is also chief editor of Kran & Bühne magazine said: "I was able to get to know and appreciate him there. He combined his specialist knowledge with his wit and charm."



## ROGER VAN DE WEGHE 1946-2022

**Roger Van de Weghe of Belgian crane and access rental company has died. He passed away peacefully at home on Friday, 12th August following a six year battle with ill health and cancer. He leaves behind his wife Manuela, daughter Annick, son Philippe and first wife Martine.**

The Van De Weghe crane business was established in the Antwerp suburb of Wilrijk after World War II by Roger's father Isidoor, moving to premises on Boomsesteenweg - the old road to Brussels - buying ex US military trucks, cranes and earthmoving equipment to sell and rent. Roger took over the business in or around 1967 and began adding larger cranes and later a heavy transport division, helped by acquisition. In 2005 he began to exit the crane rental business merging most of the 115 unit fleet - many of them larger models - with Michielsens.

In the early 1980s he entered the aerial lift rental market and as a Grove crane buyer naturally took on the Grove Manlift product line, becoming the distributor for Belgium, initially on an unofficial basis.

### A personal recollection

While not seeming to be the sportiest of people, Roger was a decent horse rider and showjumper in his youth. He and his first wife Martine had stables and a riding centre at their home on the north side of Antwerp where they hosted a prestigious annual show jumping event. He also became a half decent golfer and would drag you out onto the golf course after work, whether you liked it or not.

Roger van de Weghe was a larger-than-life character with an unforgettable laugh and smile, he used his facial expressions to great effect when negotiating. As the Grove district manager for the Benelux region, I recall him nagging me to have a formal distribution contract confirming him as the official Grove Manlift dealer. I told him that the informal arrangement he had was the better, strategically handy when dealing with major competitors, and that to all intents and purposes he was the official distributor. Eventually he wore me down and one day I arrived in Wilrijk with a standard Grove distributor contract for him to sign.

He took one look at the thick document and close typed legal text and looked up with a sheepish expression, and exactly as I had anticipated said: "No I don't want this, all I want is a single sheet of paper with the words 'Roger you the dealer on it', then you and I sign it, and everything is good."

Then after some consideration and a couple more looks at me added, in a slightly more subdued tone: "I think we stay like we are," followed by a sheepish smile and notification that it was time for lunch.

While he had all the trappings of wealth none of it seemed to matter much to him, he just enjoyed life. When we first met, he drove a Porsche 928, a really fancy car at the time, but it was an absolute tip, particularly inside, and if I recall correctly, it broke down at least once because the oil or water ran dry! The fancy car, it seemed, was just not important to him.

After leaving Grove at the end of the 1980s I would bump into him at trade shows, usually Bauma, and his big smile would light up the world, he would grab me and introduce me to whomever he was with saying something like: "Hey this is my very best friend, Leigh." In all my years I have never met someone quite like him. He was like a big slightly chaotic teddy bear of a man, but highly professional, canny and smart. He chose and cultivated some great people along the way, such as Paul Spaepen who went on to set up Grove dealer BLE. In all my dealings with him Roger van de Weghe was a totally open book, I never saw anything devious or underhand. If he was not happy about a proposal, he would show it with a pout and restless fidgeting.

Sadly, I have not seen him for a long time, something I deeply regret.

Roger was unquestionably an industry character, one like no other, a totally unforgettable force of nature.

The world has lost one of the best.

Rest in  
peace Roger  
Leigh Sparrow



**FIL FILIPOV 1946-2022**

**Fil Filipov - owner of crane and excavator company Atlas, past president of Terex Cranes and a highly influential player in the crane and aerial lift markets during the 1990s and into the new millennium - has died. He passed away aged 75 on August 26th following a short battle with an aggressive form of cancer. He is survived by his wife of 35 years Véronique, son Steve and daughter Nadia.**



Filipov was born in Plovdiv, Bulgaria in 1946 to a local tailor who owned his own shop until it was taken over by the post war communist state. As a non-party member Fil did not qualify for university, so he attended a local technical college learning to be a machine tool operator for the textile industry. His rebellious nature began to get him into trouble, so in 1964 he decided to escape and was eventually joined by three others.

They travelled to the border ostensibly to visit Fil's cousin, crossing the border at night by swimming a river to the sound of gunfire. After a few days in prison as a possible spy, they were eventually transferred to a Greek refugee camp. The four were asked where they wanted to go and chose France, Belgium or the USA. The following year they were given air tickets and paperwork to emigrate to the USA.

**Life in the USA**

On arrival in New York the friends were met by a charity which gave them \$40 and left them to their own devices in a strange land with no English. Filipov found work washing dishes in a Greek restaurant and sleeping at the railway station. Unable to settle in New York he and his friends appealed to the charity, which gave them rail tickets to Chicago. After a short spell washing dishes, Filipov found a job working on a packing line, walking out when offered a lower pay rise than the locals.

He soon got a job working in a machine shop where he was able to demonstrate his skills. He and one of his compatriots - an artist - opened a small gallery. Fil ran it during the day, working a night shift and selling vacuum cleaners door to door in between. Then in 1966 he found work sweeping floors at International Harvester which was more convenient to the gallery. When a machinist failed to turn up one night, he volunteered to operate his machine and gained a new job - within two years he was promoted to team leader of the night shift.

When the Chicago plant closed, he was offered a job as a management trainee in Louisville, Kentucky and he was on his way. Over the next seven years he received 11 promotions and by 1978 was managing a production line with a staff of 700 producing 60 tractors a day. He was asked to return to a previous role to rescue a failing operation, which he did on the understanding that it was followed by a transfer to International's operations. He was posted to Paris, France, and was soon given the job of "saving" a failing plant in Croix, near the Belgian border.

In 1984 International Harvester was acquired by JI Case, presenting Filipov with further opportunities and by 1990 he was vice president of a substantial operation in Turkey for what was now Case Tenneco. The larger company became ever more top heavy and bureaucratic, as a result Filipov decided to leave without anything lined up. He was not short of offers though, and eventually deciding to join ex Case colleague Ron Defeo at Terex. Defeo persuaded him to take over the Koehring Crane and Excavator business that was a terminal 'basket case' having tried to absorb the production of the 50 strong Mark Lift product line, which the company had acquired in 1991. The aging plant in Waverly was also dealing with Northwest crawler cranes and parts as well as Koehring. All three brands eventually disappeared.

**The Terex years**

The following year he was given the additional responsibility for Clark Forklifts in Germany with the challenge of turning it round, which he did. As a result, Terex decided to sell it in order to focus on building a major crane business. In 1995 it acquired PPM and its sister companies P&H and Bendini establishing Terex Cranes at the P&H facility in Conway, South Carolina. Franna pick & carry cranes were added in 1998 along



Filipov (centre) at the Greek refugee camp 1964



with Delaware based American Hoist & Derrick which had decimated by a wholly unsuccessful transfer from its plant in St Paul, Minnesota.

Terex Lifting also made another attempt to enter the aerial lift market acquiring Simon, a major but failing player in the market following a string of poorly integrated acquisitions, and niche scissor lift manufacturer Holland Lift. Neither ended well.

Terex surprised everyone in 2002 when it acquired Demag cranes and then Genie aerial work platforms - two high quality manufacturers with strong reputations, a total departure from the previous strategy of buying up struggling businesses. However, Filipov did not get to 'turn them round'. His son Steve took over the reins at Terex Cranes with Fil leaving Terex the following year. He returned to the Clark forklift business in Germany taking it out of administration through Filco.

In 2010 he made his final major acquisition, buying Germany's Atlas loader crane and excavator business from Terex, where he made major changes in the face of strong opposition from the union IG Metal. A battle he eventually won.

**'Not everyone's cup of tea'**

Fil Filipov had a reputation for a 'no compromise' management style and treatment of acquisitions, a reputation he seemed happy to encourage. As a result, his pending arrival would send ripples of fear through a newly acquired business. His 'First 100 days' strategy for takeovers could be brutal, especially for those in sales, marketing or administration roles. Although to be fair the acquired companies were often in serious trouble and bleeding cash. In some cases, his policy worked, while in others it failed.

In those days he advocated a 'pile them high sell 'em cheap' strategy and boasted "No price increases in 10 years at Terex". When asked about the reliability of Terex Rough Terrain cranes compared the market leader, his answer was apparently along the lines of "Hell you can buy two of ours for the same price and keep one spare if you're worried."

**'They can handle the truth'**

Filipov inspired many and could be very charming but above all he was a straight talker, and you knew where you stood with him. He never 'suffered fools gladly' but had many friends and supporters. He also remained in touch with his Bulgarian roots and was a major donor to the Bulgarian community, including the church of Saint Sofia in Des Plaines and joined a delegation representing the USA/Bulgarian community to the Illinois Congress.

As Fil would say: "Nishto Ne E Vechno" - Nothing is forever.

A statement from Atlas said: "In this period of inflation, the end of the holidays and travel difficulties, it is Fil's wish to have a private burial with very limited attendees. A brief ceremony was held in Fort Lauderdale and is available at [www.Atlasgmbh.com](http://www.Atlasgmbh.com). Additional tributes to his life will be held in Chicago, Ganderkesee, Germany and Strelcha, Bulgaria."

