



LIFE MEMBER BOB PARKER

2019 will see the 40th anniversary of the CICA conference. To help celebrate, *Cranes and Lifting* will be running a series of articles based on interviews with CICA Life Members.

BOB PARKER'S career spanned 42 years before his retirement in 2000. He played a fundamental role in establishing the industry representative committee in Queensland and he a founding member of CICA. Cranes and Lifting talks with Bob about his extensive career.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE CRANE INDUSTRY AND WHEN?
I started in the crane industry by working with a crane and rigging company, Maros Constructions, in 1958 – I was 19. I enjoyed it that much that I stayed with the industry and after working a few years at a practical level for that company I progressed to becoming an estimator and finally the manager of the Queensland operation. Maros Constructions was a NSW based company and we opened up the business here in Queensland, which I ended up managing.

HOW WAS THE INDUSTRY BACK THEN AND HOW DID IT CHANGE DURING YOUR CAREER?
The main thing I noticed in those days was the industry comprised mainly of smaller type family-owned companies,

with only one big player being Brambles who in those days were know as CHEP and was the only true national company. Each of the major cities had one major family company including Marr Contracting in Sydney, Clark Cranes in Melbourne and Aitkin Cranes in Brisbane.

HOW DID THE CRANE INDUSTRY VIEW ITSELF BACK THEN? WAS IT WELL ORGANISED AND PROFESSIONAL?
It wasn't well organised, nothing like it. It was highly competitive among the smaller companies and they fought viciously for the work that was around, and that applied to all the states that you could care to look at. This competitiveness led to the crane companies pushing their equipment to the limit and beyond to get the maximum out of it. There were not a lot of big cranes around and, being as competitive as it was, they were taking on work that they weren't really geared up to accommodate. They just didn't have the right sort of equipment. However, they took it on and got the job done, albeit, sometimes with disastrous results.

WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT ISSUES TO DEAL WITH AND ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING ASPECTS OF YOUR TIME IN THE INDUSTRY?
In the early part of the industry the unions were not really a problem, but in the latter part of my career after the 90s the unions became a increasingly difficult. The silly competition that went on between the companies in the various states was seen to be an unnecessary factor because they were tearing the



industry down rather than building it up. One of the most rewarding aspects of my career was the effort taken by a small amount of people to instigate some form of uniformity and broad based knowledge of what the industry was all about. This led to the formation of the various state-based associations and then ultimately their representation onto the national body being the National Crane Council of Australia (CICA). That was probably the first move taken to rationalise and help settle the industry down. It also encouraged people to discuss what the industry was really all about. Personally, I appreciated my opportunity to participate in that movement and to see the results that it generated – I felt better about it all the time. Another rewarding aspect of my time in the industry has been the amount of really good people that I have been fortunate to meet and work with. Many have been genuine friendships and

some of these I have been lucky enough to take with me through my life.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN YOUR ROLE IN SETTING UP THE QUEENSLAND BRANCH OF CICA?
We set up the QLD branch in 1972 as a result of some visits from Bill Shaw from the Victorian association, which was the only branch that had any formalisation or structure apart from Western Australia. He came to Queensland and proposed the development of a committee that would work to establish representation in each state where there were no formal structures in place. This included South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. I became part of that committee in 1972 and the Queensland branch was finally formed in 1974. Progressively, the other states got their acts together and developed

their own organisations with a lot of support and information from Bill Shaw and the Victorian association. In my view, he was the leader of the push that made the whole thing happen. But, I had a very rewarding career in the industry organisation by being part of the formation of the Queensland branch and sitting on the committee. I don't think I ever got off it. As a Queensland member I, for many years, became the delegate on the national body. This was known as a 'working party', which formalised, developed and implemented the 1979 conference. This saw the start of CICA.

WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU HAVE MADE TO THE EARLY INDUSTRY?
I think the most significant and the most effective change we did make was the coming together of the industry and

the formation of the organisations. One obvious issue I would like to have changed was the number of very serious accidents, injuries and loss of life that occurred because of cavalier attitudes. If one were able to change anything with a stroke of a pen, it would have been that.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEBODY COMING INTO TODAY'S CRANE INDUSTRY?
I would say that the big thing that affects the industry is professionalism, particularly towards safety. Ensure you operate within the guidelines and processes of how things are supposed to be done, rather than taking acting individually. In other words, take good sound advice on how to safely run a business in what can be, if it's not controlled properly, a really hazardous work place. ●

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