



LIFE MEMBER ROB WAY

This year will see the 40th anniversary of the CICA conference. To help celebrate this landmark event, *Cranes and Lifting Magazine* is running a series of articles based on interviews with CICA Life Members.

IN THE SECOND of the CICA Life Member profiles, we feature Robert Way. Rob has long been regarded as a pioneer of the Australian crane sector and is also recognised as being someone who identified safety and operator training as major issues for the fledgling industry. Ultimately, Rob went on to launch Robway Safety Systems, which still leads the way in crane and safe load monitoring systems today.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE CRANE INDUSTRY?

Our business started in 1952 when we were awarded a contract to load and transport tram bogies when trams were being removed from metro Adelaide. To do this we needed to have a 2t crane, so we had a 3t crane made, with a basic boom of 4m and a manual extension of 2m, by a local engineer and mounted onto an ex-Korean War LHD Reo.

This led to hiring it out to different people who wanted to lift and shift heavy items, so now we were in a new industry by default as were a lot of the early crane people.

HOW DID THE INDUSTRY SEE ITSELF BACK THEN?

It was a fledgling industry in the 1950s with 4t mobile cranes being the norm and 2x10t cranes privately made, also being in the mix.

There were a few dragline/cranes available and Coles and P&H lattice boom cranes of small capacity available. It was thought, at the time that the lattice boom cranes would eventually be made available in larger capacities.



Rob Way.

WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT ISSUES TO DEAL WITH?

Crane safety has always been an issue to be dealt with.

We were restricted mainly to 4t mobile cranes, but customers were wanting to lift heavier loads at greater radii, and this led to overloading and overturning.

Lattice boom cranes were more cumbersome and couldn't lift and carry

a load and needed a truck to move the load consequently customers preferred mobile cranes.

We started installing basic load indicators on our cranes and proposed introducing these via the Australian Standards (of which I was a member for 15 years). However, the unions objected to the use of basic load indicators and automatic safe load indicators because they considered that the owners would use them for spying on the operators. Fortunately, now the unions fully support their use.

WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU HAVE MADE IN THE INDUSTRY?

None really, everything evolved as the technology changed with the advent of hydraulics.

In the late 1950s, crane engineers started using hydraulics to extend and retract single sections of booms and this progressed to multi extension booms which were restricted in length because of the external piping and inadequate seals. This, however, was the start of the evolution of hydraulic cranes.

Some of the leaders in the development of hydraulics were our own Con Popov based in Sydney, John Grove, USA, Coles Cranes UK and Liebherr Germany. They had worked out how to return the fluid internally via the extension cylinders with the use of sequencing valves and together with the new designs of telescopic sections, using higher tensile steel. It seemed that the designs and capacities were only restricted by engineers' imagination.

Now we have 1200t telescopic cranes

“Together with these state associations, it was my pleasure to meet and share ideas with people, not only from around Australia but from around the world.”

and pick and carry cranes up to 50t capacity.

Perhaps I may have started using basic load indicators a bit earlier than I did, and although we trained our own driver/operators to military standards, there still wasn't enough emphasis put on training Australia wide.

Now most of the cranes manufactured in the world have load moment systems installed as standard, so the other part missing in the equation is operator training. One without the other doesn't equate.

WHAT WAS ONE OF YOUR REWARDING ASPECTS OF THE TIME YOU SPENT IN THE INDUSTRY?

Meeting other people in the same industry worldwide.

This started in 1952 when there was a mobile crane division of the South Australia Road Transport Association made up of a handful of people. This organisation brought together people with problems and ideas to share.

This then developed into a more professional state association by using the SA Chamber of Manufacturers for our secretariat. As the industry kept growing, we then established our own secretariat and finally merged with CICA.

Together with these state associations, it was my pleasure to meet and share ideas with people, not only from around Australia but from around the world.

Early model weighload safe load indicator manufactured in the UK.



After several years trying to get the state associations to agree to an unofficial national conference it finally happened in 1979 at Broadbeach where approximately 150 people attended. This proved a great success and then

following the conference the conference committee met in Perth and it was then that the CICA was conceived.

This has proved to be one of the greatest achievements in the history of cranes in Australia. ●