



LIFE MEMBER ALLAN MCPHERSON

After more than 50 years in the industry, Allan McPherson is still active on a voluntary basis in CICA WA.

ALLAN MCPHERSON OBTAINED HIS CRANE ticket in 1965 and has a long history in the crane industry in Western Australia. He has seen many changes, one of which was the genesis of Boom Logistics when his company was purchased to start Boom. Allan is still very active in a voluntary basis in CICA WA which he has done since 1979, and he maintains excellent relationships with key stakeholders: Main Roads Western Australia and WorkSafe.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE CRANE INDUSTRY?

My initial interaction with cranes came in early 1965, when I was given the opportunity to operate an overhead gantry crane at Parkeston railway transshipment yard near Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

This was my first job after four years of doing a carpentry apprenticeship in the Australian Army. From having “a go” and showing some promise, I progressed to operating mobile Fowler Cranes transshipping cars and timber sleepers.

My next career change was in mid-1965, when I re-joined the Australian Army, which turned out to be a very valuable experience, as it gave me a skill set



Allan McPherson receives the 50 Year Service Award from Brandon Hitch, CICA CEO.

and work ethic that I have continued to build upon, my entire career.

I stopped by during my Perth Christmas holidays from Boulder and was offered a job operating cranes with O'Connor Cranes in Kwinana. Within a week I had relocated the family and commenced my first official employment in a crane hire company.

From 1969 until 1972 I worked as a full-time crane operator and I was taking home \$52.00 for 44 ordinary hours per week. Importantly during late 1972, my existing branch manager decided to take leave overseas and never returned. Brian O'Connor summoned me to a meeting, having noticed my work ethic and military background, he promoted me to the position of Kwinana branch manager.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED AS A VOLUNTEER WITH THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STATE CRANE ASSOCIATION AND HOW HAS YOUR VOLUNTEERING BENEFITTED YOU?

In 1979, my then employer was involved in the WA Road Transport Association which included a mobile crane hire division. I was elected to the inaugural committee and in time this division evolved into CAWA (Crane Association of Western Australia) as a stand-alone association, where I continued in an executive position. As the state association progressed, I was motivated to contribute to improving the industry, to learn from others and acquire a better understanding about the technical aspects of cranes and lifting.

Getting involved has afforded me the opportunity to meet and build friendships with some wonderful people with common interests and goals to progress and improve the things that matter in our industry. Over the years, I have gained valuable

knowledge from other crane companies, manufacturers and government bodies about cranes, regulation and best practice, that I could pass onto our local members large and small. I have enjoyed good discussions and engaging with regulators which has led to improved outcomes for our members.

WHAT IS / WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE YOU SAW IN THE INDUSTRY?

Operationally, some significant changes in WA have improved the industry for the benefit of hirers and customers. These include the removal of “daylight only” travel; increased axle mass to 12-tonne for all terrain cranes; 43-tonne GVM for 4 axle truck cranes.

There has been an overall improvement to safety management and practices with devices such as Christmas tree lights (RCI).

Another significant change I've observed is changes to the traditional blue-collar career path into management roles. In contrast to my career path which was founded on technical expertise and learning management skills on the job. Nowadays, crane company managers do their management training in university and then learn the technical aspects of the crane industry on the job.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE EVOLUTION OF THE TRACTOR CRANE INTO THE ARTICULATED CRANE (A.K.A FRANNA), AS WESTERN AUSTRALIA HAS A LEGACY OF HOME-BUILT TRACTOR CRANE MANUFACTURING?

Whilst working for United Transport in the mid-eighties, it became obvious that the common mobile workhorse - the BHB/JEC tractor crane, which was an excellent crane for site work, was fast becoming an issue for the modern road usage.

After having discussions with my friend Brian Hain in Queensland, I flew

over to look at the prototype high-speed Articulated Crane that was being built by Dave Francis in Brisbane. Immediately, it became obvious that this was going to be the future workhorse for Western Australia but would also suit other Australian states and overseas.

Brian partnered with another local identity Lou Parolin who then bought out Dave Francis and set about producing the 10-tonne “FRANNA” articulated crane. United Transport took on the agency for Franna in WA and the first two machines were delivered in 1986, and as they say “The Rest is History.”

Brian phoned me in 1992 to tell me that Franna had taken on the agency for Kobelco, and that he had found a small compact road crane with full slew and 21 metres of full hydraulic boom which was only 7-tonne capacity. Brian and I then flew to Japan and tested out the new Kobelco RK70.

United Transport purchased this crane and it arrived in Perth in March 1993 and was nick-named “Tom Thumb” by the then Crane Supervisor, Ivo Joy due to its size. This was the only crane of its type in Australia until October 1996 when the Japanese Government permitted the second-hand ones to be exported. Today, this type of crane has proven very popular and are made by different manufacturers up to 22-tonnes.

Special mention goes out to Main Roads Department, Western Australia (MRDWA) for their foresight back in 1998, they were very collaborative with industry and approved 12-tonnes per axle for All Terrain Cranes up to 9 axles. Then again in 2002, when they allowed four axle truck cranes to run at 43-tonne Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM). Even today, WA leads the way with its axle weights, travel hours and consultation with regulatory bodies is ongoing.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEW COMERS TO THE INDUSTRY?

The most important advice that I can offer is for new entrants to join and participate in your local association for the benefit of your business and the whole industry. Without active members, the local industry would not be enjoying the benefits they do today. I would also encourage new entrants to make the effort to engage with myself and other long-term industry volunteers, so that new people with new ideas can gain from the industry experience we have attained and ensure this great industry can continue to strengthen and grow in this awesome country we live in.

Allan is not only proud of being married to the Crane Industry for 54 years, but is very proud to be married to his long-suffering wife Barbara for 51 years. ●

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