



MANAGING THE BIG ONES

In the latest CICA Life Member profile, *Cranes and Lifting* interviews Jeff Brundell who offered a different historical insight into the crane industry as his career has seen him manage a number of large OEM companies.

CAL: HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE CRANE INDUSTRY AND WHEN?

JB: I first became involved in the crane industry in 1984 when I started as the Product Manager for Harnischfeger looking after the P&H and Kobelco range of cranes. These products were distributed in Australia by the Cranex Division of Blackwood Hodge.

CAL: HOW WAS THE INDUSTRY BACK THEN AND HOW DID IT CHANGE DURING YOUR CAREER?

JB: My first assignment was the “quitting” of 83 units of stock into a market that had only seen 13 units placed annually. Included in the stock was a 300t crawler which, was then, one of the larger crawlers available worldwide.

It was at this time that Harnischfeger ceased to manufacture the T600 hydraulic truck crane and lattice boom truck cranes locally.

This made for a very interesting start to my working life. I didn’t know then, but I was to be continually involved in cranes for the rest of my career.

CAL: HOW DID THE CRANE INDUSTRY VIEW ITSELF BACK THEN? WAS IT WELL ORGANISED AND PROFESSIONAL?

JB: The crane industry has always been organised and professional, but in the early days, the industry was manipulated by “quasi local manufacturers”. These companies avoided the large import duties on particular cranes, by “manufacturing or assembling” locally at the time.

There was not much of a future for the local manufacturers who could only hope to stave off the cheaper, better specified Japanese cranes for a while. It was only a matter of time before the import duties were not a big deterrent, and it would be impossible to prevent the ultimate takeover by the three major Japanese manufacturers in the hydraulic truck crane “taxi” market.

CAL: WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU HAVE MADE TO THE EARLY INDUSTRY?

JB: The most obvious change would have been to stop the inefficient, local manufacture of cranes and also to ban the import of second hand cranes.

Local production of cranes was

justified only because import duties of around 30% existed but once the duties were reduced, local manufacture essentially ceased.

Just over 10 years ago, the used crane issue was a major problem for the industry. In fact, CICA prepared a submission entitled ‘The impact on Australia from used mobile crane imports’ which examined the impact on the market of imported cranes.

CICA recognised that a maximum age limit imposed on used crane imports was unlikely in the short term. CICA recommended that imported used cranes must meet, or exceed, the expectations as mandated by AS2550.1.

CICA also recommended that for used crane imports up to the age of 10 years from date of manufacture, the crane must comply in all respects to what is stipulated in AS2550.1 Section 7.3.5, and have an assessment carried out by a third party inspector or Australian Engineer (if over 10 years) to ensure that any identified issues be rectified before any individual state plant registration be issued.

The CraneSafe program has made

a huge difference as it regulates the assessment and remedying of issues before a new Green Sticker is issued.

CAL: WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAJOR CHANGES FOR CRANE SUPPLIERS IN TERMS OF TECHNOLOGY?

JB: I guess I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time. Having said that; I had worked with many of the overseas manufacturers and had been responsible for the importation of cranes from worldwide suppliers, so, I was probably the ideal choice when global acquisitions included Australian distribution outlets.

There is no question that the advancements in steel production, electronics and overall quality improvements have been at the forefront of the development of the new cranes we see available today.

CAL: HOW HAS THE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPED BETWEEN CRANE SUPPLIERS AND CRANE HIRE BUSINESSES?

JB: There really hasn't been a lot of change in respect to new cranes, it is still a 'people business' and relationships remain important to the crane sector. There certainly was a period where the boundaries were blurred, and crane hirers became importers of used hydraulic truck cranes. This was only for a relatively short period and occurred when the manufacturing of hydraulic truck cranes in Australia ceased. There was no viable alternative except to import low hour, used cranes from the Japanese market.



Jeff is a keen angler in his spare time.

CAL: HOW MUCH MORE EDUCATED IS THE INDUSTRY IN TERMS OF PRODUCT AND TECHNOLOGY AWARENESS?

JB: In my experience, crane users have always been very aware of new technology and have always been prepared to embrace it. I would have to say the crane sector is more aware of new developments than any other industry I have been exposed to.

CAL: YOU WERE VERY ACTIVE IN THE AUSTRALIAN CRANE MARKETERS ASSOCIATION (ACMA). WHAT WAS ITS ROLE AND HOW DID IT IMPACT ON THE INDUSTRY?

JB: ACMA was relevant in the early days as it was lobbying for tariff protection, but it became increasingly irrelevant when the local production of cranes in Australia ceased. In the early eighties, we decided our efforts would be better suited by working in conjunction with CICA.

CAL: HOW WAS THE INDUSTRY IMPACTED BY THE "MERGER" OF ACMA AND CICA?

JB: From the outside, there was probably very little impact on the crane sector, behind the scenes, however, we had access to members with crane marketing backgrounds who were better suited to lobbying and we also had experience regarding Australian Standards and road regulations, having spent many years adapting cranes to suit local requirements.

CAL: HOW WAS YOUR TIME AS THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF CICA AND WHAT CHANGES TO CHANGES DID YOUR TENURES EFFECT?

JB: Being the first 'crane marketer' to be elected as a CICA President, I was faced with a few issues, but these were quickly resolved. Guys like Bobby Parker, John Gillespie, Allan MacPherson and Kevin Wheeler, among others, made sure we stuck to addressing the key issues and challenges faced by the association and its membership.

I think CICA benefited from the involvement of "crane marketers" because we provided experience and dedication

in areas relating to compliance and regulatory issues.

CAL: HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED IN THE INDUSTRY TODAY?

JB: I have no involvement in the day to day issues relating to the industry, but I stay close to current trends and issues.

CAL: 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?

JB: That is quite easy to answer, when the Japanese ceased manufacturing hydraulic truck cranes in Australia, it left a huge void in the local market. There was no viable alternative except to import low hour, used cranes from the Japanese market.

It was open slather for a number of years with many people importing hydraulic truck cranes. These were Japanese cranes that conformed to JIS standards, but not Australian Standards. In my opinion, many were unsafe and I doubt whether the industry was fully aware of the risks these incorrectly modified cranes posed, every time they were operated.

From this chaos the CraneSafe Program was born. I was the architect of the CraneSafe program and it quickly became (and still is) the envy of crane users worldwide. CraneSafe ensured that standards were set, and users of the inspection service were assured that a crane needed to comply. If it didn't, the crane owner would not receive a "Green Sticker" confirming the crane was not fit for continued use.

CAL: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEBODY COMING INTO TODAY'S INDUSTRY?

JB: It is a fantastic Industry to be associated with regardless of whether you are a "flogger, or a user". My advice would be to give back to the industry the same level of support it has given to you. All of the CICA Life Members have adopted this same philosophy and I am proud to be associated with each and every one of them. ●