

As Cranes, Inc. celebrates 75 years of doing business in New York City, **Rob Weiss** discusses how his company has found success in such a complicated environment.

**D. Ann Shiffler** reports.

**Cranes, Inc.'s Rob Weiss, chairman of the 2015 SC&RA Crane & Rigging Workshop, stands in front of a new Liebherr LTM 1300-6.2, which he said he is partial to due to its technological advances, including infinite outrigger positions and a revolutionary single-engine design.**

# Staying involved

It's a big deal when any company celebrates a milestone anniversary but a 75-year anniversary is something really special, especially a company that is based in New York City.

Cranes, Inc. was started as an offshoot of New York steel erector A.J. McNulty & Co., Inc., a firm founded back in 1925 and managed for some 40 years by Paul Weiss, father of current chairman Larry Weiss and grandfather of President Rob Weiss, with whom we caught up with for this month's Interview article.

As the steel erection business expanded,

even through the lean Depression years, Paul Weiss looked at how to control the ever growing crane rental expenditures. So, in 1940, Cranes, Inc. officially opened its doors with a small fleet of Link-Belt truck cranes.

"From those humble beginnings, we have expanded into one of the New York region's largest and most diversified crane rental houses, all while remaining a family business," said Rob Weiss. "I have been lucky enough to work side-by-side with my father, Larry Weiss, for the last 23 years, and we have both enjoyed watching Paul's vision continue to evolve. Today, Cranes, Inc. offers a fleet of over 50 cranes, including the largest all-terrains and crawlers in the Northeast."

Some of Weiss' earliest memories as a child are of riding on cranes as they rolled down 5th Avenue during the annual Labor Day parade.

"What a thrill for an eight year old boy," he remembered.

Weiss started working for the company as a teenager, spending summers in the yard painting boom sections. His boss back then was Robert Serrone, who is still with the company and is now in charge of maintenance for the entire Cranes, Inc. fleet.

"That's what nice about Cranes, Inc. – we really are like a family, with many employees making the company their home for most of their careers," he said. "For example, both our sales manager, Manny Zaccone, and chief technician, Robert Cardillo, have been with us for over 20 years and our accounts receivables are still handled by the same person who did so for my grandfather more than 50 years ago."

## **WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY MARKETS OF CRANES, INC AND HOW DOES THE COMPANY DISTINGUISH ITSELF IN THE MARKETS IT SERVES?**

Cranes, Inc.'s primary focus is on the New York City construction and rigging markets. Listening to my comments during SC&RA committee meetings, people might think we are crazy to do





**The Cranes, Inc. sales staff includes (from left) Sales Manager Manny Zaccone, President Rob Weiss and Brad Gordon. Standing is Joe Sadden.**

business here, but I find it personally rewarding to navigate the turbulent work environment that is The Big Apple. As if dealing with some of the most powerful labor unions in the country wasn't challenging enough, we also have to contend with the most stringent crane rules in the land and a local press that likes to dub even a minor forklift incident a major crane accident.

Working here is not for the faint of heart, but I enjoy the challenge; it certainly is not boring. And right now, we are blessed with a very vibrant construction market, so things are booming. We currently have cranes on all the major bridges being built in the New York area, including a brand new Liebherr LR 1300SX on the Tappan Zee Bridge, a project that will be featured during this year's SC&RA Crane & Rigging Workshop.

I think what distinguishes Cranes, Inc. is our commitment to service. I take great pride in the skills of our mechanics and strive to ensure that they are the best trained in the industry. Every year we send them to school at the major crane factories, and a number of our guys are certified mobile crane inspectors. In my mind, proper service and inspection are the keys to running a safe and successful operation.

**HOW DO YOU NAVIGATE THE CHALLENGES OF DOING BUSINESS IN THE NEW YORK CITY REGION?**

The key is getting involved. I have been very active with local trade associations over the years, serving as both a board member and an officer. This has allowed me to have a voice in the industry and has opened doors to serving on various

Building Department committees, including my current position on a select task force that is updating New York City's crane rules. I have found that such opportunities for face-to-face interaction with city officials have engendered a spirit of mutual respect; they may not always agree with my position, but they do listen, and that is very important. Working with other crane professionals for the betterment of our industry has been one of the most rewarding things I have done in my career.

**RIGHT NOW, WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CRANE IN THE CRANES, INC. FLEET AND WHY?**

Right now I am partial to our new Liebherr LTM 1300-6.2. It is chocked full of the latest German technological advances, including infinite outrigger positions and a revolutionary single-engine design. Rather than using pumps driven directly off the engine that send hydraulic oil up through a swivel to power the crane functions, this machine utilizes mechanical linkage to drive pumps located in the superstructure. I can't tell you how



much money we have spent over the years repairing or replacing leaky hydraulic swivels on single engine machines. This is now a thing of the past. But the best feature is how Liebherr's engineering staff used the weight saved by eliminating the upper engine to reinforce key load-bearing components, allowing far greater lengths and capacities than its popular predecessor, the LTM 1250-6.1. This is a real advantage in New York City, where reach is everything. I've been so impressed with this crane, which was first put into service last November, that I just took delivery of a second one.

**WHAT IS IT YOU LIKE ABOUT THE CRANE INDUSTRY? DISLIKES?**

Personally, I love the equipment. Growing up in the industry, iron is in my blood and I never cease to be fascinated by the amazing things cranes are able to do. When I was a child, my friends would joke that I could name cranes the way others could name baseball players. Now my kids make the same joke. And my vacation photos would not be complete without shots of every crane I happen to see.

Beyond the equipment, what I really enjoy most about the crane business are the people. I think that's why I so eagerly await every SC&RA meeting. Being a part of such a passionate group, all with similar interests and a drive to improve our industry, is invigorating.

The hardest part of the business, frankly, is dealing with the challenging web of regulations that govern the NYC market. Take transportation of mobile cranes, for example. While getting a travel permit for every move does not on its face seem to be that unusual or daunting, imagine that such a permit is valid for only one day and needs to be ordered 72 hours in advance. Now you are facing our reality. What happens if rain is forecast and the

**Cranes, Inc. Chairman Larry Weiss, Rob Weiss and Chief Technician Robert Cardillo stand in front of one of the company's many large crawler cranes.**



**Javier Moreno, Rob Weiss and Robert Serrone attended a factory training school at the Liebherr Ehingen facility in Germany.**

customer wants to push the rental a day? Sorry, that can't really be done since the permit is no longer valid. And by the way, all the counterweight loads need to be permitted, even if they are under 80,000 pounds, because New York City is the only place in the country where 8-foot-6-inch wide trailers are not considered legal.

**YOU ARE ACTIVE IN SC&RA COMMITTEES, ISSUES AND EVENTS. WHEN DID YOU FIRST GET INVOLVED WITH SC&RA? WHAT DOES SC&RA BRING TO THE TABLE FOR YOUR COMPANY?**

Back in 2003, when I was serving as a member of the C-DAC committee working to re-write federal crane regulations, I first met SC&RA Vice President Beth O'Quinn. I was immediately struck by her firm grasp of the issues and commitment to the industry, and I decided then and there that the SC&RA was an organization that I wanted to be a part of. It was one of the best decisions I have ever made. From a business standpoint, it has opened up whole new markets for Cranes, Inc. Meeting and networking with other industry leaders from around the country has led to us renting cranes to places as far flung as North Dakota and Oklahoma, something that would have been impossible without SC&RA connections.

Just as important, however, is what SC&RA does for its all its members. In my mind, it is the voice for the crane industry, working to ensure that our interests are properly represented on both a national and international level. It is truly an honor to be elected as chairman of the Crane & Rigging Group, and I look forward to an exciting year.

**AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CRANE & RIGGING WORKSHOP IN DENVER, WHAT WERE YOUR GOALS/ASPIRATIONS WITH THE PROGRAMS AND EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS, AS WELL AS THE NETWORKING?**

I am really proud of this year's presentations. It was my goal to put together a workshop where the attendees could leave saying, "I learned

something here." That's not always easy to accomplish, but I believe that the high caliber of the speakers and their topics will allow everyone to leave with a bit more knowledge under their belt. This year's program will be especially focused on real world issues facing our industry and include some good practical hands-on sessions.

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING?**

I enjoy traveling with my wife, Nikki, my two sons, Ethan and Devin, and my daughter, Anna. Ethan, who is my oldest, will be heading off to the University of

Florida in a few short weeks, and this summer, as I scaled Mt. Norquay in the Canadian Rockies, I reflected back on all the amazing places we've seen together over the years and how lucky I have been to share the world with my family. I am also an avid skier and am proud to say that three generations of Weisses continue to pound out those moguls every year.

As anyone who knows me can attest, however, my real passion outside of work is baseball, which both my boys play, and particularly the New York Yankees. I am a true fan, with shelves full of autographs to prove it, and I live and die with the Yanks from April through (hopefully) October. ■



# TRAIL KING



## SPECIALIZED TRANSPORT



VISIT WITH US AT THE  
**2015 SC&RA CRANE & RIGGING WORKSHOP**  
September 23 – 25, 2015 | Sheraton Denver Downtown | Denver, CO

**WE BUILD IT SO YOU CAN HAUL IT**

Need a unique hauling solution? Contact your nearest TRAIL KING dealer or call 800.762.5557 to learn more.