

Straddle Carriers

By Ulrich Cramer



This really is a remarkable picture - taken in 1967. It shows one of the first containers arriving at Antwerp. In my reports elsewhere on this website, I have already mentioned that Moore McCormack Lines used the Flexi Van system for its South and North Atlantic service. The picture illustrates the components of the Flexi Van system:

- 20ft aluminum container with folded landing gear, foldable king pin and bogie rails
- 2 axle bogie
- tractor with elevating 5th wheel

The container is transferred from ship to shore by a conventional shipboard boom crane. At this time, a spreader was not used. The container lands on the 5th wheel of the tractor and the bogie. In this case, to position the bogie, a fork lift truck is used - a very time-consuming operation.

The tractor shown is MAFI's first prototype of a "Yard Hustler" commonly used in the USA to handle the Flexi Van system. Since MAFI needed a tractor with elevating 5th wheel for their Rolltrailer with detachable goose neck, I had the idea of buying a mobile crane chassis from Krupp in Wilhelmshaven/Germany and fitting an elevating 5th wheel. This machine is the first MAFI TRUC, a terminal tractor you still can find worldwide.



To cope with the fast-growing containerisation, the Antwerp stevedores PAYS Havenbedrijf bought MAFI's prototype of the Porta Lift as well.

At this time Straddle and Van Carriers were not used in Europe because many people were sceptical about the development of "containerisation" and wanted to avoid large-scale investment. I was the inventor and had a design right on these machines. This Van Carrier is handling a 40' goose neck type container.

. 40' container, with 20 tons of export cargo,
. moved alongside a modern containership,

