

# Soaring Skyward with Heavy Lifts

*David Frazier*

My first job was “Hi-lift Operator” at Inland Steel in East Chicago, Indiana. I loaded stock and moved material too heavy for a worker to lift by hand. My occupation kept me on ground level, but my aspirations were high above where mill pigeons flew, next to the men who worked the giant cranes.

I often stood mesmerized watching those monstrosities inch along steel rails. The hot rail shoes created fiery sparks that floated softly downward like dancing fireflies. This was the job I wanted. This job was where I heard the mechanical music of cables straining and steel wheels squeaking as the giant crane easily lifted 200-ton iron ladles filled with molten metal skyward. It brought back memories of when I was a kid watching airplanes flying high in the clouds as the sun glistened off their silvery wings. I wanted to fly, and that crane would become my aircraft. I imagined myself sitting in the crane cab moving objects bigger than life. This was my ambition. This was my dream.

And then one day, it came to pass. I bid on that job, and I won. My dreams of man over machine – of controlling, moving, and manipulating heavy equipment – came true. I was a crane operator. My dream of flying high in the skies of Inland Steel became a reality. My dream of lifting ladles and moving them from place to place like toys in a sandbox came true. Simply moving a lever in the cockpit of the gargantuan crane lifted tons of molten iron and made me feel like a kid again. This was the best job I ever had. It’s almost as good as the one I now have: retired. I still dream of flying everyday.

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