

Dear Gib:

Pursuant to your request that I write a "history" of the Crandall-Ricks Co. I have been "cogitating", as to just how to go about such a task. I have come to the conclusion that it would be easier to write "The Crandall-Ricks Story," and from this "story" you could edit - or rewrite - a Crandall-Ricks history; so here goes.

Actually, I believe that the blame for our business can be put on World War I! Back in 1914, I had graduated from college and the time had come for me to "seek my fortune." As I recall, 1914 was a sort of depression year, and jobs were hard to come by. Having a brother who was doing very well with the American Tobacco Co., and through his "good offices," I was offered a chance to learn the leaf-tobacco business, and eventually found myself in a little tobacco town in North Carolina, called Louisburg, with exactly 25¢ in my pocket, which by the way, was the sum total of my worldly wealth.

Fortunately for me, one paid one's board & room at the end of the month, not in advance, so I could eat and sleep, work, and roll my own out of Bull Durham.

I was to receive the magnificent sum of \$50.00 per month for my services. However, good board and room could be had in a first class boarding house for \$25.00 per month, so I got along fairly well, paying as I went, but being careful not to go too much.

Suffice to say, I spent better than two years in leaf tobacco when we got into the big war, and I enlisted at Wilmington, N. C. in April of 1917, as I recall.

By good fortune, I was sent to the First Officers Training Camp at Chattanooga, Tenn. and came out a "shave tail" in the Field Artillery. However, the "latrine gossip" had it that, if you wanted to get to France in a hurry, the thing to do was to put in for the Motor Transport Corps, get sent to Detroit, and embark for Norfolk with a fleet of trucks, and set sail for France.

Well, it didn't work out that way! Instead, I was sent to Camp Jackson, S. C. to attend a Motor Transport School, so there I went. Camp Jackson was just building. There was no sign of a Motor Transport School, and so - after getting my fill of sitting around under the pine trees, shooting crap, or playing cards, I decided to look around a bit. At the camp Q.M. office, I met a chap from Providence, R. I. who was acting as the camp purchasing agent, and so I suggested that he might help me out to find something to do, so in due course, I was assigned to his office. While working for him, I had a chance to ride a motorcycle for the first time in my life, and thereby hangs this tail!

With the armistice in November 1918, I wanted "out," and in May 1919, I was on my own. To shorten up a long story, I found a job in Springfield, Mass. with the Indian Motorcycle Co., in the domestic sales dept. In less than a year, I was sent to Chicago to take charge of their Chicago branch, where I remained for two years to be called back to Springfield as Ass't Export Manager. While with Indian, I had several different jobs, the most interesting one being that of organizing the Indian Acceptance Co., founded to finance time sales of motorcycles, since in those days no bank would touch motorcycle paper.

In 1924, I think it was, the Big Boss wished the job on me of finding a new Indian dealer for Springfield, Mass., Indian's home town. This wasn't easy. Meeting with no success, I propositioned Glen Crandall who was then in Springfield and working for Indian. Finally Glen and I decided to take a long chance and take over the dealership, each of us putting up \$500.00 and with the help and cooperation of Indian we "put the show on the road," as the Crandall Cycle Co., an equal partnership of Crandall & Hicks. Incidentally, we signed notes to Indian until we both had "writer's cramp" but always found a way to pay these notes, as they came due, which was something of a record.

In the course of events, we added to the motorcycle line the Johnson motor, a few boat lines, chief of which were Old Town and Chris-Craft.

The control of Indian changed hands and a crowd of bankers from Atlanta took over. Being chiefly interested in manipulating Indian Motorcycle stock, the product suffered badly, and many of the old time employees were let out or resigned in disgust. Finally in 1928, I resigned and cast my lot with the Crandall Cycle Co. Soon it became apparent that the business needed other lines to be successful.

About this time the American Austin car was introduced. Being one of those persons who believed that the Austin was not too small; but that the conventional car was too large; we took on the Austin without consulting Indian and, as a result, we received in the mail a registered letter from Indian notifying us that we were cancelled out as dealers. It might be of interest to note at this point that our store was directly across the street from the Indian factory, and so the letter of cancellation was like a "bolt out of the blue," since nothing had been said to us in the way of disapproval or protest.

Well, we went along - doing business as usual. However, in the early part of 1930, I was approached by the Indian Motorcycle Co. with a proposal that I go to Boston and take over the then Indian dealer in Boston who was not doing too well and was deeply indebted to Indian. I well recall my answer - "in the first place, I haven't the money and, if I did have, I'd be too smart to put it into the motorcycle business." However, Indian insisted, and on three or four occasions, I went to Boston with one of their men to look things over and come to a decision. Failing to find anything available in Boston in the way of a suitable location, at the price I felt would be paid, my decision was always "no," until the last visit when I happened to call in on Eastern Service Marine who were the then N. E. Distributors for Johnson Motors and located at 780 Commonwealth Ave. While there, I learned in confidence that they were going out of all retail business, giving up the location, and moving into a "warehouse operation." Right then and there, I saw a picture that looked good. If I could take over their retail operation, and bring the Indian into the picture, I might make a go of it.

After a good bit of "goings-on," Indian agreed to finance such an operation; Eastern Service agreed to turn over the retail end of their business to me and the landlords agreed to let me take over their lease.

Right here, it should be noted that we were well into the business depression of 1929, and business in general was in "the doldrums." For this reason, it was easy enough to "take over" with no money since it was such a scarce article. Suffice to say, I left for Boston in the late summer of 1930 to

start all over again.

Right at this point, it is interesting to note that the products to be handled were:

1. Indian Motorcycles
2. Johnson Outboard Motors

By good fortune, I was able to take over all of the employees I could use from both Eastern Service Marine and from the former Indian dealer, since jobs were hard to come by in these depression days.

My partner, Crandall- was left in Springfield to operate the Crandall Cycle Co. while I was to head up the Crandall-Hicks Co.

It was decided to call the new company the Crandall-Hicks Co., Inc. since the Crandall Cycle Co., by this time, was well and favorably known in New England and it was felt that the good will that had been built up might "rub off" onto the new Boston venture. While I continued to own 50% of the Crandall Cycle, in the new venture, I owned all of the stock, although it was - at the time - quite worthless. At a later date, and prior to Glen Crandall's death, I sold out my share in the Crandall Cycle Co. to him, and we each went along on our own, and very cordial relations were maintained.

Well, things went along fairly well in Boston, although Roosevelt's Bank Holiday hurt us badly since all of our funds were tied up in the bank closings; but we managed to go along, "paying the troops" out of COD returns, as this was all we had coming in, along with cash sales - few and far between in those trying times.

As I recall, we added Cushman Scooters to our line, then known as "Autogides." In the early thirties, the old American Austin was revived as the American Bantam, and this time, with Indian's permission, we took on the small car once again. However, the Bantam had its "ups and downs," although we were able to sell all we could get. Finally American Bantam folded up, so we went to the Willys-Overland who had started to build a small car.

Along about 1934, we began to import the English Austin, with which product we have stayed. Our premises at 780 Commonwealth Avenue now outgrown, we took on the adjoining store at 782, knocked out the walls, and made one big store out of both, at a substantial rent increase.

Now, with plenty of room, we took on "The Covered Wagon," a house trailer, becoming the pioneer in the trailer business on Commonwealth Ave. In 1937, we needed larger quarters and moved to 959 Commonwealth Ave. where we remained until around 1947 when we moved again into the building at 910 Commonwealth Ave., and now known as "910."

Along about 1955, and due largely to the steadily increasing rent costs on Commonwealth Ave., I decided to move out and away from traffic and parking problems, onto a main artery where we could conduct our business in a more efficient and orderly panner and well out of the high tax - high rent area. A piece of property was found and purchased on U. S. 1 in the town of Lynnfield. The land was cleared and on it was erected a Quonset hut - 40' wide

and 120' long. In this, I planned to conduct our parts and service - and when finances permitted - planned to erect a building on the front of the property for sales and offices. Before making this move, I had cleared with Austin of England and with Johnson, both of whom approved the move.

However, our well laid plans were doomed to destruction, for in February, as I recall it, during a howling gale and snowstorm the hut caved in from the snow load and was a complete loss. Our insurance coverage was of no value due to a clause in "the fine print" but our luck had not left us completely. The Quonset hut people moved in within a day or so, removed the wreckage, and created a new hut, at no expense to us, except the cost of making certain changes in the foundation to correct errors made by us. It developed that we had been sold a Quonset hut improperly designed for New England weather conditions.

I have always felt that what at first appeared to be ill-fortune and bad luck was in fact, extremely good fortune for the following reasons:

1. We were ahead of our times in moving so far out of Boston.
2. Due to the collapse of the Quonset, we were forced to buy, as nothing was available to suit our needs that we could afford to pay in rent. The purchase of "910" proved out to have been a good investment.
3. Several years later, two different outfits had the same idea that we had in opening up similar businesses in this location on U. S. 1 and went broke!
4. The building of "128" around Boston, several years later, took away the advantages of our site on U. S. 1 in South Lynnfield. Until we could sell out this property, we used it for storage purposes only.

By and large, we were very lucky to break out as well as we did, as I see the picture in retrospect.

The move to "910" was a fortunate one, everything considered. We were most fortunate in leasing a part of the building to the state of Massachusetts. While at "910," the business grew and developed in a healthy manner - slow but steady. Here we became the New England distributors for Austin of England and later on for The British Motor Corporation. After having been at 910 for approximately nine years, the building and location were no longer suitable, so we decided - once again - that we must move, and move we did.

Our present location on Route 9 - close to 128 was located and purchased in late 1956. In November of 1956, I underwent major surgery, and since that time have slowly bowed out of the Crandall-Hicks Co. picture, leaving the management largely to Gib Davenport under whose capable guidance the business has continued to thrive and prosper.

In 1957, my son, Charles Hicks, joined in the business and has shared in the rebuilding of the place at 230 Worcester Street from a shambles to a modern and efficient plant. Due to my general health since my sickness of 1956, and to my age, I have been quite happy and content to entrust the Crandall-Hicks Co. to Gib Davenport and Charlie Hicks under whose guidance and management we have continued to prosper and grow strong, keeping in tune with the times.

From 1957 to date, the Crandall-Hicks story can better be told by Gib Davenport and Charlie, so I leave the rest of the story to them.