

Rigging legend Rinus tells his story



Polyte Rigging Training at DWR in Feb 2015

Rinus Bakker, Consultant and Trainer of Rhino Rigs and one of the European pioneers of entertainment rigging (since the early 80s) visits DWR Distribution regularly in February to present the Polyte Rigging Course to the South African market. He chatted about the series of events, which led him to this career path.

Somewhat to his father's disapproval, who would have preferred his son to follow a technical education, Rinus wanted to study Biology and become a School Teacher.



Relaxing in Africa. Rinus Bakker with Paul-Erik Haseloo from Polyte, Marcel Wijnberger (Gearhouse South Africa) and Otto Winberger (Gearhouse In2 Structures).

Getting started

"I had a friend who worked as a roadie and lived in the same street as I did," said Rinus. "He knew I was good at building things as I had learnt metal and wood working skills from my father (a railway carriage maintenance supervisor), and he asked me to manufacture flight cases for the guitar Amp/cabinets."

It was in 1970 that Rinus started as an all round volunteer tech in a rock venue, and after doing that for two years it did not take much convincing for him to join his friend on the road with *John the Revelator*, a regional

blues band who had good relationships with the early *Fleetwood Mac* in the UK.

The following ten years, Rinus toured the Low Countries and NW of Germany with a series of Dutch bands where he did various things like sound, lighting and backline to driving the truck! This is also where he was given the nickname Rhino.

“One of the lighting guys also worked on corporate shows for Courage Lighting in Haarlem, that had the usual Vermette and Genie wind-ups, and occasionally we used chain blocks to support the trusses,” said Rinus. “Theatre Projects took over that company in 1983/4. The then TP-manager brought some CM chain hoists with him when he came to Holland, and it soon proved that he in fact knew less about rigging than I did. So it quickly became the small department that I, as a freelancer, was very happy to take care of.”

Then from 1983 onward, at the age of 31, the activity swiftly shifted to just rigging and Rhino Rigs became the company name, initially as a service company only.



Rinus Bakker with South African delegates

Flashlight on-and-off

In 1985 Rinus started to work for Flashlight Productions that had taken over the Theatre Projects rigging department, and in just a few years the business started to grow like mushrooms. In that same period Rhino Rigs was also pioneering in-house rigging in the major venues in Holland and Belgium.

After a management dispute in 1987 Rinus left Flashlight. He bought his own chain hoists and Rhino Rigs started as a rental and sales company. “I started out with having only grey flight cases to make us stand out as a separate independent company,” he recalls. “From then my father supported me full out, and helped me with just about everything he could. He was a highly skilled metal worker having climbed to maintenance chief, supervising a 100 man department. When I needed a structural engineer, he had the contacts and got me them – often for free. In fact my then Father in Law was a structural engineer that had become a teacher.”

After some major changes within the Flashlight management, the return route was paved and in 1993 Rhino Rigs and Flashlight Rigging merged, eventually leading to what now is the Rigging BOX.

However in 1997 the CEO of Flashlight had a heart attack and the vision of the new management chiefs was so out of touch with his, that Rinus decided to resign from the rental business altogether.



Practical training

The Prolyte period

Just two days after his resignation, Rinus received a phone call from Mark Hendriks of Prolyte and was asked to join the company. Mark had followed one of the rigging trainings in 1994.

“I knew the guys at Prolyte well,” said Rinus, and while he initially signed a contract to work two days per week, within six months that had changed to a full time position. Sales were going well, with Prolyte selling top class trussing. Rinus was responsible for the quality of engineering and user support, and became the head of the technical department. “I enjoyed contributing my knowledge and experience, both as a user and a consultant,” he said.

Working at Prolyte meant being in an office space for four years, and eventually the time had come to be ‘back in the open’. Rinus left the manufacturing company in early 2001, and since then has been active as rigging - consultant, -supervisor, – trainer and –inspector, in about every niche / branch of entertainment rigging. “I still know a lot of people at Prolyte and the good relationship has continued, so they still hire me to do the rigging trainings for them, as I have organized my own in Holland and Belgium since late 1992. “

Rinus was one of the founders of ARGH in 1999, the oldest association for rigging professionals in the world. He presents lectures on the rigging safety aspects in the entertainment industry, as well as being active in various national and international committees that write codes of practice or standards for entertainment rigging and trussing. Recently he joined the ICoPER project, where professionals from the North American, European and Australian regions join hands in setting up an International Code of Practice for Entertainment Rigging. He uses his Facebook page exclusively to advocate his crusade for better and safer rigging work.

When there is time to let his hair down, Rinus loves watching Formula One and is interested in the history of nations, how all kinds of cultures have evolved, and how the earth and human kind have changed -or not- over time.

Both Rinus’ parents are alive, his dad is 91 years old, his mother 89, and they have been married 65 years.