

Containers Arrive in Antwerp

By Ulrich Cramer, Contec



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.