

## Personal Profile – Bob Smith, Works Manager



Well it is hard to believe, but last month saw me mark my 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service with 'The Firm'. To coincide with the celebrations that have taken place with my colleagues, I was asked if I would like to write a little bit about my business and personal accomplishments, however, as Chairman of my local rugby team Coventry Saracens, (and a former player and coach for them) it is probably better that I don't recall all of it!

Having left school in 1968 I have only ever been involved with timber conversion businesses, so not only do I complete 10 happy years at N.E.J.S, it also sees me complete my '40 year apprenticeship' with the UK wood working industry, which I guess must make me a bit of a specialist?

I started my working life with what was then H. Burbidge & Son Ltd in 1969 as a trainee wood machinist, and took day release from my job to complete work related City & Guilds. You may be familiar with the company name, as many of their products (architectural mouldings, stair banisters and doors) are to this day still currently sold through several of the UK's DIY stores. Later I was to become a machinist within their newly developed kitchen and bedroom company. I also worked in the tool room where I learnt to make and shape cutting tools, always trying to make the machining process more efficient, not always succeeding though.

In 1976 I married Jean my wife of 33 years, the same year that saw Montreal host the Olympic Games of Nadia Comaneci fame. Little did I know then how Canada would become such an important part of our both our lives. In the same year I joined Jaguar Cars working in the sawmill making the dashboards for several of their models. Unfortunately under Ford's ownership they weren't the best cars produced during this period, so perhaps it was a shame that the upholsterers covered my work over? This year also witnessed the start of my long association with Coventry Saracens, so I guess as years go this was quite a special one.

Prior to joining N.E.J. Stevenson in 1999 I worked for a couple of shop fitting companies through the 90's, one even worked on Euro Disney albeit I never got further than the Birmingham NEC at that time.

However, privately my time spent travelling was about to change. I mentioned earlier that Canada would become a particularly special place for both my wife and I, and this was to be the case once Jean's sister headed out there. In fact, we've not missed a year since 1994, visiting the country at various times of the year. Needless to say, after all this time we've got to know some parts particularly well and with the flights being as long as they are I can catch up on my other passion, reading. So if you haven't made it there yet, do take the time to go, I fully recommend it.

Here's to the next 10 years!