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Moving on after a great career

By Lawrie Chivers

I was born the day after World War II started, so I saw buildings disappear overnight through the bombing, the blackout, and very strict rationing of food.

From the age of 12 till I started work proper, my dad used to take me to work with him at his brother's greengrocer's shop at Warren Street from 7am to 7pm to earn some pocket money. At 17 I secured a five-year indentured apprenticeship with British Thompson Houston - a large electrical engineering company which manufactured power stations. Up at 6am, cycling from Finchley to Willesden to be at work by 8am. Finish at 6pm and then cycle to Harrow Technical College for engineering education, then cycle back to Finchley, arriving home about 10.30pm and so to bed. Saturdays were spent working at Burton's outfitters to supplement my low wages as an apprentice. Eventually I became deputy production superintendent of the factory which employed over 2,500 people and I was responsible for one half of the factory's production.

Career move

Thirty-six years ago

my brother Roger and I decided to leave our jobs and set up a car accessory shop. I sold my 1952 TR2 sports car for £200, and shared Roger's Sunbeam Rapier. We borrowed £1000 from an uncle to buy the lease on 113 High Road. We were made to sign an agreement to pay him back within 12 months, or forfeit the lease. The £200 and a lot of chat to secure credit from suppliers financed our starting stock. The first week's takings were £2.12. To fill the shop up we paid customers for their old oil cans and put them behind the real stock, so 75% of our stock items were dummies. The residents of East Finchley were very supportive and with much hard work and ploughing the takings back, the business flourished. We made a good living and raised our families on the proceeds.

Over the last 10 years, changes to car design and manufacture, competition from supermarkets and obsessive regulation has made it increasingly dif-



(Right - left) Lawrie & Roger Chivers with Ed McHenry. Picture by John Dearing

ficult to trade. In 2004 I have celebrated my 65th birthday, and have since taken the difficult decision to retire.

Roger and I would like to thank all of our customers for their support and goodwill over the years. By and large it has been good fun and we have met some really nice people.

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