

In conversation with Ernie Blom



Q: How long have you been involved in the diamond industry and where and how did your involvement begin?

A: I started my career in the diamond industry over 40 years ago as an apprentice diamond polisher. I became interested in industry matters at the age of 24 when I became a “shop steward” for the Trade Union and became the youngest vice-president of the Union at 25 years of age. I started my own business in 1978 and became involved in various industry organisations.

Q: What is your company called and what do you enjoy best in your daily work environment?

A: I have two companies: Ernest Blom Diamonds, a licensed rough diamond trading company, and Ernest Blom Diamond Cutting Works, a manufacturing facility. I love the challenge of buying rough and seeing the resultant polished. I also enjoy interacting with customers and colleagues and sharing ideas, opinions and news with them.

Q: Are you married and do you have children, if so what do they do?

A: I am married to Elna and have two sons: Aron and Phillip. Aron practiced as an advocate and is now in the business with me while Phillip is an actuary at a large South African bank.

Q: What has been your greatest achievement so far?

A: My family and my businesses.

Q: In what way has the industry changed over the years?

A: The most dramatic change for me since I started my business in 1978 has been certificates and price lists. This has, for me, taken much of the joy out of the business. Modern technology has also played an important part and the most significant has been the ability to communicate globally using electronic formats. This has made our world a much smaller place.

Q: Are you optimistic about the future of the diamond industry and would you encourage young people to get involved?

A: I've always believed that the diamond industry is a good sector for the younger generation to become involved in and I am sad to see that this is not happening.

Q: What advice would you give a young person thinking about entering the diamond industry?

A: Learn the business thoroughly before venturing in too deep. Our business is complex with a number of challenges; however, it is a wonderful industry to be a part of.

Q: If you had the choice, would you consider any other profession?

A: No. Although, when I was younger I did contemplate medicine or becoming a game ranger.

Q: Do you hold any position in any other club or association other than the WFDB?

A: Yes, I am chairman of the Diamond Dealers Club of South Africa and vice-president of the World Diamond Council.

Q: Who is your role model and who in the world would you most like to meet?

A: The pioneers of the diamond industry as well as Warren Buffet.

Q: Is there anything you can tell us about yourself that your colleagues might not know about you?

A: I am a very gregarious person and I like nothing better than to have dinner or socialise with friends. I also enjoy travelling and going to the bush.

Q: Do you have time for a hobby and if so what do you do?

A: I enjoy going to the gym as well as the bush. I also like to scuba dive.