

Holly Raible Blades interviews

Fred Phillips

Principal director, Atelier do Sul

BORN: Sussex, England

BASED NOW: Boliqueime, Algarve

EDUCATION: Studied art at Mayfield College (in Sussex)

FAMILY: Recently widowed after 35 years of marriage. Three grown sons: Ivan, André and Freddie.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO PORTUGAL?

I have lived and worked in the Algarve since 1973. I met my wife-to-be when I was here on holiday and after that looked for a job so that I could come back and stay. I worked for 6 months in a small private hotel in Faro, then moved on to a publishing company, where I developed my capabilities for graphic design and learned artwork paste-up skills and all there was to know about printing. In 1977, we founded a monthly newspaper aimed at foreign residents called Algarve News. It still exists, but is now called Portugal News.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO DESIGN?

In my younger days I wanted to be a fighter pilot, but after an RAF (Royal Air Force) interview and learning that my chances of becoming a pilot were very slim, I decided that I wanted to be a designer in an advertising agency. Though like most boys I thought flying a fighter jet seemed like loads of fun, art was my strongest subject at college, and I like the satisfaction of seeing a design realized and in the field, doing its job for the client.

HOW DID YOU START ATELIER DO SUL?

I formed a partnership with a fast-expanding

architectural practice that was doing planning and architecture for a lot of development projects, mainly in the Algarve. The architects were in contact with clients at the very beginning of a project that in turn allowed my business to step in and offer identity, brochure and advertising design, billboards, sign projects for the developments themselves and basically all that was required to market and sell the properties, normally at an off-plan stage. I bought the architectural practice out of my company in 1992, one of the toughest years in business up until this year.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IN BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS?

Staying focused on our core business (design for communications) and adapting to the market needs. We've lived through the revolution of manual paste-up to desk-top publishing, and then the internet boom, that still goes on. We have to learn new skills and media all the time.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR PROUDEST MOMENT?

In business, being mentioned in André Jordan's speech at the inauguration of the first Four Seasons Country Club in Quinta do Lago, and again when he relaunched Lusotur/Vilamoura. Atelier do Sul designed the marketing and sales materials for both projects. In my personal life, I am proud of my family. Fatinha, my wife, died recently after an 8-year battle against cancer. She was the most fantastic wife and mother. Her legacy is our three fabulous sons: Ivan, who works for Loulé city council; André, a senior designer with the business; and Freddie, who is doing a design internship in New York as part of his studies at Hyper Island, Sweden.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR FREE TIME?

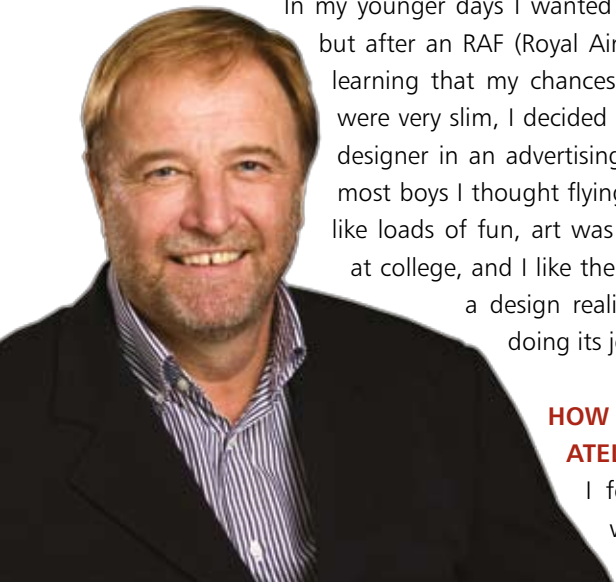
I don't have much, but I enjoy cooking for family and friends, and taking my dogs out for a fantastic, rejuvenating, head-clearing run on my hand pedal cycle.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?

In business: Never presume what the target market knows about you, your client or their product. Start by thinking they know ZERO. In soccer: Never leave until the final whistle is blown. In life: Work hard, play hard.

HB: WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

FP: Life is too short to drink bad wine!



QUICK FAVORITES:

Restaurant: Restaurant Veneza in Purgatório, Algarve

Weekend or vacation destination: Home, or Andalusia

Gadget: My new barbeque

Sport: Skiing

Music: My son's (Ivan sings part-time in a pop-rock band)

Wine: Red—Pinga do Torto, made by the Reynolds family in the Douro, and then Callabriga Douro, from Casa Ferreirinha (of Barca Velha fame)