



TWO OF US

STORY BY Rosamund Burton | PHOTOGRAPH BY Xxxxx Xxxxx

Bob Menzies, 75, founded the Australian watch brand Adina in 1971. Twenty-five years later his son, Grant Menzies, 46, joined the Brisbane-based business. They still argue – after hours.

**B**OB: I left school after year 10, aged 16, and a watchmaker offered me an apprenticeship. I started Adina 46 years ago, the same year Grant was born. It was just me putting watches together and selling them, and if there were any problems, servicing them. I worked until 11 o'clock every night, seven days a week.

Grant's very flamboyant. He has a hospitality background and worked for Sheraton for a while. When he was interviewed by a Sheraton executive he said, "I want your job." I said, "You don't say that," but that's how he is.

He worked overseas for four years, and when he came back in 1996 I said, "Grant, there's a good opening here for you." Up until then I only employed watchmakers, who also did the sales-repping for me. But I needed them assembling the watches. So Grant repped for us, and we expanded hugely, because he was very energetic. Today, we have 20 staff including 12 qualified watchmakers and two apprentices, and make about 40,000 watches a year.

Grant's very ambitious. He'd like to run the whole operation by himself, but he hasn't got the watchmaking skills. We used to go together

once a year to visit the factories in Asia, which make some of our components. On the plane he'd say, "When am I going to take over?" Our daughter is a physio, so she doesn't want to run the business. "And what happens, Dad," he'd continue, "when you fall off the perch?" I'd say, "I hope I'm not going to do that too soon."

Grant is a crazy bicycle rider. He had 10 weeks' long-service leave and took all his family riding in Europe. Then the following year, he had five weeks and took them cycling again, and the next year, another five weeks. A supplier said, "He's an SOO: Son Of Owner." People ask, "Where's Grant?" And I say, "He's on another of those holidays."

Grant is very passionate and extremely positive and enthusiastic. He gets great satisfaction, like I do, when we make a new watch. But if I don't agree with an idea of his, he'll get really dirty. We're both Taureans, both stubborn, and we lock horns, but he thinks like I do. He's a new generation thinking about the business.

When Grant suggested we sell watches online I disagreed, because I thought we would be in competition with our retailers. But I spoke to a

few guys whom I respect, and they said, "Bob, it's the way of the future, don't misunderstand what Grant's saying." So I said, "Go ahead."

I'm more conservative, probably because I'm older. I don't have a mobile phone. When I go away on a sales trip, if someone wants to ring me, they know what shop I'll be in.

About eight years ago Grant said, "You should be paying the staff by direct deposit." I said, "No, we've always paid them in cash." But then I said, "Okay, we'll do it." It's the old way and the new way. If you don't go the new way you get left behind, so Grant's making me go the new way.

**G**RANT: Dad always worked at home in the evening when I was young. He'd be sitting at his wooden watchmaker's bench when I said goodnight to him. I worked for him every school holidays; when I was 12 I started putting bands on the watches, and did that through high school.

I came home from living in London in 1996, and Dad said, "There's a repping job going. But don't mess me around. If you're in, you're in, if you're out, you're out." That's how he is, very cut and dried. By the end, I was travelling 36 weeks a year, and our business grew fourfold in that time. Nowadays, I'm the general manager. But he's the boss, and although I strongly influence the direction of the business, if he doesn't want something to happen, he'll stop it. When I suggested we make bespoke watches, it took him a while to warm to the idea.

My friends reckon I fly by the seat of my pants. Dad's much more calculated. He's quieter than me and not a natural salesman like I am. I find his ideas conservative at times. However, as a 28-year-old, he put everything on the line to start Adina.

Four years ago, when my wife Nichole was on maternity leave, having had our twins, Audrey and Clancy, I said, "Dad, can I have long-service leave?" He said, "Are you joking?" I said, "I'm not. I want to ride the bike 3000 kilometres from western France to Vienna with the family." He goes, "You're mad." But we did it with the 10-month-old twins, and Estella, 4, and Archie, 2.

Dad's got a gruff exterior, but the softest heart. However, he and I argue. We wait until after hours when everybody's gone home, then it's on for young and old. But the next day, we've moved on.

He always comes in at weekends. He can't help himself. I only work at weekends when I need to. I didn't have a lot of time with Dad as a boy, even though he never missed a football game, and we always went sailing. I want to spend more time with my family. Hence my annual family cycling trips are very important to me.

Dad played first-grade soccer. He then took up squash, and played A1. I did triathlons and raced road and mountain bikes. We both like to win, and both give it everything we've got at work every day.

As much as I try to call him Bob at work, I can't. He's my dad, and I call him Dad even in front of clients. And sometimes he looks at me as if I'm 12, like recently, when I came in covered in bruises after falling off my mountain bike.

We have our moments, but I remind myself that not every son gets to work with his dad on a daily basis. ■

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