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Classic Tool & Die Inc.

25th Anniversary and expansion



25 Years of Classic dedication

SUSAN LEWIS
Special to The Star

According to Ivo Oppio, the president and owner of Classic Tool & Die, "Happiness comes from the pride of not a job well done, but a job perfectly done." And he has stuck to that goal since first starting the business.

Ivo Oppio was born in the picturesque, valley town of Fonsazo, in the Northern Italian province of Belluno. Determined to excel, Ivo elected to learn a skilled trade – something that was very highly regarded.

"Becoming a journeyman at Ivo's young age was an exceptional accomplishment," says his wife Kathryn, partner in life for the past 29 years and company partner as well.

Making the decision to leave Italy for the more fertile employment opportunities that Canada seemed to offer, Ivo emigrated to Canada at age 19 to live with his aunt and family. He had nothing to offer but his abilities in his trade. "His was a familiar Italian immigrant past," says Kathryn, referring to the huge volume of Italian immigrants to who eventually settled upon Windsor as their home.

Ivo moved to Windsor in 1969, "On the first day after I arrived, my cousin took me to a tool & die shop to apply for work," he recalls. "They told me 'come back when you can speak English.'

"Maybe that's why today our shop is like the United Nations," he reflects ruefully. "More than half of the 40 employees we have, are new Canadians like me."

But fortune smiled upon him just one day later, when Ivo was introduced to a new sport – bowling, and in the process, met his future boss, Santo Piccinato, of Valiant Machine & Tool. Impressed with the young man, Piccinato hired him on the spot right there at the bowling alley.

"I was so fortunate to find work with such a reputable employer as Valiant, and I will always be grateful that they gave me the opportunity to improve myself and



The Oppio family and employees of Classic Tool & Die proudly celebrate 25 years in business. Left to right: Paul, Kathryn, Ivo and Adriano Oppio.

Photo: A.J. Britton - Special to The Star

learn from them."

He was also fortunate to meet Kathryn Schincariol just two years later in 1971, and in her found the life partner who would serve as a major strength behind him and the realization of his professional dreams.

"I was the second of five daughters. The early experience of working in our family grocery store taught us the attitude that with dedication the sky is the limit!"

But she was, admittedly, the odd woman out in the industry:

"A lot of women shy away from anything to do with manufacturing or industrial – they don't think they're suited. If I can do it, they can do it."

After nine years with Valiant, Ivo came to the conclusion that his professional goals would only be realized if he took a great risk, and, with a twinge of regret, decided to leave Valiant to become his own boss. "I worked for Valiant for only nine years but I made life long friendships there."

Ivo and Kathryn opened Classic Tool & Die in Oldcastle a short distance from its current site, renting a 500-square-foot room with only themselves as employees.

Over time, the business developed a reputation for good work and a strong client base because of Ivo's own formula for success. "Dad's recipe is one part

genius, two parts perfectionism and three parts determination," says Paul Oppio, the youngest Oppio at Classic Tool & Die. "I have been involved with the family business since I was old enough to push a broom, and I can tell you that my Dad has never said, 'I quit', or 'I hate this job', or 'I can't do it', and he has no tolerance for people who do."

"It's good enough when it is perfect and not before," says Paul, who will finish his tool & die apprenticeship at St. Clair College this year and plans to write his qualifications exam for his journeyman's papers soon after. "I love the challenge. I really enjoy working with the people here."

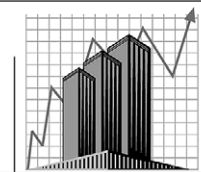
"Paul's most endearing qualities are his free spirit and his remarkable PR skills," says Kathryn. "People of all ages are drawn to him. He is clearly in his element in a crowd of people."

Adriano, the older of the two Oppio sons, shares a great deal of his father's workload: "If a task involves a computer, any type of electronics or mechanics, Adriano can create it, rebuild it, or update it," his mother Kathryn says with pride. "He has certainly inherited his father's talents."

The growth of the company has led it through several expansions. From its first site, the business relocated to a 7,000-

square foot building, and eventually to its current 22,000-square-foot building.

"Ivo always says, 'I just need this piece of equipment, or that piece of equipment' but there's always one more," says Kathryn. "And they keep getting bigger so we have to enlarge our facility to keep up."



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Happy 25th Anniversary
And Congratulations
To The
Oppio Family

We are very proud of our relationship with Classic Tool and are happy that we could contribute to their success.

The current 8,000-square-foot expansion got underway in June 2003 to accommodate a 1,500-ton press with a bed size of 96 by 180 inches. When the project is completed it will total 30,000 sq.ft. of manufacturing space.

Classic Tool & Die has changed a great deal from its early years, reflective of the dedication and determination of its owners.

But, for Kathryn, what impresses her most about Ivo is "unbelievable memory."

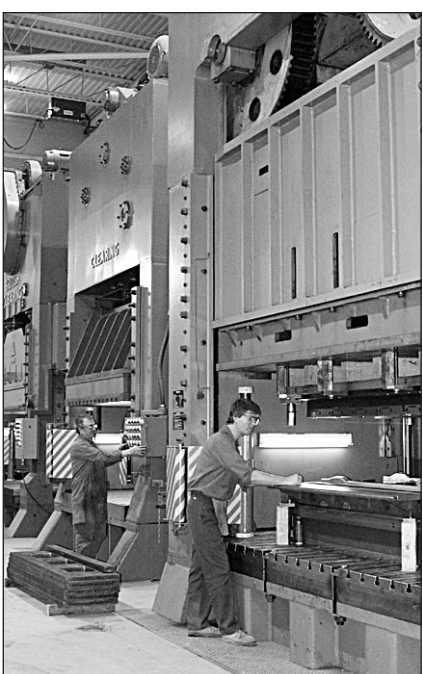
"That is the quality I envy the most. He remembers every detail of every job, every face of every person he has ever met, every price he was ever quoted. I'm amazed each time he recalls some fact I've long forgotten."

Ultimately however, Ivo himself attributes the company's longevity to hard work, perseverance and a loyal clientele.

"We wouldn't be where we are today without the clients who have been the lifeblood of this business," he says. "We'd like to thank them gratefully for their support in helping us get to where we are today."

But despite the importance of business success to Ivo, "my family and the time I spend with my close friends will always come first."

Looking back over almost three decades, "I can't begin to tell you how the move to Canada has changed my life," says Ivo. "To celebrate 25 years in business is great, but to be celebrating 35 years in Canada is better."



The growth of the company has led it through several expansions to accommodate larger and more sophisticated equipment.

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