



Bob Clarke joins the VSA

Industry icon accepts consulting position

The recently retired executive-director of the Automotive Retailers Association (ARA), Bob Clarke, has been appointed a special consultant to the VSA said its President and Registrar of Motor Dealers, Ken Smith.



"I don't think anybody expected Bob to be idle very long," Smith said. "There are few - if any - people in this country with his diversity of expertise and vast experience, who also enjoys such universal respect. Bob was instrumental in the formation of this regulatory authority and helpful to us in all of our pursuits, most notably the three-year Legislation Review."

His VSA service will focus primarily upon industry and government relations and efforts to see that the recommendations of the Legislation Review Committee are implemented by government. He will be a resource to support all VSA personnel and activities on behalf of consumers, dealers and industry professionals.

An extraordinary career

With respect to the automotive industry, it is no exaggeration to say that Bob Clarke "has done it all."

An article written by Rene Young for one of the ARA's successful magazines, *Collision Quarterly*, was titled "A Legend Retires." It chronicles a career that began as a newspaper boy in Nanaimo who bartered a year of free newspaper service to obtain two 1933 Chevrolets. From parts scavenged from these abandoned vehicles, he built his first car.

Some career highlights:

- after school work in an auto electrical shop, rebuilding distributors, generators and starters, led to a job on the mechanical team for a well known stock car racer.
- following high school graduation in 1957, worked as a machinist in an engine rebuilding plant, followed by two years as an apprentice mechanic for the Nanaimo Hillman-Volkswagen dealership and subsequently a journeyman mechanic.
- auto racing remained a passion both as a competitor and a mechanic, at one time both the Mid-Island and Victoria stock car champion. Over many years, racing took him to tracks as

far east as Idaho and Colorado, and as far south as California.

- Chevron service station owner in Nanaimo 1967-1970
- Volkswagen Canada service manager for Western Canada
- partner in Westminster Volkswagen for two years (1975-77) before the dealership sold.
- first-ever employee of Subaru Auto Canada and, after building a pioneering organization, became the first national President.
- refused to relocate to Toronto when Subaru decided to set up its head office there and became Western Zone Manager for Suzuki.
- joined the ARA as Mechanical Repair Division Co-ordinator in 1993, subsequently promoted to become Executive Director a year later.

At the ARA, Bob turned just about every activity into a vibrant business proposition, while increasing membership to over 1,000. The ARA, in its different divisions, offers benefits packages, training programs and a variety of services, including a profitable publishing division with several titles. Sound financial management put the ARA in a position where it could afford to buy its own building in an attractive modern executive park along the Fraser River, just east of Boundary Road.