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The Fireworks of Life

Posted on Tuesday 4th December 2012

Mark with the WFC trophy

From aspiring biochemist to organising the world's largest firework competition, one alumnus shares how university broadened his horizons.

CEO of the World Fireworks Championship, which he established in 2003, Mark Wooding (BSc Biochemistry, 1979) previously enjoyed a stint in student politics before embarking on a successful career in marketing and communications.

'Each of the six competitors' displays is huge with approximately 10,000 fireworks set off within a 20-minute period, so it takes a lot of preparation,' says Mark. 'I don't recall what first attracted me to fireworks, but I needed a break from marketing and it was great to be able to showcase the Championship in Oman to more than 750,000 people – their biggest ever public event.'

Coming to Birmingham as a budding biochemist, Mark soon immersed himself in Guild politics and upon graduation he became the Deputy President of the Guild of Students. Mark spent a further year as an Executive Member of the National Union of Students, and Vice Chairperson of the British Youth Council before moving into marketing.

'A good university broadens your horizons and Birmingham certainly did this for me,' says Mark. 'Through my experiences with the Guild I learnt how to address an audience and present an argument. I learnt design and media production, as well as logistical skills, which proved invaluable in my career.'

In 1993, he set up Nexus Multimedia, one of the first UK internet agencies, and also produced a horror movie before setting up World Fireworks Championship Ltd in 2003 with the first event taking place in Oman in 2010.

'We are busy planning the next World Fireworks Championship with the possibility of bringing it to the UK, maybe South America or the Middle East. The hope is the event will be every four years because of its sheer scale,' explains Mark.

'There are not many jobs where you stand back and see that you have created something that both spectators and competitors will remember for years to come. We like to say everyone leaves with a smile on their face,' he adds.

Find out more: **http://www.wfchampionship.com/ (http://www.wfchampionship.com/)**

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