



The Meccas at PWQA's 2005 convention in Riverside, Calif. From left: John, Kris, Kari, Mat, Mike, Mark, Lori, Pete, Mary Beth, Bob, Eileen and Rick.

A Mecca for Performance Excellence

(or how a multitude of Meccas ended up in the water business in California!)

By Karen R. Smith

That there are family dynasties in the water treatment industry is a well-known fact—we know many have grown up in the business. But the Mecca family members didn't—yet each and every one of them ended up here anyway!

In fact, the progenitor of the line was a barber and the Meccas grew up in Wisconsin during the decades of their father's work in that profession. In the late 70s their parents divorced and their mother decided to move to California. Kris, Mat and John moved to the west coast with her. Mark followed the next year, Mike the year after that and MaryBeth the year after that.

Still, there was no one in the water industry. Mother Eileen landed a position as the receptionist at a temporary employment agency, and Mike registered there seeking work when he first arrived in the Golden State. They sent him to King Industries International in Irvine, where they needed shop help. "I began taping Teflon® fittings out in their shop," he recalls. A year later he had risen to Vice President with brothers Kris and Mat joining the firm shortly thereafter.

"Really, we jumped off from King Industries," Mike says. From there he dove into the water vending machine business for 15 years. Mat headed to Coast Filtration, which led to Hinckley & Schmidt and in the late 90s he moved

to Fleck Controls, where today he is Director of Sales. Kris remained at King Industries the longest, until its closure in 1987. Starting in '88 as a partner in American Water Products, he left in '92 to start Performance Water Products (he remains the majority shareholder and runs the manufacturing end of the business). A couple of years later he hired Mary Beth with John soon to follow. Mike joined the fraternal team at Performance in 1998; Mark followed in 2004 (Performance Water has since grown to be the largest independently owned OEM in the west).

Meanwhile, Mary Beth had moved east to run her own business but decided to return to California and become a financial services provider. One of her clients is PWQA, where her five brothers devote much of their time and energy. This year, Mike is the organization's President.

"We've always worked best as a group, I think," Mark explained, adding that their mother had realized early on that her children were first and foremost each other's best friends. Today this first generation of water industry Meccas are beginning to bring their children on board. Two are already working at Per-

formance and four more will be coming of age soon.

Mother Eileen happily remarried in 1981. Stepdad Bob had also been married previously and of course all the children found themselves mingling at different social events as their parents began dating seriously and ultimately tied the knot. Kris was single and so was Bob's daughter Kari, so it seemed like a good idea when Mom encouraged Kris to take Kari out on a date. No one would have guessed the two would end up happily married themselves!

Today, Bob works in the shop at Performance on a regularly irregular basis, enjoying both the opportunity to help with systems and components and the camaraderie of working side by side with his stepsons and son-in-law. Mary Beth and Mat, of course, are regular visitors since PWQA shares office space at the Buena Park facility and Pentair is one of Performance's major suppliers. In terms of major areas of responsibility, owner Kris is out in the plant running the manufacturing operation, Mark heads up sales efforts, John is chief financial officer and Mike handles technical development.

The intricacies of these kinship ties may be a bit different in some ways—after all, most families don't have step-siblings married to each other—but in some ways, it's a typical water industry dynasty—just more recent than most! G