Bobby Meeks Environmental installs Alar Auto-Vac filter for liquid/solids separation

In companies throughout the country (advertising claims to the contrary), a sincere dedication to satisfying customers and their expectations is rare. When it occurs it is notable. When two organizations, each built upon a strong mandate of "customer satisfaction" — one a manufacturer and supplier of equipment, one the end user of that equipment — join together to find solutions, the resulting success is predictable.

The story begins in the late 1950s in the Birmingham suburb of Bessemer, Alabama. There young Bobby Meeks, at the time employed as an Alabama highway patrolman, seeking to supplement his salary and looking to forge a new future for himself and his family, purchased a septic tank pumper truck and founded what would eventually become Bobby Meeks Environmental Services.

Several years later Bobby, with the help of his wife Faye, dedicated himself full time to the endeavor. By 1985 the emerging company had moved from their home to their first office and had acquired three pumper trucks and the first of their tractor-trailer trucks.

Today, Bobby and Faye's family company is in a new facility located in Bessemer since 1991, and includes son Steve as operations manager and daughter Mary Kay Tully in administration.

The company, which now serves residential, industrial and municipal customers within a 75-mile area in and around Birmingham, is equipped with five residential pump trucks, each with a 2,500 gallon capacity; one 3,250 gallon vacuum/jetter truck for municipal and industrial work and three tractor-trailer rigs for their land application business.

The firm's land application site is located in northern Chilton County on a 1,100-acre farm where treated wastewater sludge is transported and used for fertilizer on pasture grass.

Bobby Meeks Environmental Services is one of Alabama's oldest and is Birmingham's largest onsite environmental service company. Bobby is a founding member of the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association (AOWA). Steve Meeks, following in his father's footsteps, was president of the Association from 1991 to 1993 and is currently chairman of the AOWA Certification Sub-committee.

In 1970 a young engineer named Alex Doncer, armed with not much more than what he believed to be a better idea for the treatment of water pollution control, co-founded Alar Engineering Corp. in his Burbank, Illinois home.

Not satisfied with the costs associated with and the results achieved by traditional wastewater treatment systems, Doncer, who is today Alar's president and chief executive officer, conceived the "Alar Filter."

The basis for every generation of Alar wastewater treatment systems, the Alar filter has revolutionized methods and procedures for dealing with industrial and municipal wastewater.

Known throughout the world as the Alar Auto-Vac filter, it virtually removes all suspended solids from liquid slurries. Because it is self-cleaning with every revolution, it never blinds. With the aid of a diatomaceous earth filter media, solid particles as small as 1/2 micron are removed from the liquid being filtered. The solids are continuously removed from the surface of the media by a Stellite knife blade and then deposited into a receptacle for easy disposal.

Liquids typically can be safely discharged into the sewer system or can be recycled back to plant operation. Auto-Vac drum sizes for the pumper industry are most often 6 feet in diameter by 6 feet in length with a nominal filter of 113 sq. ft. However, Auto-Vac filters are available with drum diameters of 1 foot and lengths of 1 foot up to sizes 8' x 20'.

Today Alar, located in a modern, well-equipped 80,000 square-foot administrative and manufacturing facility in the Chicago suburb of Mokena, is among the world's largest providers of wastewater pollution control equipment.

Bobby Meeks Environmental Services' desire to maintain the highest degree of efficiency and customer satisfaction regarding the need to dispose of septic and grease trap waste would cause them to cross paths with Alar at the 1997 Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo in Nashville. Bobby and Steve Meeks visited the Alar exhibition as part of their investigative process. Following extensive conversations with Alex Doncer and staff and a subsequent visit to a similar firm, Bobby and Steve were convinced that an Alar Auto-Vac filter was the way to go.

In November, 1997, Bobby Meeks Environmental Services installed at their plant a 6' x 6' Alar Auto-Vac filter wastewater separation system. Currently the system is handling 2,000 gallons an hour, eight hours every day.

The process works as follows: The Meeks trucks empty into a 1,500 gallon tank. The waste is then transferred into a 20,000 gallon batch tank. The tank feeds the filter where liquids and solids are separated. The water from the process, which is now clear, is transported to a wastewater treatment facility that would not accept the waste in its original form. The company has ADEM approval to take the solids to a landfill for final disposal. Recent tests have shown the Alar filtered solids to be 48% dry compared to some other separation methods that register 12-20% dry.

The installation of the Alar Auto-Vac filter has afforded Meeks new opportunities in addition to the ability to expand its current client base.

For example, the company is now able to remove waste from "further processing chicken plants" where they separate bones and liquids for proper disposal and from a marble plant where they are able to separate the "marble grit" from the liquid waste. Additionally, Meeks is aggressively marketing its grease trap waste disposal capabilities to other pumpers in the area. "We believe the Alar Auto-Vac filter to be the most effective and efficient way of doing things," said Steve Meeks.

As it has done for more than a quarter of a century, Alar Engineering has assisted a customer in search of a better solution. In doing so the two companies have joined as partners in progress. For more information call Alar Engineering at 708-479-6100.