

Water Filters

In the accompanying photo are a Bon Del™ kitchen counter top water filter (white) and a portable water treatment unit, the latter a second generation product of a line that originated in Space Shuttle technology. The Bon Del filter development represents an instance wherein NASA technology spawned formation of a whole new company. This particular company—Water Filter Company of America (WFCA), a subsidiary of Dubarry, Inc., National City, California—was started with an investment of \$27 and is now a multimillion dollar a year business.

It began when Ray Ward, now board chairman of Dubarry, moved from Utah to Arizona and didn't like the taste of the water in his new locale. He decided to develop his own water filter and conducted extensive exploratory research on various types of filtering systems. From this research, he learned of a NASA unit developed to purify the water aboard the Space Shuttle Orbiter. A compact, lightweight electrolytic water filter, it generates silver ions—in concentrations of 50 to 100 parts per billion—in the water flow system. The silver ions serve as effective bactericide/deodorizers. Ray Ward requested

and received from NASA a technical information package on the Shuttle filter and used it as the basis for his own initial development, a home use filter.

Ward had originally not planned to manufacture filters, only to build one for his own home. But friends and neighbors wanted one, and that launched a booming business. In 1977, Ward formed the Bon Del Manufacturing Company of Mesa, Arizona and began producing the first generation filters. About the size of a thermos bottle, the basic

kitchen model attaches to a faucet. Tap water passes through a filtering element of silver that has been chemically plated onto activated carbon. The silver inhibits bacterial growth while the activated carbon removes objectionable tastes and odors caused by addition of chlorine and other chemicals to the municipal water supply. A filter will treat up to 10,000 gallons of water.

Ward originally offered three models, including the counter top unit, portable system and a refrigerator unit. Subsequently, the product line was expanded and improved, and the growing company, which by the early 1980s was supplying filtered water to more

than a million people, was moved to California. In 1987, WFCA introduced a new inline unit featuring more modern design and more bacteriostatic media for greater efficiency. ▲

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