

# What Else Was Happening:



# HISTORY OF RPI

Here's How It All Began

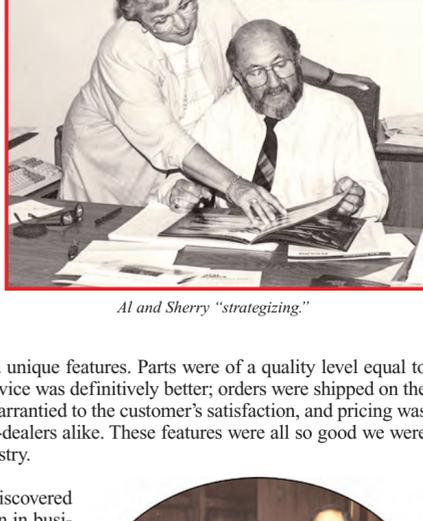
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## 1970

United States celebrates its first Earth Day; Break up of the Beatles; United States voting age lowered to 18 (1970)

*In the early 70's when everyone else was "chilling out", playing Pong, watching "The Brady Bunch", listening to the news reports about a burglary at the Watergate Hotel, following the Miami Dolphins go undefeated to the Super Bowl, and reading a newly released book titled, "The Joy of Sex", four people in Los Angeles, California, were mailing their first catalog of 19 replacement parts that fit autoclaves.*

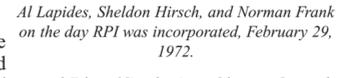
**The First 25 Years with Al and Sherry**  
Sherry and I had always wanted to start our own business (I guess we are a little masochistic). My being an engineer in the defense industry limited our exposure to opportunities, but we tried anyway. Our first attempt was in 1962, but it took until 1972 to make it happen. Our efforts took us into making primary magnesium from the ocean to building recreational vehicles. In 1971 we teamed up with Sherry's brother, Sheldon Hirsch, who worked with me at Litton, to try to make something happen together. We were in a wine club then with Norman Frank who had (and still has) a business making parts for repairing butcher saws and other meat handling equipment. We decided to talk with Norman about his business.



Al and Sherry "strategizing."

Norm's business had some interesting and unique features. Parts were of a quality level equal to or better than the OEMs. His customer service was definitively better; orders were shipped on the same day they were received, parts were warranted to the customer's satisfaction, and pricing was at or below dealer net for dealers and non-dealers alike. These features were all so good we were sure they could be applied in another industry.

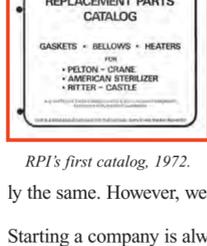
On Thanksgiving weekend of 1971, we discovered that next to Norm's business were two men in business repairing medical equipment. Norm, Sheldon and I went in to ask them if they were having any trouble getting parts. They let us go about three hours later. The company: Medi-Call. The men: Cliff Hudson and Brian Statter. (A little later, Cliff retired and Brian's son joined him in their business.) But after 25 years, they were still our staunchest supporters and a great customer. What they told us back then was that all of the features of Norm's business were lacking in the biomedical field. Getting parts on time was one of their toughest problems.



Al Lapides, Sheldon Hirsch, and Norman Frank on the day RPI was incorporated, February 29, 1972.

Well, that visit was it. Brian and Cliff helped to define 19 parts for us to start with: heaters, door gaskets, and bellows to fit some Pelton & Crane, American Sterilizer and Ritter/Castle AutoClaves. Over the next three months we found out how to reverse engineer and manufacture those 19 parts. And so we did it. On February 29, 1972 we incorporated, and put our combined monies into this start-up we called Replacement Parts Industries, Inc., or RPI as it has become known.

It took until November to get our 19 parts designed and manufactured, acquire facilities and equipment, design a logo, develop our own mailing list, and get a catalog designed and in the mail. The mailing list was developed over a period of some four months with Sherry leading the work of going through every set of yellow pages in the Los Angeles public library. The few hundred square feet next to Norm's business became available when Medi-Call moved into larger quarters. Norman found a desk gratis from a friend. Sheldon and I went to Litton surplus facilities warehouse and bought an adding machine for \$10, a steel desk for \$15 and a bookcase with pencil sharpener mounted for \$5. We decided that Sherry would manage the "office" at first. A two-line phone with an extension was brought into Norm's business so the phones would be covered when Sherry wasn't around. We were "in business"!



RPI's first catalog, 1972.

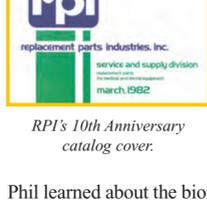
Our first catalog was titled, "Medical Autoclave Replacement Parts Catalog". On November 17, 1972, we made our first sale from the catalog. The customer: Doctor's Equipment Repair in Northridge, California, about two miles from our home. This was a very exciting moment. Sherry pulled and packaged the order. I left my desk at Litton and drove to the RPI plant which at that time was in the center of Los Angeles, and then I hand-delivered the order to their service-man, Andy Vail. Needless to say, he was so impressed with the service and the parts that he became another guiding source for us. Andy taught a course in biomedical technology at the local occupational center which we immediately enrolled in. After all, we had a lot to learn, such as the fact that dentists use the same autoclaves as physicians. So we put together our second catalog titled, "Medical & Dental Autoclave Repair Parts". The contents, of course, were exactly the same. However, we did add dental equipment repair companies to our mailing list.

Starting a company is always difficult. We lessened the risk by staying in our own jobs so that we did not depend on RPI for our livelihood. Sherry was our first and only employee. I was the managing partner from the start, and worked with Sherry by phone, after hours, weekends, and endless pillowtalk (thank goodness we already had our three children).

Over time, our children, Larry, Ira and Robbie, "volunteered" to work for RPI by folding and stuffing mailers. Putting on the stamps was also their job. I think we paid them one cent per envelope. We stopped playing the radio in the car because it interfered with our planning for our next mailing or product. What made it great was that we were having fun (and to this day still are!).

I engineered some new parts, and we got out new catalogs almost every year. It was a nice business through the 70's, but we still did not know where it was going. We woke up one day in late 1980 to realize that the business was very real and needed more nurturing.

In 1981 we hired our first outside employee, Phil Goldstein. His job: to put RPI product development into high gear; to ensure that we would have continuous additions of new parts to meet our customers' needs.



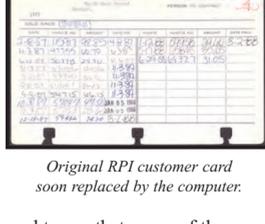
RPI's 10th Anniversary catalog cover.

How we hired Phil Goldstein is its own story. When we finally decided we were going to make RPI a "real business", we knew that developing new products had to be our priority. Until then I had been doing product development in my "spare time". There now had to be more focus. Although product development was primary, we had to hire someone who could do everything - from product development to technical support.

We advertised and asked some of our local customers for help. Then one day we spent some time with one of our local customers, Al Goldstein of MediDent. Al told us that it appeared that we needed someone who was a learner and a doer. That we needed someone with the attitude and motivation like his son Phil. And sure enough, Al was right.

Phil learned about the biomed equipment we were working on very quickly. He then started learning about other equipment our customers talked to us about, and he led us into producing parts for them. He continued to learn by taking classes, talking to our customers on the phone and working with them at their businesses. Phil has not slowed down since ... in fact, he may never slow down.

By 1983 we were able to hire a third person. And computers were definitely on board with us to keep track of everything - moving away from a "card" system on which we hand wrote every purchase of every customer. Two things of history to note here: first, we still have our original card system (although deep in storage somewhere upstairs), and second, the person who basically brought us into the computer age, Mike Hasci, is still with us today, helping us stay current on our Business Software. We also are fortunate to work with Jim Valle, who keeps our computer system up and running.



Original RPI customer card soon replaced by the computer.

During the next several years we increased our staff, and are proud to say that many of them are still part of the RPI family to this day.

Celebrating her 17 year anniversary with RPI, Lisa Link joined us in 1990 as part of the Shipping and Warehouse Department. On the side, Lisa enjoys drawing and painting - she's a talented artist. She is hearing impaired, and has taught us all a bit of sign language, as well as the art of communicating without speaking.

Then in 1992, Maria Cortez joined the RPI family. Maria, a native of California, joined Lisa in our Shipping and Warehouse Department. At the time she joined us, Maria was a mother of four and a grandmother of four. Today, Maria has 13 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Another employee celebrating her 15 year anniversary this year, is Joan Woodlock, our Vice President of Marketing and Customer Service. She came to us by way of New York and San Francisco where she worked for American Express. She really has given us a wealth of new ideas and different perspectives. Joan is originally from southern California, and earned both her B.A. and M.B.A. at UCLA. In fact, Joan and Ira (our son) were classmates while attending the UCLA graduate school of business. It's really a small world isn't it!

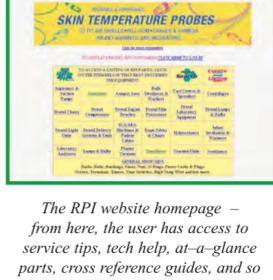
Dora Aguirre, our Customer Service Manager, joined us in 1993. She is originally from El Salvador, and came to live in California in the early 70's. She began her career at RPI in the accounting department, then became one of our customer service representatives, and then quickly moved up to position of Manager. Dora works with many of our Spanish speaking customers, and we rely on her expert knowledge about exporting parts around the world.

In 1994, RPI introduced Planned Maintenance (PM) to the healthcare service industry, and since then it is celebrated by our customers every June with a free PM poster from RPI. The poster is developed and designed by RPI with the intention of reminding the industry of the importance regular PM programs play in the well-being of their equipment. The posters are created using lively themes to present PM service tips, suggestions and pertinent articles. They have become a useful resource and work tool for healthcare service professionals.

**Back to the Future with Ira**  
In May of 1995, Ira left his position at FHP (a healthcare HMO) to join us as Vice President (no, he doesn't have to lick stamps anymore). Our succession plan was being implemented to assure our customers that RPI would continue as the quality company they have come to trust.

It was under Ira's leadership that the company introduced the RPI website, pursued ISO 9001 certification status for the company, significantly increased the number of new models of equipment that RPI offers parts to fit, and began a new trend with developing one-of-kind parts and value added kits - definitely a far cry from licking stamps for catalog mailings back in the beginning.

In the early 90's, when communication took a giant leap forward with the advent of the world wide web, so went RPI. By 1996, we had launched our own website, www.rpiparts.com. In fact, RPI was the first company in the healthcare parts industry to have a website. We worked very hard on designing a site that was informative and, most of all, easy to maneuver through, and thanks to our webmaster, Gary Valle, our goal was accomplished.



The RPI website homepage - from here, the user has access to service tips, tech help, at-a-glance parts, cross reference guides, and so much more!



To create a Parts Listing on the RPI website, the user selects a type of equipment, then the name of the OEM, and then the model. At that point, a listing of all parts that fit the model is displayed. It's simple and fast!

Since its introduction more than ten years ago, our website has added pages dedicated to service tips, technical assistance, at-a-glance parts cross-reference guides, troubleshooting guides, and exploded views of equipment. Perhaps the most impressive tool on the website is the one that assists its users in finding parts. The search tool is based on a hierarchy system in which the user selects a type of equipment, then the name of the original equipment manufacturer (OEM), and then the model. At that point a complete listing of all parts that fit the model is displayed with an option to obtain details and an illustration for any of the parts listed. It's simple and fast.

From 1996 to 1998, RPI added on four more members to the RPI family - Budd, Blanca, Jim and Tanya. Budd Ford came to us from Kansas City, Missouri and has been able to share his talents in several different departments here at RPI, including Quality Control, Product Development and finally the Shipping and Warehouse Department where he continues to work today.

Jim (aka, "The Dental Guy") Wisniewski, hails from Irvington, New Jersey. He came with his family to California in 1986 after working his entire career as a dental service technician. It was in 1996 that RPI recruited him for our Product Development Team, and today he is the Manager of that department. Jim is always coming up with new ideas on how to improve parts - it just comes naturally to him.

**"The ISO 9001 certificate is a nice badge to advertise to our customers and prospective customers, but the proof will always be our parts and customer service."**



The official "Passing of the Baton" ceremony making Al and Sherry's son, Ira, the new President and CEO of Replacement Parts Industries.

Blanca Miramontes is our Customer Service Manager who has "worn many different hats" within the company. She began as a "temp" coordinating our catalogs for mailing, but quickly jumped into the RPI team. She has worked in Shipping and Warehouse, Purchasing, Accounting, Customer Service, and now assists the Product Development team with her drafting capabilities.

The year 1999 was an exciting time because on May 1 of that year, Sherry and I handed over the "Baton" to Ira, and we went into semi-retirement. My title changed to CEO Emeritus and Chairman of the Board, Sherry became the Vice President of Customer Service (although she still holds the title of "The President's Boss"), and Ira became RPI's President and Chief Executive Officer.

In 2000, we were pleased to announce that the company had earned its ISO 9001 certification. RPI healthcare has been a leader in replacement parts for healthcare equipment, and while we have consistently produced high quality parts and established excellent systems, ISO prompts us to do even better. The ISO 9001 certificate is a nice

## 1972

The Goodyear blimp makes its first flight; Digital watches are first introduced (1972)

The Sears Tower in Chicago is completed, becoming the world's tallest building (1973)

Richard Nixon resigns; World population reaches four billion people (1974)

"Viking" unmanned spacecraft launched on its way to Mars; Cost of a gallon of regular gas: \$0.57 (1975)

United States celebrates its Bicentennial (1976)

Star Wars is first released in movie theaters; First Commodore PET computer is sold (1977)

Record of the Year: "Hotel California," by the Eagles; Gary Player wins his 3rd Master's Tournament (1978)

Mother Theresa wins Nobel Prize; Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister of England (1979)

"Post-It Notes" are introduced by the 3-M company; Cost of a gallon of regular gas: \$1.25 (1980)

## 1981

The first De Lorean DMC-12 automobile rolls off the production line; Pac-Man is introduced in the United States and sparks a huge craze; Birth of "MTV", the 24 hour-a-day music television station (1981)

Vietnam Veteran's Memorial dedicated; Wayne Gretzky of the Edmonton Oilers scores his 77th goal of the National Hockey League season, breaking the previous record of 76 (1982)

## 1983

TV show "M\*A\*S\*H" ends after 11 years; Federal Holiday "Martin Luther King Day" is founded in honor of American Civil Rights activist; Compact discs are first released (1983)

Coca-Cola changes formula to "new" Coke which is an immediate failure and is replaced by "Classic Coke" (1985)

Nuclear accident at Chernobyl, Russia; Hole is detected in O-zone layer (1986)

Falling of Berlin Wall; Students occupy Tiananmen Square; Loma Prieta Earthquake hits San Francisco, CA (1989)

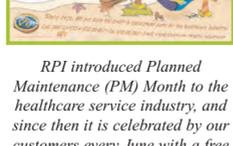
## 1992

Jay Leno replaces Johnny Carson on NBC's "Tonight Show"; Olympic games held in Barcelona, Spain, and American basketball's "Dream Team" wins the Gold as professional players compete for the first time (1992)

## 1993

World Trade Center is car-bombed; European Union is created; Holocaust Memorial Museum is dedicated (1993)

6.6 magnitude earthquake rocks Los Angeles, CA; Major League Baseball players strike; George Foreman regains the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship by defeating Michael Moorer. Foreman becomes the oldest heavyweight champion in history (1994)



RPI introduced Planned Maintenance (PM) to the healthcare service industry, and since then it is celebrated by our customers every June with a free PM poster from RPI.

## 1995

Oklahoma City bombing of United States Federal Buildings; Cal Ripken breaks record for consecutive baseball games (1995)

## 1996

Academy Award Best Picture: Braveheart; In Superbowl XXX, The Dallas Cowboys become the first team to win 3 Superbowls in a span of 4 seasons; Dolly, a Finnish Dorset ewe, was the first mammal to have been successfully cloned from an adult somatic cell (1996)

## 1999

Fear of the "Y2K Bug" is strong; Lance Armstrong wins his first Tour de France; World population reaches 6 billion people; Star Wars Episode I is released in movie theaters (1999)

## 2000

New millennium is celebrated world wide; The Dot.com era ends; The New York Yankees defeat the New York Mets in Game 5 of the World Series and win their 26th World Series title. This was the first Subway Series matchup between the two crosstown rivals. (2000)

badge to advertise to our customers and prospective customers, but the proof will always be our parts and customer service. We believe that ISO will help RPI maintain the level of excellence required in today's marketplace.



RPI earned its ISO 9001 certification in 2000.

The same year brought more talented people to work for RPI. Our Purchasing Supervisor, Lara Karaguezian, is originally from Beirut, Lebanon, and immigrated to the United States in 1992 with her family. This last June she also had a baby girl, giving her son a baby sister. We are happy to have her as part of our family here at RPI.



Ira Lapidès  
RPI President and CEO

Randy Hunt actually started working for RPI many years ago, drafting our prints on a part-time basis. Eventually he came to work with us as a full-time drafter in 2000. He joined the Product Development Department where he still drafts our prints, as well as oversees the configuration management aspect of the department.

Cathy Murillo is one of our wonderful Customer Service team members. She and her family came to California in 1981 from El Salvador. She works closely with our Spanish speaking customers, and she really has a talent for taking care of our customers' parts orders. Cathy has two beautiful young children, a daughter and a son.

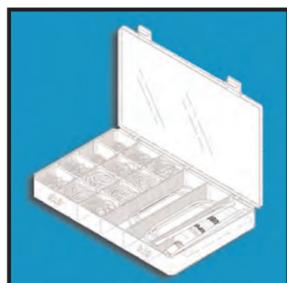


RPI's unique design includes a "quick disconnect" that allows the Condenser Waste Bottle to detach from the unit with just a simple snap.

In 2001, we concentrated on developing parts that are "end-user" friendly. For example, RPI's condenser waste bottle kit that fits a table top sterilizer was introduced. Its unique RPI design includes a "quick disconnect" that allows the bottle to detach from the unit with just a simple snap, thus preventing spillage and making it an easy task for the end-user to dispose of the liquid.

In 2002, Mark Micucci joined RPI as a member of our Product Development team. He is a veteran of the United States Navy, and served in Vietnam. After the military, he was servicing and repairing copy machines, which ultimately lead him to the dental repair industry, and finally to us where he engineers parts and helps customers with technical questions on the phone and via email. He can talk anyone through just about any difficult repair job.

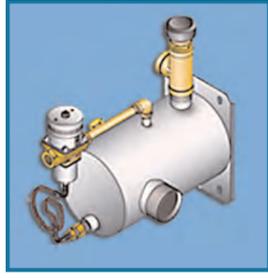
That same year, Brian Ridgeway was hired as our Shipping and Warehouse Supervisor. He is originally from Ohio, but he and his family now reside in beautiful Santa Monica, California. Brian has a great sense of humor that keeps us guessing at every turn. But he takes his job seriously, ensuring that our customers have the parts delivered on time and in good condition.



Customers are demanding more RPI value added kits, because they offer just about everything needed for servicing specific aspects of equipment in one convenient kit such as this O-ring Kit for servicing endoscope washers.

Also in 2002, we introduced the RPI Field Service Smart® Kit for servicing and repairing cassette autoclaves – the first exclusive, value added kit from RPI. Following that kit, came the Calibration Kit for servicing ultraclaves, and later the specialty O-ring Kit for servicing endoscope washers. These are kits that RPI customers appreciate, and are demanding more of in the future because they offer just about everything needed for servicing specific aspects of equipment in one convenient kit.

Early in 2003, Lolita Jones joined our Customer Service team. Since arriving, she has showered us with her Alabamian warmth and southern hospitality. Being from a military family, she has lived all over the world, including Germany. She has two wonderful daughters, who are a joy in her life.



RPI offers a tempering and water saving device designed to retro-fit most bulk sterilizers. It's called the Water-Mizer™, and can save more than 50 gallons of water per hour, resulting in a significant cost savings for the hospital.

The year 2004 gave us a brand new product that would help our customers conserve water and keep hospital costs down. That year, RPI was pleased to announce that we were now offering a tempering and water saving device designed to retro-fit most bulk sterilizers. It's called the Water-Mizer™, and can save more than 50 gallons of water per hour, resulting in a significant cost savings for the hospital. Depending on water rates and the amount of time a sterilizer is run each day, savings can add up to \$7,500 per sterilizer per year.

During this year, the RPI family grew once again where we welcomed Tina, Neil and Ray. Tina Torres joined the Customer Service team and she too assists our Spanish speaking customers with their orders. In her spare time, Tina earned her real estate license, became a professional make-up artist, and hikes the trails of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Neil Blagman also joined RPI that year. He graduated from college in New York, and with his six years as a biomed and another 10 years as a service engineer, he was the perfect match for our Product Development Team. When in need of technical support, our customers appreciate the time he takes in making sure that they receive the help they need – he really knows his stuff.

**"With respect to the design and development of parts, RPI has expanded its goal of manufacturing parts that meet or exceed the OEM's performance."**

2004

Hijacked United States airplanes crash into World Trade Center, Pentagon, and in an empty field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania (2001)

A new insect order, Mantophasmatodea, is announced; Academy Award Best Picture: *A Beautiful Mind* (2002)

A tsunami hits southern Asia; The Boston Red Sox win the World Series for the first time since 1918, breaking the "Curse of the Bambino"; Ken Jennings' 75-game reign as Jeopardy! champion ends – winning more than \$2.5 million. (2004)

Hurricane Katrina hits Gulf Coast of United States; Cost of a gallon of regular gas: \$3.04; International Astronomical Union decides that Pluto is not a planet (2005)



Our customers demanded more parts to fit infant warmers and incubators — not only did we respond with replacement parts, but also skin temperature probes. Now neonatal departments can depend on us for parts as well as reusable and disposable probes.

We were very busy during this year, in fact we took almost the entire year to revamp our General Shop Aids section of the catalog. We did it. We looked at the parts we offered, we looked at parts we could offer, then we looked at parts that we thought our customers could really use. New tools were added – some off the shelf, and some custom designed for our customers' use such as the Metal and Plastic Tubing Snakes. These snakes easily push and pull wire, cable, tubing, and fiber optic bundles

In 2005, Ray Martinez came aboard as our Quality Control Supervisor. With his thirty plus years in the aerospace industry, he was man after my own heart – given my background in the defense industry way back when we started RPI. Ray is currently earning a degree in Anthropology just for the fun of it!

Also in 2005, we again went into action in response to our customers. This time our customers demanded more parts to fit infant warmers and incubators. In fact not only did we respond with replacement parts, but also skin temperature probes. Now neonatal departments can depend on us for the parts they need most to keep the machines up and running as well as reusable and disposable probes.



Our expanded line of General Shop Aids offers these custom designed Plastic and Metal Tubing Snakes.

behind walls, above ceilings, inside operatives, through crawl spaces, and under floors. We really listen to our customers. Their input is so very important to us, and we take it seriously!

2006

In 2006 we welcomed four more new employees – Linda, Kathleen, Katie and Jose. Linda Bean became a member of the Customer Service Team. She grew up just miles from RPI, and as she said in her interview when we hired her, "I have always been in customer service, and I love working with people!" – and here at RPI it really shows that she does.

Kathleen Kowal is a native Southern Californian and she received a BFA from an art and design school in Brooklyn, New York. Her talents as a graphic artist are truly exceptional – just take a look at our flyers and the 2006 PM poster.

Katie Egbert, yet another who wears many hats at the company, works with both the Purchasing and Customer Service departments. Before coming to RPI she worked in a doctor's office. Katie is proud to be a Los Angeles Kings hockey fan.

Born in Guatemala, Jose Rodriguez works hard in our Shipping and Warehouse Department. He move to the United States with his family in the late 80's, and is a big Dodger's fan. In his spare time, he attends school to become an electrical engineer.



RPI also focuses on developing one-of-a-kind parts such as our clear filter housing that allows visual inspection of the filter inside, without having to remove the housing.

With respect to the design and development of parts, RPI has expanded its goal of manufacturing parts that meet or exceed the OEM's performance. Today, RPI also focuses on developing one-of-a-kind parts such as a clear filter housing vs. the OEM's brass-nickel plated housing that fits dental delivery systems that was just launched earlier this year.

We pride ourselves on offering parts that our customers demand – including parts that fit both new and older equipment. For example, we still offer parts for some equipment that was first introduced more than 30 years ago. As our customers tell us, "Some of the older machines are true work-horses and are better than the newer ones, so we need those parts to keep them running". On the flip side, our customers also expect us to have parts that fit newer models. That's where Ira really set a milestone for the company.

Since Ira has taken charge of RPI, the company has launched more than 20 new lines of parts. It's incredible how we cater to the needs of the industry. Our secret is two-fold – listening to our customers on a regular basis and incorporating their feedback into our product development plan, and having the full RPI family of employees a company could ever hope to have to make it all happen!

RPI now has 24 employees, and is located in Chatsworth, California in a 15,000 square foot building in which all of our parts are inventoried. And just like came in 1972, customers ordered by 2:00 pm (Pacific Time), Monday through Friday, are shipped the same day, so customers do not have to keep large inventory of parts on site. RPI does it for them, thus saving them time and money.

When we first opened our doors in 1972, quality was our first concern. As a company that manufactures replacement parts for healthcare equipment, it was imperative that our parts were as good or better than the manufacturer's original equipment parts. And that holds true even more so in today's quality conscience marketplace. In fact, throughout our 35 year history, we have always maintained that our parts are guaranteed to our customer's 100% complete satisfaction. We are proud to stand by our parts and our customers appreciate it.

As of this year, RPI boasts of more than 2,400 parts to fit a vast array of equipment including bulk sterilizers, centrifuges, infant warmers/incubators, exam tables/chairs as well as dental laboratory equipment, delivery units, film processors, and lights.

**"We have always maintained that our parts are guaranteed to our customer's 100% complete satisfaction."**



The RPI Family, 2007: From left to right — Back row: Budd, Ray, Mark, Katie, Randy, Jim and Ira. Third row: Neil, Linda, Tina, Lara, Lisa and Joan. Second row: Blanca, Cathy, Lolita, Kathleen, Dora, Maria and Jose. Front row (sitting): Brian, Sherry, Al and Phil.

A much celebrated 250th anniversary of the birth of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; The first World Baseball Classic opens in Tokyo, Japan; Warren Buffett donates more than \$30 billion to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2006)

United States Senator Nancy Pelosi becomes first female Speaker of the House; World soccer superstar, David Beckham, announces that he will play for the Los Angeles Galaxy (2007)