Doing It His Way

Scott Handy, owner of Mr. Water™ Professional Water Treatment, has created a patent-pending water softener and sulfur removal system that is getting rave reviews.

BY MIKE PRICE

Every inventor has their own method.

Thomas Edison worked out of his legendary "invention factory," a laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey. Henry Ford experimented in a Detroit machine shop.

Scott Handy used his living room floor in Hagerstown, Maryland, located 75 miles northwest of Baltimore.

"You know, Thomas Edison had 1200 patents," says Handy, a longtime admirer of both Edison and Ford's accomplishments, "so I thought, 'Scott, you're smart enough that you ought to be able to think of one.'"

The 45-year-old owner of Mr. Water™ Professional Water Treatment has done just that, designing a patent-pending product he believes is the biggest development in the field of residential water treatment since the automatic water softener was first invented by Emmett Culligan in 1936.

He feels it's a major development in water softener and sulfur (hydrogen sulfide) removal systems because of its simplicity and ease of use, working without the use of any chemicals like chlorine bleach. This new system uses the tried and true technology of air injection—using a micronizer (a type of air injection valve) and air pump if more oxygen is required to oxidize the repulsive rotten egg odor of sulfur and lets the excess air out of the softener tank by the innovative EcoVent™ air venting system developed by Handy. With a clever modification of the typical softener vessel, the system uses the natural oxygen of the air to remove hydrogen sulfide. Since air is about 20% oxygen, the system replaces the oxidative properties of sodium hypochlorite bleach.

The patent-pending product is called the EcoSoft Water Treatment Systems™ 32,000 grain Electronic Demand Water Softener with EcoVent™ and is also available in Super Heavy Duty 64,000 grain versions with dual micronizers or single air pump for extreme water conditions.

To learn more about Mr. Water™ Professional Water Treatment, visit *www.ifixh2o.com*.

"Other than changing some filters and adding softener salt (sodium chloride) or using potassium chloride (salt substitute) as all current water softeners use," Handy says, "no other maintenance on the part of the homeowner is needed. No bleach and water to mix, no pumps to prime if the solution runs out, and no chlorine taste or smell in the treated water."

Previous air injection systems required the installation of an air retention tank that needed periodic cleaning of oxidized iron and manganese deposits because they had no way to clean themselves through backwashing or regeneration with salt solutions.

"The chemistry of natural waters can often be complex, but the basic scientific principles behind it are straightforward," says Ted Toskos of Pittstown, New Jersey, who is senior principal geologist for MACTEC Inc., a consulting firm that provides engineering, environmental, and construction services to both public and private clients worldwide.

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"Simple systems that provide simple answers based on straightforward science are inherently elegant. A simple system that provides a reliable solution to a vexing problem benefits the consumer by providing safe drinking water. In the long run, it raises the public's trust in the groundwater professional and it is good business."

Handy's ground-breaking idea was hatched in the fall of 2008. He placed a dome-hole water softener tank in the middle of his living room floor, and in his downtime as he watched television or worked on the computer he peered over at it and brainstormed concepts.

"In this area of the country (northwest Maryland) you get a lot of hydrogen sulfide in the water," Handy says, "so I started to think, OK, what could I do to basically combine pieces of equipment into one system that would simplify everything?"

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That dreaded but fairly common problem for water well owners—the rotten egg odor—reared its ugly head for Kathy and Marc VanDoorn.

They instantly noticed the stench in their newly purchased three-bedroom vacation home in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, leading Kathy to research their options.

"You have this new place and doing any cooking, bathing, you're like, 'Oh geez!'" she recalls.

Kathy found out at the local hardware store that many well owners in the area deal with the annoying smell. She did a Google search and came across Handy's Web site. Only 45 minutes from Hagerstown, Handy drove to Berkeley Springs in his hard-to-miss van that has his trademarked company name plastered on the side of it.

The price of the standard size system was reasonable for the VanDoorns, so they purchased it, which Handy installed within a day in the couple's small basement/crawl space.

"After he did the work it was just like night and day," says Kathy, who was impressed enough with the system that she left a dozen of Handy's business cards at the hardware store.

"He's innovative and original. I'm happy for him. He said he's working on a patent."

"In all honesty, sometimes the biggest compliment I get is I just don't hear back from people."

Not only is the smell gone, but Kathy's husband, Marc, noticed a change in the texture of the water.

"It used to have minerals, now it's a lot smoother. I can notice a difference when I wash," he says. "He's also very friendly. We had minor problems in the shower—water pressure problems—and he said he'd take a look and found some crust in the valves, so he removed it."

Tim Ganley chose the Super Heavy Duty 64,000 grain unit after using a multiple-water tank system for nearly 30 years.

His large-sized property just outside of Middletown, Maryland, with a 450-foot well had a number of water issues emanating from its system—the smell of sulfur and high levels of iron, just to name a couple.

"Quite frankly, I've had none of that since Scott put in the system," Ganley says. "He took us off multiple tanks to one tank, plus two filters—a pre-filter and post-carbon filter."

Referred to Handy by a former work colleague, Ganley was intrigued with what he had to offer.

"My wife and I thought Scott was a little nutty," he says with a chuckle, "but we also thought he seemed to know what he was talking about because apparently nobody else is doing a lot of this aeration in the water. Apparently this is something that he's been developing and it certainly is better water for it. I've not had any cleaner or brighter water; I mean it's almost sparkling."

The most-heard response Handy hears from customers is they no longer have to hold their nose when they brush their teeth. He also takes comfort in walking away from a job knowing that no other system on the market can do what his does.

"In all honesty, sometimes the biggest compliment I get is I just don't hear back from people," Handy says.

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Over the course of his 20-plus years in the water treatment industry, Handy has seen it all.

His career path began in 1988, selling water treatment products, and then he worked for contractors in Maryland installing the equipment. Because he knew he wanted to start his own business someday, Handy became a plumber in 2000. He worked for various plumbing companies and was known as the "go-to guy" for water treatment since he built his own equipment.

Dealing with inferior quality water equipment, though, helped force Handy to start Mr. Water in 2005. It's a full-service well and city water softening and conditioning company specializing in sales, service, maintenance, and repair of residential and light commercial water treatment equipment.

"The biggest problem in this line of work," he says, "is people who don't know enough about it. They'll put a water treatment system in and flood somebody's house, and then you're out of business, so you have to really be careful of that."

In Hagerstown, widely considered one of the largest, if not the largest, regions in the country for water treatment, Handy typically operates in a 100-mile radius and has his hands full dealing with competitors. He tries to educate customers, along with engineers, on how a water treatment system works and how to properly maintain it.

"I deal with a lot of electrical engineers, mechanical engineers, geotechnical engineers," Handy says. "Water treatment just throws them to see the whole picture and know how the system operates."

For now Handy works alone, oftentimes putting in 12- to 14-hour days, estimating that since 2009 he has installed 25 of his patent-pending systems—all with no customer complaints. The patent is expected to be reviewed this summer.

"That's what I probably say about him the most," recalls Randy Cogar, a recent customer of Handy's in Clear Spring, Maryland. "You talk to Scott and he knows exactly what you need. Once he tests the water, he'll tell you things you've never thought of. He's an amazing young man.

"He's probably going to be a millionaire one day because he really does a great job." *WWJ*