

Aladdin Grew With Pool Industry



ALL FOUR PHASES of Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co. are headed by Wayne Davey, left, vice-president, Bud Combest, president and Lindy Combest, secretary-treasurer, shown here in Combest's office in the company's new Bell Gardens headquarters building.

Combest Terms Farsightedness Essential In Running Successful Pool Business

Bud Combest believes in looking ahead and for him, it has paid off.

When he established Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co. back in 1950, the swimming pool industry was beginning to boom. The number of pool owners was growing and the number of service technicians available wasn't keeping pace.

It would have been easy to get the business first and worry about how to handle it second.

ACCOUNTING FIRST

Bud Combest, however, established a cost accounting system before he had secured a single account. He still believes this is one of the most important and most overlooked aspects of the swimming pool business.

He feels that lack of a good cost accounting system has led, many times, to unsound price-cutting which has forced many service firms out of business.

He also advises against what he calls, "suede shoe tactics" which he describes as verging on misrepresentation of products or persons. "These tactics draw customers but they won't keep them," he said.

Bud also believes that it pays service firms "in the long run" not to hire experienced men. He said a service firm which trains its own men in its own methods achieves a uniformity of operation which customers can depend upon and like.

He said he also has found that an experienced service technician is a "poor listener" when it comes to receiving training in company techniques.

In the establishment of successful credit relationships, he feels the big difference lies in a clear understanding of what is expected at the outset.

In the retail end of the pool business, Bud also believes in looking ahead.

In selecting an area which can best support a pool supply store, he believes potential is more important than the number of pools. He said Aladdin studies the rate of issuance of pool permits looking for an increase in rate. The firm also considers the class of homes and the amount of home building.

(Please turn to page 30, col. 3)

Million Dollar Business Started in Family Garage

Bud Combest is a do-it-yourselfer who has made the practice pay.

His ability and desire to do things for himself led to the establishment of Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supplies back in 1950, and to a spectacular growth that has made the Bell Gardens, Calif. company the largest of its type in the country.

Aladdin today is a service company, a distributor, a manufacturer and a retailer, successful and highly respected in all four areas. The company has an annual income of more than one million dollars.

STARTED IN '50

The firm got its start in 1950 because Combest made some repairs on his own pool. He was employed by a firm which made equipment for racing carts at the time. He felt his future with this company was limited and was looking around for a business he could go into on his own.

When some of the equipment for his pool needed repairing, he went to the builders to secure the necessary parts. Having been 'at home' with things mechanical most of his life, he felt sure he could do the work himself. He was advised by the builders that he would have to have a specialist but they'd didn't know where he could find one.

Bud Combest did the work himself and decided, at the same time, to make himself a specialist in Swimming Pools and their equipment.

ONE EMPLOYEE

He set up a business in his garage with his wife, Lindy, his only employee and a part time employee at that for she retained her job as a secretary for the same firm for which her husband had worked.

In a red pick-up truck, the firm's first capital asset, he drove around Bell Gardens and vicinity knocking on doors of pool owners. Within a week he had secured eight accounts for pool service. Five of the eight are still Aladdin customers.

At the end of the first year, the company had more than 100 service accounts. Lindy left her job to devote full time to the company's office routine. Combest hired Wayne Davey to assist him. Davey, now vice president and general manager of Aladdin, had been a shop foreman for the company where Combest and his wife had been employed.

The company was still operated out of the Combest garage. A retail show room for equipment and accessories had been

(Please turn to page 20, col. 2)

Aladdin's Stores are Supermarkets for Pool Owners

When Aladdin Pool Service and Supply Co. opened its first separate retail store in Garden Grove, Calif. in 1960, there were skeptics who said it would never go.

Bud and Lindy Combest conceived of the store as a "supermarket" for pool owners. It was to be a store where pool owners could find "everything" for the pool on display and in stock.

The Combests said it was a departure from the average pool supply store which, at that time, operated with minimum stock and displays with most items ordered from catalogs.

It was a success.

REGULAR DISPLAYS

The store keeps approximately \$25,000 worth of saleable merchandise regularly on display.

Stores opened by Aladdin in Bellflower and Tustin, Calif. in 1961 and in Covina, Calif. in 1962, also are operated on the "supermarket" plan. All have been successful.

Two of the Aladdin stores, the Tustin and Garden Grove stores, are located in shopping centers. All are located in busy business centers.

The Combests report their supermarket type displays attract street trade. This includes window shoppers looking for gifts for pool owners who might otherwise never have thought of giving a pool accessory.

EASY TO SEE

They report too that customers who come in for a specific item often will buy several because everything is easy to see and readily available.

The five Aladdin retail stores stock everything from replacement parts for pool equipment to ash trays for pool side use.

Lindy Combest attributes the success of Aladdin stores in part to the fact that they stock only quality items. "We look for the best of its kind in every line," she said, "even if it is the most expensive. As a result we have practically no returns."

Like all supermarkets, the Aladdin stores push gimmick items at special seasons. Every Christmas, they sell metal Christmas trees. These are intended for patio use but Lindy reports that one customer once floated one in his pool.

From One to 43 Trucks is Story of Aladdin Fleet

Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co.'s truck fleet has come a long way from the single red pick up truck with which Bud Combest started the business in 1950.

Today, the fleet is made up of 43 trucks. Six of these are repair trucks, each outfitted with between \$3,000 and \$5,000 worth of equipment.



ALADDIN STORES, like this one in Tustin, Calif. are located in busy shopping areas. They feature attractive window displays designed to attract street traffic and attractive interior displays designed to appeal to the impulse buyer.

Ability, Optimism, Wife's Support Add Up to Success for Bud Combest

Bud Combest has been interested in things mechanical as far back as he can remember.

However, his ambition throughout his school years, was to become a doctor.

Service with the Army's paratroopers during World War II, just after he was graduated from Compton College, and a serious accident which terminated that service, kept him from a medical education.

When Bud's outfit was making its last practice parachute jump prior to moving overseas, his chute failed to open. A tree which broke his fall saved his life but the injuries he sustained kept him hospitalized for more than a year.

OPTIMISM SURVIVES

Having to abandon his medical ambition did not dampen Bud Combest's deep seated optimism. This optimism, his natural mechanical ability, and a far happier accident — meeting and marrying his wife, Lindy, made him instead a pioneer in the swimming pool industry and a successful entrepreneur.

His mechanical interest and ability have made him a self taught expert on swimming pool equipment. His optimism makes him ever ready to try something new and it generally pays off. Lindy's encouragement and support plus her keen business head provide the final ingredient which makes the family firm, Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supplies Inc. one of the most successful of its kind.

Bud, a native of Indiana, and Lindy, who was born in South Dakota, met while

both were vacationing in Avalon, Catalina, in 1946. They were married soon afterward.

At that time, Bud, who is an avid auto racing enthusiast, had his own garage where he worked primarily on racing cars.

An automobile accident made it necessary for him to give up his business. When he recovered from injuries sustained in the accident, he went to work for a firm which made equipment for racing cars. He left this company to form Aladdin in 1950.

Lindy, who has done office work most of her adult life, has run the Aladdin office since the company was formed. She did this by herself until 1959, when one girl was

(Please turn to page 27, col. 1)

Wayne Davey, Vice President Joined Aladdin in Early Years

Wayne Davey, vice president and general manager of Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co. is one of the firm's oldest employees.

Davey, who worked with Aladdin owner Bud Combest at another firm, was sought out by Combest and joined Aladdin in the early years of the company's operation. He served Aladdin as a serviceman, a repair man and as repair and service manager before becoming vice president and general manager.

A native of Nebraska, Davey, 31, studied mechanical engineering at Compton College in California.

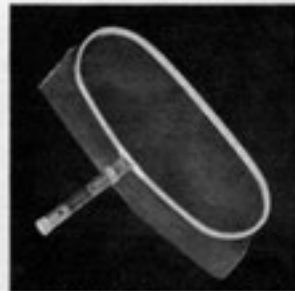
He served in the Navy as an Interior Communications Electrician and previously was employed by Ignition Systems Inc. and Lynco Grinding Co.

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ALADDIN GROWTH

(Continued from page 18)

established in an adjacent store room and a study on the second floor of the Combest home had been converted into an office.

Aladdin's present manufacturing operations also had their roots in that first year. A self taught "specialist" in pool service and repair, Combest developed and made his own equipment as he went along. The company still makes most of its own service, test and repair equipment, some of which it manufactures for outside sales.

In 1958, the company had become too big for the Combest home and garage. The Combests purchased property adjacent to their home, moved into an existing office building on it and opened the first of their five retail stores. They continued to use their garage, which they expanded, as their shop.

OWN BUILDING

In 1960, they purchased additional adjacent property and began building a store-office-shop unit. They occupied the new store and office in August of this year and completed their move into the new shop this month.

Aladdin's first separate store was opened in 1960 in nearby Garden Grove. Its success led the Combests to open stores in Bellflower and Tustin in 1961 and in Covina late in 1962. A sixth retail store will be opened by the company late this year in a location to be announced soon.

The company's service operations has grown to the point where it now has more than 5,000 accounts. The firm covers the entire southeast section of Los Angeles County and all of Orange County. New business is secured in three basic ways. The company gets leads from and is recommended by several major pool builders in the area. They get referrals from existing customers and they maintain an up to date list of pool owners in the area which they use for direct mail promotion and for approach by their salesmen. The list is compiled from building permits listings and from information supplied by builders. Aladdin has two regular salesmen and one in training.

MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTION

As a distributor, the firm got its start eight years ago when it began to take on a few lines at the request of manufacturers and "because there was a need and they were there and able to fill it." Today Aladdin is a distributor for 20 to 25 lines of pool equipment and supplies and is finding the business so profitable that, for the first time, it is actively seeking new lines for this end of the business.

The manufacturing end of Aladdin's operations got into full swing in 1960 when the company began making a vacuum clean-

er it had been producing for its own use, for outside sales. The cleaner and all other equipment manufactured by the firm were designed by Combest.

In addition to the cleaner the firm produces a complete line of strainer baskets and a line of portable pump and filter units. All Aladdin equipment is sold nationally. Except in its local market, the company sells only to distributors.

The portable pump and filter units, which were first introduced at the National Swimming Pool Institute's Miami convention last year, have been sold all over the world. The company recently shipped a unit to Johannesburg, South Africa and has a pending order from Hong Kong. It also has sold portable units locally to Disneyland and Knotts Berry Farm.

Aladdin's operations are handled today by a staff of 50. Like its owner, the company can take care of most of its own needs itself.

The company's shop contains complete machine shop facilities; complete motor and pump test panels; time clock test panels (Aladdin rebuilds its own time clocks and each one is tested before it is used); complete heater rejuvenation facilities; a sand blast furnace; and a paint booth.

BUILT BY COMBEST

With a few minor exceptions, the equipment was built by Combest himself with the assistance of Aladdin employees.

The company rolls all of its own tubes and does all of its own heater tube work. It has facilities to do complete heater testing, simulating actual running conditions. It also has complete de-liming and de-sooting facilities.

Aladdin's present fleet of 43 trucks are serviced regularly at the company's own truck repair facility. The firm has its own gas pump and its own lube rack.

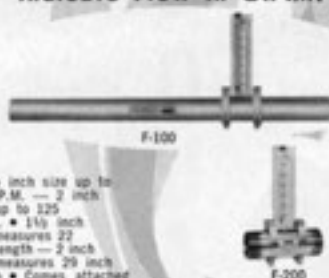
CONTINUED GROWTH

The company is continuing to grow in all four phases of its operation. With plans for opening of a sixth retail store virtually complete, Combest already is eyeing sites for additional stores he hopes to open in 1964.

Both the office and shop portions of the new building were designed for expansion. The company plans a gradual expansion of its manufacturing line and will add to the list of products it distributes as markets open up.

The Combests got into the swimming pool business because they foresaw its growth. They have grown with it. Today they foresee continued growth and they're ready to go along with that too.

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Lindy Combest Proves Value of 'Woman's Touch' in Pool Business

Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co. is proof positive that the woman's touch is an asset in the swimming pool industry.

For Aladdin, Lindy Combest provides this touch with a zest and a flair that mark everything she does. Like most wives, Lindy supported and encouraged her husband, Bud, when he organized a swimming pool service business in the family garage back in 1950.

But Lindy went beyond support and encouragement. She contributed ability which has helped the family business grow into a million dollar a year, four phased operation.

JOBS FOR WOMEN

Feminine Lindy believes very strongly that the mechanical and the "wheeling and dealing" phases of the business are a man's province. She believes just as strongly that there are jobs in the business that can be best performed by women.

Lindy's work as office manager for Aladdin gives strong support to her contention that a woman, generally, can run an office operation more smoothly than a man. She feels this is an often overlooked truth in the swimming pool industry where many operations are staffed entirely by men.

Lindy handled Aladdin's office affairs alone for the first nine years of the company's existence. She now accomplishes the job with only three assistants, all of whom she trained herself.

RETAIL STORES

Aladdin's retail stores also reflect Lindy's feminine touch and are another area of the pool business where she feels women can make a valuable contribution.

She pointed out that it is generally the woman in a family who takes care of the pool and consequently makes the majority of the purchases which are not of a major nature.

She feels that in many areas, women are best equipped to cater to a woman's taste and can make a significant contribution to purchasing.

TOYS ACCESSORIES

When Aladdin began opening retail stores, it was Lindy who suggested the inclusion of pool toys and patio accessories. She still passes final judgment on any lines in these areas added by the stores.

She also has selected all of the colors used in interior decoration of the stores. She chose bright colors "knowing women find it fun to shop in a bright and cheerful shop." She feels the stores' appearance also have given the firm's store managers an added feeling of pride in their work.



TIME CLOCK is tested on Aladdin-built test panel.



MACHINE SHOP in Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co.'s new Bell Gardens facility.

Calls Portable Units Most Successful Item

Aladdin Equipment Co., manufacturing arm of Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co., terms a line of portable pump and filter units it is producing its most successful items.

Introduced at the National Swimming Pool Institute's Miami Convention last year, the line has met with sales success both here and abroad, unmatched by any other Aladdin item, the firm reports.

Based on equipment the company has been making for several years for use of its own service men, the portable units are designed to meet all pumping and filtration requirements where portability is essential.

The firm produces a range of models with various rated capacities to cover many uses and materials subject to transport and filtration. All units are mounted on compact, lightweight carts.

The line includes: a portable pump cart, model 100, able to carry pumps up to 2 hp; a portable pump cart model 300 with a 3/4 hp bronze pump, model 300 which will drain a pool or vacuum to waste; a portable pump cart with 3/4 hp bronze pump and dynel filters, model 400, which will vacuum pools without water loss and can be used to filter pools on a standby basis; and a portable D. E. filter and pump, model 500 which can be used to drain pools, vacuum a pool, filter a pool, vacuum to waste or to filter water when filling a pool.

The company also produces accessory kits for all its portable units.

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Aladdin Staff Like Family, Well Run Team

Aladdin Pool Service and Supply Co.'s staff of 50 is like both a large family and a smooth functioning team.

Like a family, it is an integrated group marked by a great loyalty to the group and between members. Like a team, each person knows his job and has been trained in the others' job to a point where most of them could step into any other job should the need arise.

One of the reasons for the loyalty, according to owner, Bud Combest, is the fact that Aladdin never has lay-offs during the off seasons.

SLACK PERIOD JOBS

During slack periods, Bud finds other jobs for his men which not only keeps them on the payroll but gets work done for which he might otherwise have to call upon outside contractors.

The company's new building was built almost entirely by members of the Aladdin staff. All of the firm's retail stores were remodeled by staff members with service men, repair men and even sales men wielding hammers and paint brushes.

Combest is a strong believer in getting "the right men" and keeping them. He says it takes him between two to three years to train a man in all aspects of Aladdin's business. He feels it would be a waste of time and money to begin this training only to have to lay a man off during a slack season.

FOUR GIRL OFFICE

His wife Lindy follows a similar philosophy in her running of Aladdin's office operations. Four girls handle all the paper work for the million dollar a year business.

As with the men in the firm, each girl knows the other's job as well as she does her own.

They have a real team system for telephone answering. The girl who's job it is to answer the phone catches it on the first ring or a second girl knows she must get it and so on down to four rings though it rarely gets that far.

POSTING FOR STORES

The girls do all the posting for the firm's five retail stores as well as for the company's manufacturing and service operations. They receive only sales slips from the store managers. These come in about once or twice a week.

Inventory control also is a central operation. It is the job of Hilda Griffith who keeps her records from reports which come in from the stores about once each week. On the average of once each month she makes a swing of the stores to take a direct inventory.

(Please turn to page 30, col. 3)



BOB HILLMAN, who heads Aladdin's Service Department, enters a service request in company books after dispatching a service truck by radio.



GEORGE PETERSON, shop foreman and repair manager for Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co., tests a motor for a possible short.

Wayne McVeigh, Tustin Store Mgr. Experienced With Water, Selling

Wayne McVeigh, manager of Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co.'s Tustin, Calif. store, was new to the Swimming Pool Industry when he joined Aladdin but not to the problems of water or the business of selling.

McVeigh's job prior to joining Aladdin was with Middletown Rubber Co. and included firing H. P. boilers and the analysis of boiler water.

Before this he held selling jobs with a number of companies including A&P Tea Co., Talon Zipper Co., Atlantic Refining Co., Atlas Supply Co., Wehle Brewing Co., and Edelbrau Brewing Co.

McVeigh, 55, is a native of New Haven, Conn.

Covina Job is Third At Aladdin for Jim Coffin

Jim Coffin's present position as manager of Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co.'s Covina, Calif. retail store, is his third with the company.

He previously served the firm as both a service man and a chemical delivery man.

Coffin, 32, is a native of Mobridge, S.D. He served in the Air Force from 1950 to 1954 as a radio engineer. He later was employed by the U.S. Post Office both in Washington and California and by the Kirby Co. in California. He has been with Aladdin for the past three years.

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Aladdin Promotes All its Services in 'Aladdin News'

Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co. is probably one of the few firms of its kind which has its own newspaper.

And Bud and Lindy Combust, Aladdin owners, say Aladdin News has become their most effective means of advertising and sales promotion.

Aladdin News was started in 1958 and now comes out every two or three months. It is mailed out both to existing and prospective customers. The firm's current mailing list for the "News" exceeds 25,000.

Variety of Topics

The "News" covers a variety of topics. It might announce a new Aladdin store opening, a sale in one of the stores, a new product being handled by the firm or a new product being manufactured by Aladdin Equipment Co. It also might feature any aspect of service ranging from financing to a particular technique utilized by the company.

In addition to the "News", the company's primary promotion efforts are centered in its calendars. These are hard cover calendars with special places to note such special pool care dates as time to put in chlorine.

They are distributed via the Aladdin mailing list, at the firm's stores and through salesmen. Lindy Combust reports other pool industry firms have "borrowed" the idea from Aladdin with some even photographing the entire calendar, substituting only their name. This, she said, "is something of a compliment."

Lassiter, Garden Grove Manager, is Veteran in Pool Industry

William B. Lassiter is one of the few Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co. employees who got his start in the swimming pool business before joining Aladdin.

Lassiter was employed by a major swimming pool equipment manufacturer before coming to Aladdin last year as manager of the company's retail store in Garden Grove, Calif.

Before getting into the pool business he worked for Alemite-Stewart Warner and Yale Lock Co.

Lassiter, 40, is a native of Savannah, Ga., and a graduate of the University of Southern California. He served in the Navy during World War II. He and his wife Joanne have a daughter, Nancy and a son, Robert.



JIM COFFIN
Covina Store Manager



WAYNE MCVEIGH
Tustin Store Manager

Robert Hillman Moved up Through the Ranks in Aladdin Operation

Robert Hillman, manager of Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co.'s Bell Garden Calif. retail store and purchasing agent for the firm, is a prime example of the company's philosophy of having staff men trained in all aspects of the business.

Hillman, 35, joined Aladdin in 1959 as a pool service man. In 1960 he became manager of the firm's retail store in Tustin. In 1963, he was transferred back to the company's headquarters as service manager and purchasing agent.

A native of Chicago, Hillman attended school there. Before joining Aladdin he worked in sales for a Midwest construction firm and was employed in public relations for Disneyland.

Hillman, his wife, Erma, and 15 year old daughter Carmella Ann, live in Orange City, Calif.

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(Continued from page 22)

hired to assist her. A second was hired in 1960 and today, Lindy has three helpers. Among the four of them they handle all the paper work for a million dollar a year business.

DAUGHTER, LINDY

Bud, 39, and Lindy, 38, have one daughter, named for her mother, 15 years of age. According to Bud, when Lindy isn't tending the store, she is buying clothes for their daughter and enjoying it more than her namesake.

The family occupies the same Bell Gardens, Calif. home from which they started their business. They also have the same pool which inspired Bud to go into the swimming pool business back in 1950. He found at that time that he was well able to service and make necessary repairs on his own pool and that there was a serious lack of people qualified to do this. He decided to correct this lack.

Aladdin's present facilities are immediately adjacent to the Combest home so that Bud and Lindy are very much "at home" when they are at work. Even the family car is equipped with a radio so that the Combests can keep in constant touch with their radio controlled truck fleet and with all their stores.

Aladdin's Chief Engineer Joined Company This Year

Ves Massey, Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co.'s chief engineer, is one of the company's newest employees having joined the firm early this year.

A native of Grove Springs, Mo., Massey, 43, attended grammar and high schools there and came to California in 1936. He served in the Navy during World War II.

Following his discharge from the Navy he held engineering positions with Douglas Aircraft Co., Marshall Engineering and Waste King Corp. He has taken extension courses in industrial management at UCLA and in industrial tooling at California Institute of Technology.

Hostetter, Bellflower Mgr. Joined Aladdin in 1959

Cecil O. Hostetter, manager of Aladdin Swimming Pool Service and Supply Co.'s Bellflower, Calif. retail store, has been with the company since 1959.

He was a pool service man before moving to the Bellflower store as manager in 1962.

A native of Clarksburg, W. Va., Hostetter, 39, came to California in 1944. Before joining Aladdin, he was employed by Signal Truck and as a parts department man for a Pontiac dealer.

COMPACT CHEMISTRY

FROM CHEM-LAB/KEMEX MAKES MONEY FOR ALADDIN POOL SUPPLY

Chem-Lab/Kemex Inc. is pardonably proud of the part its products have played in the dynamic growth of Aladdin Pool Supply. Other smart dealers have also discovered that this "Compact Chemistry" line brightens the profit picture. How about you?



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KEM-GUARD BOOSTER The economical dry chlorine stabilizer.



KEM-DRI POOL ACID The safe, handy way to neutralize pH.



CHEM-KIT The dual set that gauges chlorine and acid requirement.



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BILL LASSITER
Garden Grove Store Manager

COMBEST

(Continued from page 18)

Combest feels the basic key to operation of a successful pool supply store is to "keep it clean." He feels many such stores allow their equipment to become dirty unthinkingly. He says these stores often are run by men who wouldn't think of purchasing equipment themselves "covered by six months shop dirt."

He warns against overstocking which he said is another common failing of pool supply store operators because so many "deals" are offered on quantity purchases. He said operators who take advantage of such deals lose in the long run because they waste valuable storage and display space and often find themselves stuck with equipment which becomes obsolete before it can be sold.

Along with farsightedness, Bud believes hard work has been the key to Aladdin's success and is an ingredient essential to success in any business.

FAMILY

(Continued from page 24)

Purchasing too is handled by one person. It is the job of Bob Hillman who doubles as service manager for the Bell Garden area.

SERVICE OPERATION

Aladdin's service operation is tightly controlled by radio with trucks dispatched both from the Bell Garden's headquarters and from the company's Garden Grove store.

Each store manager has served in Aladdin's other operations and is as familiar with them as with the retail end of the business.

Combest says in looking for new men, he finds an appliance background helpful. For the most part, however, he prefers to train the men himself.