

ISSUE 13

JUNE 2025

POOL NATION

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Combined Service

SPOTLIGHTS & INSIGHTS

100 YEARS OF HAYWARD

*From humble beginnings
to global leadership in
pool technology.*



HAYWARD | **100**

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WELCOME LETTER

Dear Pool Nation,

This issue is a special one! As Hayward celebrates its 100-year anniversary, we at Pool Nation are honored to dedicate an entire edition to a company that has shaped our industry and continues to lead it forward!

Many of you already know Hayward. You've installed their pumps, programmed their automation systems, and trusted their products in backyards and commercial properties across the country. You probably even know some of the men and women who work behind the scenes, whether it's your local rep or someone you met at a trade show or training.

Over the past month, we have had the chance to go even deeper. We invited several Hayward team members onto the podcast to share their stories. We also visited with tenured employees who are featured in this issue.

What we found was something more than innovation or product excellence. We found people who care. We visited with employees who take pride in their craft. They are truly passionate about helping pool pros deliver the best possible experience to our customers and it renewed our excitement for the future!

What stood out the most is that Hayward's mission is not just a marketing slogan. When they say "build better so you can backyard better," they mean it.

This magazine issue is our way of celebrating not just a company, but the people behind it. From Charlotte to Canada, Spain to Australia, Hayward has spent the last 100 years growing, learning, and showing up for this industry. And they are not done. The next century promises even more.

Thank you for being part of this moment with us. We hope this magazine not only celebrates where we have been but also stirs hope for the future. The best is still to come. Congratulations, Hayward Holdings!

Edgar, John & Zac
Pool Nation

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**100 YEARS OF
HAYWARD:
THEIR JOURNEY &
THEIR PEOPLE**

INSIDE HAYWARD'S 100-YEAR JOURNEY

**IN 1925, IRVING M. HAYWARD FOUNDED
A SMALL METAL VALVE AND FLOW
CONTROL BUSINESS IN NEW YORK.**

No one could have predicted that this modest company would grow into one of the most respected and recognizable names in the pool and outdoor living industry. A hundred years later, Hayward Holdings, Inc. is celebrating a milestone that few American companies ever reach: its centennial year.

Originally focused on industrial applications, the company began to shift in a new direction in 1964 when Oscar Davis, a visionary businessman and Hungarian immigrant, acquired Hayward. Under his leadership, and with the rising popularity of backyard swimming pools, Hayward Pool Products, Inc. was born. From that point forward, the company expanded rapidly, positioning itself as a leader in pool equipment and technology. Over the decades, Hayward has introduced industry-shaping innovations, from salt chlorine generators and variable-speed pumps to fully integrated automation systems that have redefined what it means to enjoy a smart, energy-efficient pool.

Throughout all the growth and transformation, one thing has remained constant: Hayward's commitment to quality, innovation, and people. Now headquartered in North Carolina and operating as Hayward Holdings, the company continues to serve customers around the world while staying true to the values that made it successful for generations.

For this special Fourth of July issue, Pool Nation is proud to highlight six long-serving team members and share their journeys. The story of Hayward is, in many ways, an American story. It is a story of hard work, resilience, and opportunity. It was built by individuals who quietly showed up day after day, helping shape what has become one of the nation's most trusted names in pool technology. Together, their 182 years of combined service reflect more than loyalty – they represent a deep commitment to excellence, strong culture, and the future of the industry.

These are their stories.

STUART BAKER

Vice President of Development & Global Strategic Planning **27 Years**

When Stuart Baker left a quiet village outside Cambridge, England, he never imagined he would one day be part of a billion-dollar global brand like Hayward. His background was rooted in chemistry and pharmacology, and he seemed destined for the pharmaceutical world. But in 1998, a corporate acquisition changed everything. At the time, Baker was running the European division of an industrial liquid filtration company, ISP Filters. That company was acquired by Hayward Industries, which at the time operated both a pool business and a lesser-known industrial filtration division. Baker joined Hayward through that acquisition, reporting to Robert Davis, son of Hayward owner Oscar Davis. "I was running the business in Europe when Oscar had a health scare and Robert took over as CEO," Baker recalled. "He asked me to relocate to New Jersey for two years. I said yes, not knowing that two years would turn into over two decades."

A NEW LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

Once in the United States, Baker oversaw the industrial division until it was sold to Eaton in 2005.



After completing his non-solicit agreement, he returned to Hayward this time on the pool side—just as the company made a critical move that would define its future. "Hayward had just acquired Goldline Controls, which introduced automation, salt chlorine generation, and LED lighting to our portfolio," Baker said. "That was the beginning of a huge shift for the company. We were no longer just a pump, filter and heating equipment company—we were stepping into the future of pool technology." The transition not only marked a turning point for Hayward's innovation but also for Baker's role. He became General Manager of the automation division and later rose into senior leadership, helping shape company-wide strategy.

"I never expected to be in the U.S. this long," he said. "My wife and I are now citizens, our daughter just graduated high school, and we've built our life here."

BUILDING LEGACY THROUGH INNOVATION AND CULTURE

Today, Baker serves as Vice President of Business Development and Global Strategy, a role that touches nearly every corner of the business. From mergers and acquisitions to investor relations and long-range planning, his work is future-focused. "I spend a lot of time with our CEO Kevin Holleran along with my fellow executive team, leading strategic planning efforts and identifying companies that fit into our long-term vision," he said. "We are constantly evaluating how we can strengthen our offerings, grow our market share, and stay

ahead in the space of automation and energy efficiency." In 2021, Baker played a key role in leading Hayward's transition from private to public markets, resulting in a successful launch on the New York Stock Exchange. It was a monumental step in the company's history, and one of Baker's most cherished memories came when he participated in ringing the bell at the New York Stock Exchange to mark the occasion.

Baker is just as passionate about culture as he is about technology. He credits the early leadership of Oscar Davis with shaping Hayward's people-first approach. "Oscar came to America as a poor Hungarian immigrant. He bought Hayward when it was making under \$500,000 a year and turned it into a global enterprise," Baker said. "He believed in treating people right. When we sold the industrial business, he gave every employee a special sale bonus."



INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Baker's leadership also extends outside the company. He serves on the board of the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) and is deeply involved with the Step Into Swim initiative, which provides swim lessons to underserved communities. The initiative, led by Olympic gold medalist Rowdy Gaines, has grown to over \$4 million in funding with every dollar matched by PHTA.

"Being part of the check ceremony during our 100-year celebration was powerful," Baker said. "Kevin Holleran, Rowdy Gaines, and several of us stood together handing over a major donation. It wasn't just about business, it was about saving lives and making a difference."

This focus on impact and stewardship is something Baker believes is core to Hayward's continued success. As the company entered its public chapter, he helped guide preparations for the IPO, attending investor meetings and creating materials that communicate the heart behind the brand. "We are proud to be part of what I call the 'half-percent club.' Only 0.5% of U.S. companies reach 100 years," he said. "Our team knows what it takes—sustainability, sound financial choices, and a culture of care."

LOOKING AHEAD WITH PURPOSE

Even after many years with Hayward—seven of those on the senior leadership team—Baker remains energized about what's next. He is quick to name standout achievements like the launch of the Omni platform and the company's leadership in salt chlorination. But he sees legacy not just in product innovation, but in people.

"I hope I'm remembered for helping to shape teams and strategies that will outlast me," he said. "My job has always been to help position others to win and to create clarity around the direction we're heading."

That sense of clarity, commitment, and consistency is what makes Stuart Baker a valuable leader at Hayward. Whether walking through trade shows, boardrooms, or Hayward's offices, he carries with him the same principle that has guided his career since the beginning: treat people with respect, and lead with purpose.

"Respect goes a long way," he said. "And it always comes back."



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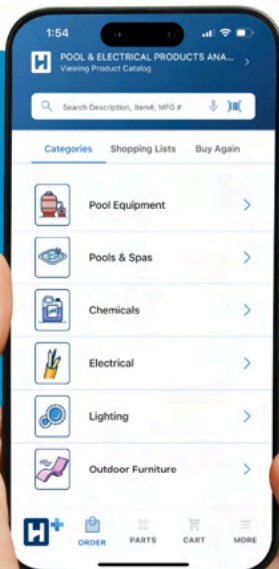
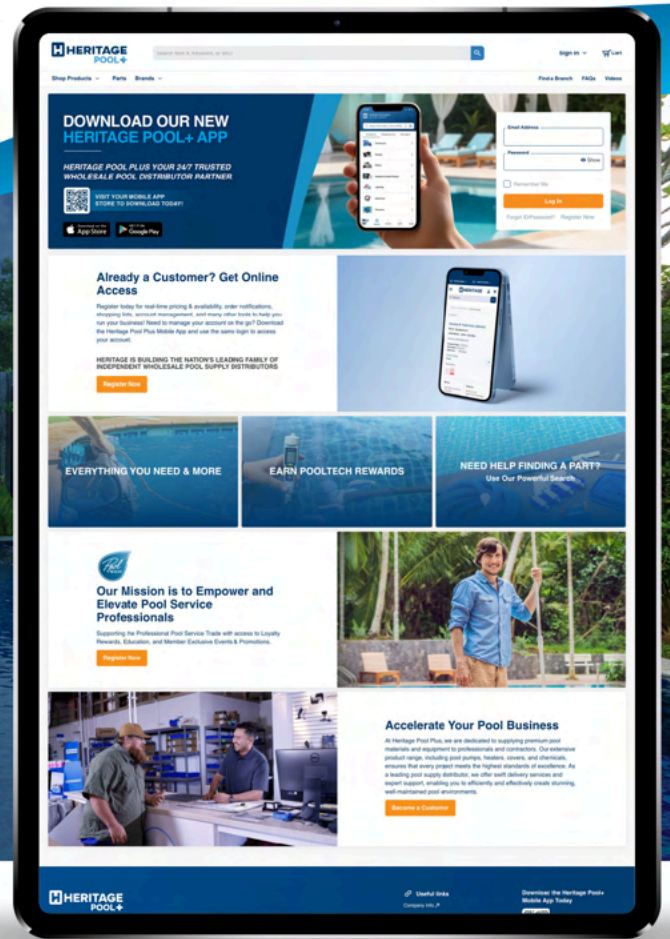
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TOM DISSINGER

Vice President of Channel Management 27 Years

Tom Dissinger didn't start in a suit. He started behind a counter, elbow-deep in water testing kits, selling above-ground pools and hauling patio furniture under the Buffalo sun. While most people associate the pool industry with Florida or California, few realize Buffalo and Western New York were once some of the biggest pool markets per capita in the country. And that's exactly where Dissinger cut his teeth.

"I got into the business in 1989," he said. "Buffalo had a short pool season, so we had to make money fast. I was playing sports in college, and pool retail gave me that opportunity." Dissinger was born in Michigan but spent his early childhood in Kernersville, North Carolina. "I'm told I developed a pretty heavy Southern drawl," he said. His family later relocated to Buffalo, New York, where he learned how to adapt to people in a wide range of environments. The pool industry was fast-paced and physical, but it gave Dissinger something more valuable than a paycheck. It gave him industry instinct. He learned how to listen to customers, troubleshoot on the fly, and think like a business owner—skills that would carry him through every stage of his career.



After relocating to Charlotte in 1997 with his fiancée, Dissinger got the call that would change everything. His Hayward representative in Buffalo, Jeff Moeckel, let him know that Hayward was hiring in the Charlotte area. The company was already known for its reliability, innovation and having the best employees. Dissinger didn't hesitate.

"I thought, 'If Hayward hires people like Jeff, that's where I want to be,'" he said. He officially joined the company on January 18, 1998, starting at the ground level as a Territory Sales Manager. He hit the road, shook hands with builders, stood in service bays, and built trust one conversation at a time.

FROM LOCAL SALES TO NATIONAL STRATEGY

Dissinger didn't just clock time—he built momentum. Over the years, he moved from Territory Manager to District Sales Manager, and eventually into a Regional Sales leadership role with national account responsibilities. With every step, he brought a deep respect for the trades and a sharp eye for what builders, retailers, and service professionals really need to succeed.

"Jack Burrows, a longtime Hayward tech support legend, used to say pool pros have to be many things, including part plumber, part electrician, part salesperson and, because we deal with the general public, part psychologist," Dissinger said. "He wasn't wrong. That's why I love this industry. It keeps you sharp."



In 2022, after nearly 25 years with the company, Dissinger was promoted to Vice President of Channel Management. Now he leads Hayward's Channel Team, overseeing distribution, builder network, e-commerce, and retail strategy. He works cross-functionally with Sales, Marketing, Product Strategy, Customer Care, and Operations to help guide national partnerships and develop strategy for long-term channel growth. "It's more strategic now, but the heart of it hasn't changed," he said. "This business still runs on relationships. Whether I'm meeting with a builder or sitting in a boardroom, my job is to understand what people need and help them succeed."

PEOPLE FIRST, EVERY TIME

While Dissinger has taken on larger roles and bigger challenges, he's never lost his core values. His approach to leadership is deeply personal. He believes that success is built over time, person by person, decision by decision. "Any success I've had is because of the people I've worked with and learned from," he said. "I've always tried to show up for others the way people showed up for me." That includes his family. Dissinger and his wife have three teenage sons, and no matter where work takes him, they are his first priority. "My wife is a saint," he said, smiling.

"Raising three boys while I'm on the road half the time is no joke. But I've always believed in life-work integration. Not balance, integration. You make it work for your life." Over his 27 years with Hayward, Dissinger has collected more than just business milestones. He's witnessed pivotal moments in company history and national events that shaped how he leads today. He remembers meeting Oscar Davis, Hayward's owner at the time, when he flew in to interview.

"OSCAR WAS WALKING DOWN THE STAIRS, HIS ARMS FULL OF BINDERS AND A JACKET. THAT WORK ETHIC AND GRIT WAS IN HIS DNA," DISSINGER SAID. "IT WAS CLEAR RIGHT AWAY—THIS WAS A COMPANY BUILT BY PEOPLE WHO WEREN'T AFRAID TO WORK."

He recalls sitting next to Robert Davis when he announced to the sales leadership team the decision to sell the company, and Robert leaned over and said, "It's the right time for our employees." He remembers the dust still hanging in the air when he drove into Manhattan just weeks after 9/11. And more recently, he remembers the moment when Hayward announced its corporate move to Charlotte. "I had to end a customer call," he said. "It just hit me. That was full circle for me and my family."

GRIT, GRATITUDE, AND THE NEXT GENERATION

Dissinger believes in hard work, but he also believes in helping others rise. His greatest pride comes not from awards or titles, but from watching people he hired or mentored take the next step in their careers. "If someone remembers me as the person who helped them when they needed it, that's the legacy I want," he said. "I've seen folks I brought in buy their first homes, become leaders, start families. That's what fills me up." He also gets excited about the future of pool technology. He's particularly passionate about salt chlorine generation—calling himself "a total nerd" when it comes to the salt chlorination process—and he believes smart, decentralized automation will shape the industry going forward.

"WITH OMNIX, YOU CAN NOW BUILD A CONNECTED POOL ONE PIECE OF EQUIPMENT AT A TIME," HE SAID. "IT'S LIKE SMART HOME TECH FOR YOUR BACKYARD. AND FOR THE AFTERMARKET, IT'S A GAME-CHANGER."

Dissinger's advice to new pool professionals is simple, but it carries weight from someone who's lived it. "Be curious. Be willing to work hard. You don't have to have the perfect resume. Just show up, ask questions, and give people a reason to trust you," he said. "This industry rewards those who lean in."

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REGINA PAYNE

Vice President of Human Resources 29 Years

Regina Payne didn't grow up dreaming of boardrooms or corporate strategy. She grew up in a town where hard work wasn't optional, it was inherited. Raised in the foothills of King, North Carolina, by her grandparents, Payne learned early that character mattered more than credentials and that showing up for others wasn't a nice idea, it was a way of life. "You worked hard, you learned to take care of others, and that's just what you did," Payne said. "That's probably why I've been successful, because of that foundation." Long before she stepped into her first human resources role, Payne was sweeping metal shavings off the basement floor of her father's small business, helping with office paperwork and quietly building the work ethic that would anchor her future. She didn't know it then, but she was already doing the work of human resources. She just called it family.

A MOMENT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

In 1996, Payne found herself looking for her next step. Her role at a textile company under VF Corporation was being outsourced.



WITH NO BIG PLAN, SHE SPOTTED A CLASSIFIED AD FOR A 24-HOUR MANUFACTURING COMPANY SHE HAD NEVER HEARD OF. THE COMPANY WAS HAYWARD

"I didn't know who they were. I didn't even know where Clemmons [North Carolina] was," Payne said. "I just needed a job." She walked into the interview expecting to leave with a paycheck. She walked out with a gut-level feeling that this place could be something more. "The energy of the facility hooked me," she said. "I remember thinking, I should have dressed better. I really wanted that job." She got it, and she stayed. Her first day was March 12, 1996.

At the time, everything was manual — green screens, Excel 1-2-3 and paper files. Her title was HR representative, but what she really became was a bridge between the people on the floor and those in leadership. Even in those early days, she noticed something rare in the way the company treated its people. “It was still family-owned,” Payne said. “And even the executives treated you like your voice mattered. That kind of culture is rare, and it’s why I’ve stayed this long.”

FROM ENTRY-LEVEL TO EXECUTIVE

Over the next 29 years, Payne quietly became a cornerstone of Hayward’s culture. She moved through roles that shaped her understanding of every side of human resources, including generalist, partner, manager, director and now vice president of human resources for North America and China. She currently leads HR operations across five U.S. facilities, one site in Canada and a major manufacturing facility in Wuxi, China.

“My work used to be very tactical, handling day-to-day issues and systems,” she said. “Now it’s strategic. I spend my time aligning people-strategies with business outcomes, coaching leaders and building culture across our teams.” Payne believes great leadership isn’t about titles or visibility. It’s about empowering others to lead e said.

with authenticity and confidence. “Everyone is unique, and no one can be better than you,” she “I want people to find their voice and lead with who they really are. That’s where true strength comes from.”



STANDING STRONG THROUGH CHANGE

Payne has helped guide Hayward through some of the company's most pivotal transitions. She played a central role in the integration of newly acquired teams and supported large-scale organizational changes, including the shift into private equity and, later, the public market.

One of her most memorable moments came on her 25th anniversary with the company when she rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange. "It was amazing," she said. "But it wasn't just about me. That moment symbolized everything we had built together. All the changes, all the growth, all the hard work—it was a shared victory." Payne also remembers the challenges, from navigating the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic to the emotional impact of facility closures and restructuring. In each case, she leaned into Hayward's core strength—its people. "Our culture shows up in the hard times," she said. "People don't say, 'That's not my job.' They say, 'What can we do together?' That mindset is what makes this place special.

PURPOSE OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

While Payne carries tremendous responsibility in her role, she remains deeply rooted in what matters most to her: faith, family, and finding joy in the little things. Her daughter grew up with

Hayward, forming relationships with the team that feel more like extended family. Now, Payne beams when she talks about her 18-month-old grandson. "He's absolutely adorable," she said. "My daughter still asks about people at Hayward, just like they ask about her. That tells you everything about this place."

When she's not leading strategy meetings or walking the floor, she finds peace in nature. She loves sunrises, butterflies, and hikes through the mountains. These small moments of stillness ground her. "Life is short and precious," she said. "I try to appreciate it all."

PAYNE IS QUICK TO REMIND PEOPLE THAT HAYWARD ISN'T JUST A NAME ON A PRODUCT. IT'S A PEOPLE-FIRST COMPANY WITH A STRONG VISION FOR THE FUTURE. "WE'RE INCREDIBLY STRATEGIC. OUR EXECUTIVE TEAM IS ALIGNED, AND WE KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING," SHE SAID. "BUT WE ALSO LEAD WITH EMPATHY AND CARE. THAT'S NOT JUST SOMETHING WE SAY—IT'S SOMETHING WE LIVE."

She is especially proud of Hayward's early adoption of lean manufacturing principles, which began in 1999 and still influence the company's approach to innovation, structure, and talent development today. It's this blend of precision and people-centered thinking that makes Hayward's culture unique in the industry.

LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY

Payne doesn't need a spotlight. She doesn't chase attention. What she chases is trust, growth, and a lasting impact. When asked what she hopes her legacy will be, her answer is simple and powerful. "I want to develop others. I want to create a culture of trust. If someone looks back and says, 'Remember Regina? She made that better,' that's all I could ever ask for." Payne has spent 29 years building a legacy inside Hayward. Not just through systems or strategies, but through moments.

She is the one people call when things get hard. She is the one who listens without judgment and speaks with clarity. And she is the one who shows up—day in and day out—with empathy, resilience, and quiet authority. As Hayward celebrates 100 years, leaders like Regina Payne remind us what truly makes a company great. It isn't just the technology or the market share. It's the people behind it. And for almost three decades, Payne has been one of the strongest hearts behind it all.





Crystal Lengua

VP SMP Metal &
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Melissa Kieling

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LUISA RODRIGUEZ

Director of E-Commerce & Sales Operations **31 Years**

When Luisa Rodriguez looks back at her three-decade journey with Hayward, she doesn't just recall a career. She sees a legacy. Her story began far from the manufacturing floor, in a quiet fishing town called Murtosa, just outside Porto, Portugal. Born in the United States, she moved with her family to Portugal in her early years after her grandmother fell ill. Her father, a devoted diesel mechanic named Marcelino (Marc), uprooted the family so he could help care for her.

"HE ALWAYS TAUGHT US TO VALUE EVERYONE," RODRIGUEZ SAID. "RESPECT EVERYONE. BECAUSE EVERYONE MATTERS. THAT'S STAYED WITH ME MY WHOLE LIFE."

Her upbringing in Portugal left a mark, one she hoped to pass on to her own children. "It was such a special place to grow up. I wish I could have given that same experience to my kids," she said. The family eventually returned to the U.S., settling on the Jersey Shore. Rodriguez enrolled in college, planning to enter the clinical field, but a few semesters in, she faced a sobering reality: "I couldn't do blood. That was a hard stop." Around the same time, she got married and became a mother.



In need of stability, she took a chance on a short-term role at Hayward in 1993. That role would turn into a career spanning more than 30 years.

A FRONT DESK, A FAMILY, AND A FUTURE

Rodriguez's first week at Hayward came with a now-legendary moment. Filling in at the front desk, she was told not to let anyone through without ID. So when Oscar Davis, the company's owner, arrived without one, she politely turned him away. "He went back to his car to get it," she recalled with a laugh. "Later that day, when I met Robert Davis, he said, 'You're the one



who stopped my dad!' I apologized, but he told me, 'Don't apologize for doing your job.' That moment stuck with me." That determination would define her early years. Within weeks, she was hired full-time. Soon after, she moved into the actuation department, where she entered orders, assembled products, and handled shipping. It wasn't long before she began moving through the ranks, holding roles in customer service, sales, marketing, and operations.

"I've always been willing to learn and do the work," she said. "If something needed doing, I stepped in." At the time, the manufacturing floor didn't have many women, especially in her department, but Rodriguez never saw that as a limitation. "I was given a chance, and that meant everything."

A COMPANY AND A MARRIAGE BUILT TO LAST

Hayward wasn't just the place Rodriguez found her career. It's also where she found her husband. "He was training for a new role in the actuation division," she said. "I was still in New Jersey, and he was in North Carolina. We did long-distance for two years, then I moved south to start our life together."

Today, the Rodriguez name runs deep in the company. Her husband has been with Hayward longer than she has, with over 32 years of service. Her sister-in-law and mother-in-law each worked there for more than two decades. Even one of her sons spent four years on the team.

"IT REALLY IS A FAMILY BUSINESS FOR US," SHE SAID. "WE'VE SEEN COWORKERS HAVE KIDS, AND NOW THEIR KIDS WORK HERE. THAT'S THE KIND OF PLACE THIS IS."

Rodriguez, now the Director of E-Commerce and Sales Operations, oversees inside sales and ensures teams across the company operate cohesively. Though she's only been in this specific role for a month, her influence reaches far beyond her title. "Anyone who comes to me with a need is my customer, internal or external. My job is to make sure they have what they need to be successful."

A HEART FOR PEOPLE & A PASSION FOR PROGRESS

For Rodriguez, work has always been about the people. "We spend more time at work than anywhere else, it becomes your community," she said. "I've had coworkers see me pregnant, then see my son grow up. It's not just a job. It's a legacy." Looking back, she's especially proud of the systems and processes she helped build, things that have outlasted titles or org charts.

"I hope people remember that I cared. That I made a difference." That impact, she says, isn't just about the work. It's about how you do it. "I've become a better listener," she said. "In the beginning, I thought solving problems meant talking first. But in customer care, and in life, it starts with listening." Her professional growth mirrors her personal one. She's raised three children and now jokes about the gray hairs to prove it. Two are married. The youngest is finishing college with a degree in finance.



INNOVATION, LEGACY, AND THE ROAD AHEAD

From fax machines and hot glue to automation and AI, Rodriguez has seen Hayward evolve in ways few others have. "I remember pressing buttons to cut tape lengths, and now we're using sophisticated systems," she said. "But it's not just the product, it's the way we work."

Of all Hayward's innovations, she's most impressed with the customer-first shift in pool care. "Growing up, we had pools, and I remember the itchy eyes and chlorine smell," she said. "That's gone now. Hayward products make pool ownership simple and comfortable. You don't think about the equipment. You just make memories."

As the company celebrates its 100th anniversary, Rodriguez reflects on what it means to be part of something so enduring. "I started as a 20-year-old answering phones, just trying to figure life out," she said. "And here I am, decades later, still growing, still learning, still proud to be here."

**HER STORY IS MORE THAN A CAREER
TIMELINE. IT IS A TRIBUTE TO
PERSEVERANCE, PURPOSE, AND
PEOPLE. IT IS THE STORY OF A
WOMAN WHO DIDN'T JUST WORK AT
HAYWARD, SHE HELPED SHAPE IT,
ALWAYS CARRYING WITH HER THE
LESSON HER FATHER TAUGHT HER
LONG AGO: "VALUE EVERYONE,
BECAUSE EVERYONE MATTERS."**





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TODD BULLINGTON

**Plant Manager, Clemmons,
NC 24 Years**

When Todd Bullington was a kid, his favorite moments were the ones spent at the kitchen table with his mother, sketching cartoons and tracing lines. Art was his first love. By the time he reached high school, he began to wonder how to turn that love into a career.

"I had some really great counselors who helped me see what was possible," Bullington said. "I got a two-year degree in drafting and design, and from there, I transferred my credits and pursued an engineering degree."

But that path wasn't without sacrifice. Coming from a large family, Bullington knew that if he wanted a four-year education, he would have to pay for it himself. So he joined the Army and later used the GI Bill to fund his college journey. "I was a little older than most students," he said. "I made my bed every morning, took notes, and paid attention. I had been getting discipline for a few years and took college very seriously. I didn't cram—I absorbed the material. I'm proud I supported my own education." Bullington became the first in his family to earn a four-year degree. After graduating, he took a job with Eaton Corporation near the



North Carolina–South Carolina border, but eventually began looking for work closer to home and family land. In January 2001, he joined Hayward. "I've driven an hour each way, every day, for 24 years," he said. "That says something about my commitment."

A MILITARY MAN, A MANUFACTURER, A MISSION

Bullington entered Hayward with a background in lean manufacturing and a willingness to take on messy problems. His first impression of the Clemmons facility? Chaos.



LEADING THROUGH CRISIS AND GROWTH

Just a year into his leadership role, Bullington faced the unimaginable: a global pandemic, a massive facility integration, and a historic demand spike—all at once. “In 2019, we were in the process of closing a West Coast facility and bringing half that operation here,” he said. “Then COVID hit. I remember our first positive case. Then it escalated—100 people were out at one point. We had distancing, quarantines, travel bans. At the same time, demand was through the roof.” People were investing in their homes, building decks and pools. Hayward’s Clemmons facility became a critical lifeline. Departments fell more than 100 days behind on orders. But under Bullington’s leadership, the team rallied.

“In about 18 months, we doubled the plant’s daily output,” he said. “We never closed. Not one day. We closed areas, but we stayed open. We knew we needed to provide for our people.” The facility grew quickly. More machines. More people. More hours. At one point, over 400 new employees had joined. Through it all, Bullington remained focused on investing in the building, the people, and the future. “This building was built in 1968. It was run-down,” he said. “Today, it looks like a facility for a billion-dollar company. New entrances, new lobbies, upgraded restrooms, training rooms, security systems. It’s become something we’re proud of.” He calls it “Looks and Pride.” That mindset has come to define the Clemmons site under his leadership.

FAITH, FAMILY, AND A LEGACY OF SERVICE

Bullington comes from a long line of service. He served in the Army. His father also served and, in a full-circle moment, once stayed in the same Fort Jackson barracks where Bullington later trained. “My mom has a shelf with all the pictures on it,” he said. “My dad was in the Army. My brother was in the Marines. Another brother’s a state trooper. The youngest is with the Virginia State Police. And now their kids are in uniform too. We’re a real patriotic kind of family.

That spirit has shaped the Clemmons facility. The team now flies three flags—American, North Carolina, and Hayward—outside the building. They hosted a flag-raising ceremony with the local VFW and added a veteran wall featuring photos of employees in uniform. “You look at those pictures and they’re all 18 or 19, almost unrecognizable,” he said. “But the discipline is there. The mindset is there. You can’t run a plant like the military, but you can take what you’ve learned and use it to lead.” At home, Bullington carries the same standard of excellence. He and his wife have two daughters. The oldest recently earned a master’s degree and is about to start her first teaching job. The youngest just graduated high school, already holds her CNA certification, and has a full nursing scholarship. “We have dinner every night as a family,” he said. “No TV, just real conversations. I try to model excellence. That’s what I want for my daughters.”

LEAVING A MARK THAT MATTERS

Looking back, Bullington is most proud of how he’s led others. For years, he focused on being the best engineer or the best manufacturing leader. But the past few years have shifted his perspective. “I realized I could accomplish so much more by elevating others,” he said. “I didn’t transform this facility alone. I just created the vision. My team executed it. They deserve the credit.”



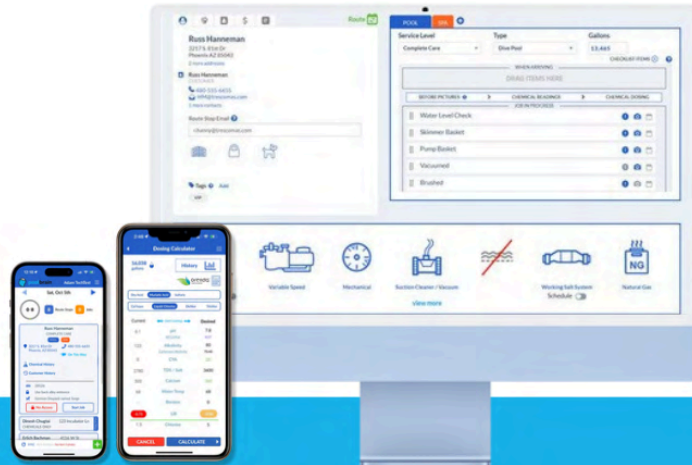
WHEN ASKED WHAT LEGACY HE HOPES TO LEAVE BEHIND, HIS ANSWER IS SIMPLE. “I WANT PEOPLE TO SAY I LED DURING THE TRANSITION—WHEN THIS OLD BUILDING BECAME THE FLAGSHIP OF A BILLION-DOLLAR COMPANY,” HE SAID. “I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED FOR HOW I HELPED US GROW.”

Bullington still believes in excellence, still believes in doing hard things, and still believes pressure reveals character. “Pressure makes diamonds or pressure makes dust,” he said. “You’ve got to decide which one you’re going to be.”



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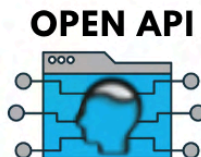
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GLORIA WARD

Plant Controller 44 Years

When Gloria Ward reflects on her 44-year career, she sees more than job titles or transitions. She sees decades of adaptability, resilience, and deep relationships that carried her through every season of life. Ward didn't grow up around pools or in a traditional corporate setting. Instead, her first job out of college involved selling windsurfers, which are surfboards with sails and were wildly popular in Europe at the time. That position introduced her to the world of leisure sports and international distribution, eventually leading her to Meridian Enterprises, an export management company owned by Charles Nevil. "Charles was a pioneer in export," said Ward, who is based in California. "We sold U.S.-made pool equipment around the world. Hayward was one of our biggest suppliers. We used to joke that we sold sand to the Saudis—filter sand, of course."

FROM STARTUP ROOTS TO GLOBAL EXPANSION

Ward began her career with Meridian in 1981, a 15-person company with a start-up spirit and a global outlook. It was a tight-knit team where everyone wore multiple hats. In 1996, Hayward acquired Meridian



to act as its export division, and Ward officially became part of the Hayward family.

"THAT WAS A BIG SHIFT," SHE SAID. "WE WENT FROM BEING 15 PEOPLE TO PART OF A COMPANY WITH HUNDREDS. BUT BECAUSE WE WERE HANDLING INTERNATIONAL SALES, WE STILL HAD SOME AUTONOMY. THAT HELPED WITH THE TRANSITION."

Her role evolved rapidly as Hayward grew from a family-run business to a publicly traded company. Ward played a key part in helping her team adapt to industry regulations like SOX compliance and finance reporting requirements. She also helped design a custom software system

or international business, oversaw the transition to Hayward's AS/400 platform, and is now helping implement Microsoft D365. "I've been through every major software change we've had," she said. "From floppy disks and ledger cards to modern systems. It's been a full arc, and I've learned to guide others through it too."

FAMILY FIRST, VARIETY ALWAYS

For Ward, staying with a company this long has never been about comfort—it's been about connection and growth. "My biggest passion in life is family," she said. "I have two young grandkids now, a two-year-old and a four-month-old. I love spending time with them. I also enjoy camping and being outdoors."



Despite not growing up with a swimming pool, Ward found herself immersed in the pool industry through the global lens of Hayward's international marketing group (IMG). It was the variety of her work, and the closeness of her team, that kept her coming back day after day, year after year. "I've never done the same job for 40 years," she said. "I've worked on pricing, quoting, logistics, promotions, reporting, rebate programs, customer service—every day has something new. That keeps me engaged." Ward started as an accounts receivable clerk, then moved into assistant controller and eventually controller. While her title stayed the same for many years, the job has never stood still. Today, she not only manages financial health but also oversees logistics, pricing strategy, and global communication efforts.

BUILDING BRIDGES AROUND THE WORLD

Hayward's IMG division services customers across time zones and continents. Ward has managed shipments and communication with factories in the U.S., China, Spain, and France. She's helped coordinate complex logistics, advised on international pricing, and strengthened customer relationships across the globe. "I always say I'm responsible for the financial health of

he division, but also the service experience," she said. "That means knowing what's shipping, when it's arriving, making sure documentation is in order, and that the customer is informed."

**SHE'S ALSO HELPED BUILD
SOMETHING LESS TANGIBLE—BUT
JUST AS POWERFUL.**

"Our team is very relationship-driven," she said. "We've taken clients sightseeing, to Disneyland, all kinds of things. It's more than just business. It's about trust. That kind of rapport helps everyone succeed." Ward cherishes memories of finance conferences where she met Hayward teams from Europe, China, and Australia. She's seen diverse cultures come together at the same table to solve problems and build strategies. "That's one of the things I'm most grateful for," she said. "I've learned how people from very different backgrounds can collaborate and care about the same goals."

**PERSEVERANCE,
ADAPTABILITY, AND
LEADERSHIP**

Over four decades, Ward's career has run parallel with her personal life. She got married, had children, lost her husband, and became a grandmother—all while working at the same company. "This company has been like family to me," she said.

"Through all those life moments, I stayed committed. I kept showing up, and I'm proud of that." She attributes her success to one key trait: adaptability. "Business changes. Life changes. The people you work with change," she said. "Being able to adjust and make things work is what's helped me stay and thrive." That mindset has carried through in her approach to leadership. Ward listens first. She values input from every team member. And she makes it a priority to ensure that process improvements aren't just efficient but also collaborative. "I hope people remember me as someone who built relationships, who valued others, and who helped the team grow," she said. "Whether it was through software transitions or international logistics, I always wanted to help people succeed."



LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

From dictating faxes to deploying modern enterprise software, Ward has witnessed Hayward's full transformation.

"What's impressed me most is the growth of the company," she said. "The leap in technology, the ability to control your pool from your phone—that's incredible. But on the business side too, we've gone from basic tools to deep, strategic data. It's made my job more interesting and more layered."

Ward hopes she'll be remembered not just for what she did, but for how she did it. "I've helped guide our division through so many changes," she said. "I've helped us adapt while keeping our team dynamic and customer-focused. That means a lot to me." Asked what she's most proud of, Ward doesn't hesitate. "My perseverance," she said. "And the fact that I never stopped growing. I've always leaned into change, and I've been fortunate to do work that matters with people I care about." That simple, steady dedication is what makes Gloria Ward a cornerstone of Hayward's 100-year story. It is also a powerful example of leadership that lasts.



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BUILT TO LAST

CELEBRATING HAYWARD'S FIRST 100 YEARS

As we close out this special edition, one thing is clear: reaching 100 years in business is no ordinary milestone. It is a rare achievement that speaks to endurance, innovation, and a deep-rooted commitment to people. Over the past century, Hayward has grown from a small operation into a global leader, building not only best-in-class products but also a culture that stands the test of time.

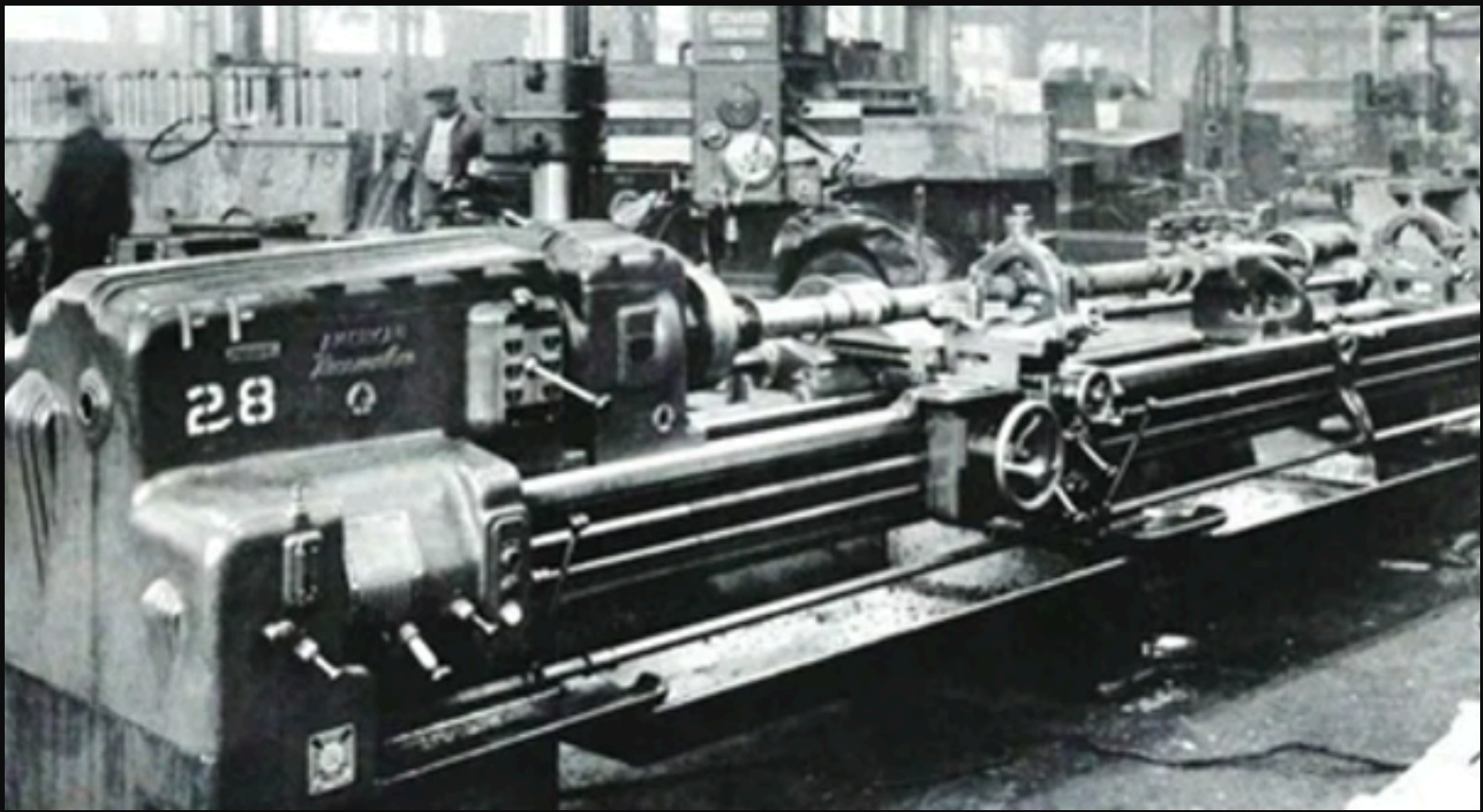
The stories shared in these pages are more than career highlights. They are the heartbeat of Hayward. They remind us that while technology drives progress, it's people who build legacies.

On behalf of Pool Nation and the broader industry, we are honored to celebrate Hayward's 100-year legacy. This company has helped define the standard for excellence in pool and spa technology, and its influence can be felt in backyards, communities, and companies around the world.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY HAYWARD



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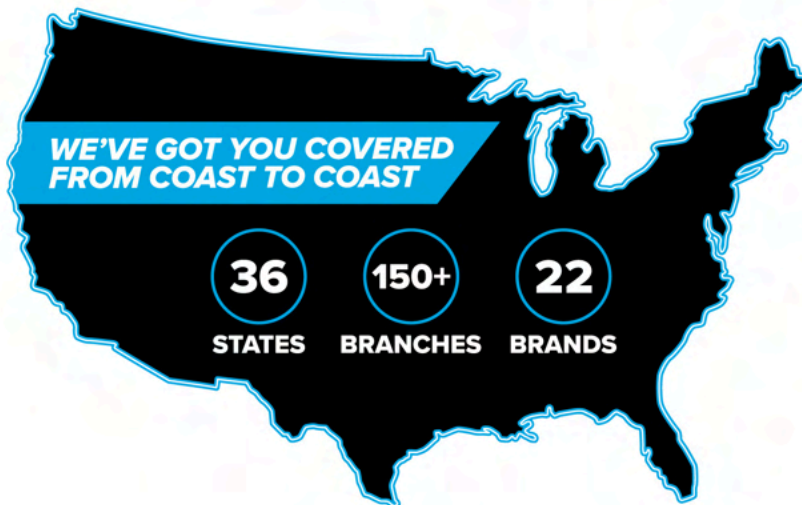






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