

# Bergquist Bulletin

SPRING/SUMMER 2022



## We Stock Over 12,000 Essential Items!

### BASIC ESSENTIALS

- First Stage Regulators
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- 2-PSI Service Regulators
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- Brass Fittings
- Hoses
- Pumps
- Paint
- Internal Valves
- ESVs

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- OPD Valves

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When you call Bergquist, you get your questions answered by the people who **know** propane equipment.



## Thank You for Visiting with Us at the 2022 NPGA Southeastern Convention & International Propane Expo in Nashville

We would like to thank everyone who stopped by our booth, celebrated with us for two evenings at our reception at Robert's Western World, attended our technical workshop, and listened to us speak at two informative educational sessions. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with old friends and new ones alike.

We're very much looking forward to discussing all things propane-industry related with you at your office, on the phone, or via email or text throughout the rest of this year.



The NPGA Expo opening reception



Our exhibit floor booth team

**The leader in wholesale propane equipment distribution, knowledge, & customer service.**

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# Unplugging Bottlenecks

Oil & Energy Magazine,  
April 2022



## How propane equipment wholesalers and installers can mitigate supply issues

Supply chain disruptions tend to have a cascading effect, especially when it comes to labor and materials shortages. Last year it was steel for propane cylinders. This year manufacturers are also having trouble getting their hands on brass, copper and other materials. As a result, propane equipment supply houses all across the globe have seen longer lead times on everything from galvanized pipe and rubber hose for dispensing systems to heating elements for gas logs and burners.

While some supply lines, like the one for steel, seem to be opening up, others are tightening. One manufacturer Oil & Energy spoke with in recent months said even shipping essentials like boxes and packing materials have been harder to find lately. Given such widespread bottlenecks, what can equipment providers — both wholesale suppliers and retail installers — do to mitigate the impact on their customers? To find out, Oil & Energy spoke with Andy Stearns, director of purchasing at propane equipment wholesaler Bergquist Inc.

“When working with manufacturers, we all know it’s been tough in these unprecedented times,” said Stearns. To fulfill “normal” delivery windows, many manufacturers have been requiring larger minimum orders. For suppliers like Bergquist, this has made manufacturer and vendor communications as well as inventory tracking more important than ever.

“We have to ask manufacturers what they are seeing on their end in terms of lead times,” Stearns said. “On our end, we’re making sure to keep our team engaged with vendors, too. We’re also monitoring and running queries on our warehouses so we can get lower-stocked items on order.” This helps suppliers brace for future availability issues and secure their place in the manufacturer’s fulfillment queue so they’re not “waiting for the last minute” if and when more troubles arise.

Likewise, retailers encountering inventory issues can relieve their bottlenecks by forecasting sales volumes, setting realistic expectations for their customers, and not putting off needed purchases. “If you see a part is on back-order, order it now so it’s in the supplier’s system and you’re not left waiting on line,” Stearns recommended.

As with every business operating amid a pandemic, flexibility has been integral to the supplier’s continued success. Stearns credits Bergquist’s shortening lead times to its long-standing relationships with multiple vendors. This has enabled the supplier to suggest a range of alternate products to its customers. “Bergquist strives to make sure we have alternate choices for everything we sell,” Stearns said. “Just because

something is an ‘industry standard’ for one specific vendor doesn’t mean we only carry that one product. We make sure to do our due diligence and stock alternatives for when situations like this occur.”

When that’s not enough, it’s time to “get creative.” Bergquist operates two distribution centers — one in Bowling Green, Kentucky and another in Toledo, Ohio, Stearns explained. “We can ship from Toledo to customers who normally get their products from Bowling Green,” he

said. “In addition to ‘flipping’ customer orders, we can also transition warehouse inventory to help reduce shipping costs.”

Other examples of potential workarounds include changing piping configurations for a dispenser cabinet to allow for proper flow with a bigger or smaller sized pipe. Alternatively, suppliers might even cut and thread pipes themselves. “We’re always working on creative solutions and asking ourselves how we can think outside of the box to satisfy everyone’s needs,” Stearns said. “We don’t look at this as a struggle, but as an opportunity to serve our new and existing customers better.”

The purchasing director was speaking specifically to his relationships with equipment distributors and retailers, but that’s a perspective that virtually every fuel supplier and service provider can appreciate, especially in times like these.

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— ANDY STEARNS





Don Heller

# From the Lens of His Self-Proclaimed Left-Hand Man

by Dale Aldrich

Although Don and I started our careers at Bergquist in the 90s, our paths didn't make a hard cross until late 2010. In 1997, Don had

been with Bergquist in Toledo for five years and was promoted to run our newly acquired M&E Equipment warehouse in Kansas City, MO. At that same time, our General Manager, Jim Silverwood, became president of the Ohio Propane Gas Association and I was hired to bolster our inside sales team.

Early in my career on the sales phones, one elderly female customer service representative working for a small propane marketer in Michigan described Don as "having the patience of Job". She said she really missed him when he moved to Kansas City.

It was during this time that I learned the term "Hellerisms" from our Toledo crew. It turns out Don has, at times, experienced some amusing behavior quirks. All were harmless yet comical and charming. Ask any one of us Bergquist old-timers about our favorite Hellerisms when you see us next.

In 2006, Jim Silverwood retired and Don was promoted to replace him, bringing Don back to Toledo. I was no longer working in the Toledo office as chance would have it. I had begun work as area sales manager for our Ohio / Pennsylvania territory. During that time I learned more about Don and that he was a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation gasser. His father, Dick, had been with a major marketer out east and some of our Pennsylvania customers knew him. They would ask how Dick was doing, and some remembered Don as well. Don had also worked for the same major marketer before taking a job with Bergquist, and many of those customers were very familiar with Don. Ellis, Bev, and Charlotte would ask about him during my sales visits and would even tell me of a few more Hellerisms from his days of working with them.

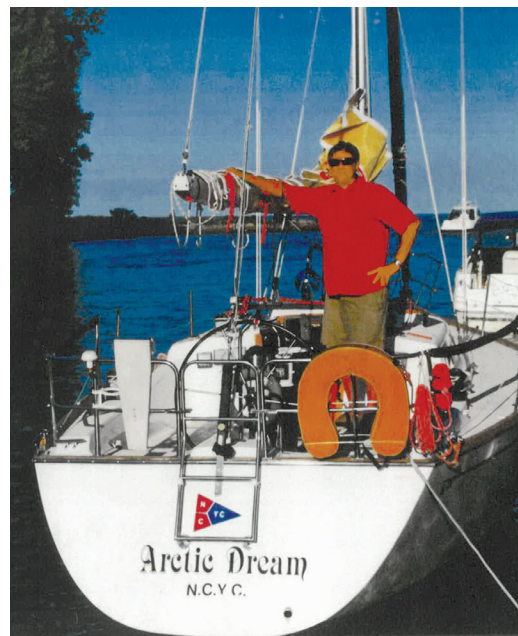
In late 2010 I was promoted to lead our growing inside sales team. This allowed Don to concentrate more on the propane products we sell and to help grow our business. I sat in the sales office next to Don's where his door was always open. My office was immediately to Don's left, thus I coined myself his left-hand man (and he is left handed). Needless to say, I learned a lot in that environment just from eavesdropping and overhearing his conversations. Until the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago, I spent most of the last ten years working side by side with Don.

During the several years I worked next to Don, I got to experience firsthand his patience with customers and his polite mannerisms. Don is the epitome of our goal to get customers the equipment they really want, not necessarily

what they were originally trying to order. Don has always had the detail of an engineer yet the ability to describe things very thoroughly and easy to understand. His explanations of propane equipment and their applications seem to have to start at the beginning and end at the end. There is no in-between. I think many of us that worked with Don in our Kansas City and Toledo sales offices have learned from him through osmosis, making us all better sales persons and, more importantly, better people.

Don has also played an extremely important part, in conjunction with our customers and vendors, in new propane-product development. He has been instrumental in taking customer feedback and getting that product information to the correct people with our vendor partners. Don has definitely played a large part of Bergquist, and the propane industry as a whole, progressing to what it has become today.

I know Don has always enjoyed his leisure life and will now be able to enjoy it even more. Don has a sailboat and I am sure he plans on enjoying it much more often now that he is retiring. So, to end my thoughts, I will share the lyrics of a classic rock song sung by Dennis DeYoung and the band STYX:



*I'm sailing away  
Set an open course for the virgin sea  
'Cause I've got to be free  
Free to face the life that's ahead of me  
On board I'm the captain  
So climb aboard  
We'll search for tomorrow  
On every shore and I'll try  
Oh Lord I'll try  
To carry on*

Happy sailing my friend, you will be missed.

Dale Aldrich  
Director of Inside Sales

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## Your Propane Equipment Experts

### HOME OFFICE & WAREHOUSE

1100 King Rd., Toledo, OH 43617

**800-537-7518**

### BOWLING GREEN

1344 Memphis Junction Rd., Bowling Green, KY 42101

**800-448-9504**

### INDIANAPOLIS

Carmel, IN 46032

**800-662-3252**

### KANSAS CITY

11006 Parallel Parkway, Suite 204, Kansas City, KS 66109

**800-821-3878**

### MINNEAPOLIS

327 Marshall Rd., Suite 355, Shakopee, MN 55379

**800-328-6291**

[www.bergquistinc.com](http://www.bergquistinc.com)



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1100 King Road  
Toledo, OH 43617



Andy Stearns

## Bergquist, Inc. Welcomes Director of Purchasing, Andy Stearns

At Bergquist, we continue to identify ways to increase efficiency and reduce expenses without compromising quality. In 2021, it was evident our global supply chain showed an imbalance and limitations. In

response, we made the decision to solidify our purchasing team. We couldn't be more excited to welcome Andy and help drive our business forward. He truly understands our industry and has a passion for helping our customers reach their business objectives.

In his newly appointed role, Stearns will work with Bergquist purchasing agent, Pam Sienko, to provide a strategic-purchasing presence that will ultimately better serve customers. Stearns will also work closely with newly added buyer, Jake Barry, who joined the Bergquist team in early January, and Bergquist long-time vendors to procure necessary propane equipment items to ensure customers' supply needs are being met.

Stearns is no stranger to Bergquist, having served as a distribution specialist for the company from 2005 to 2012.

"When I started at Bergquist 17 years ago, I immediately saw how much the company cared for its employees, customers and partners – and it continues to do so to this day," said Stearns. "The opportunity to come back, especially during a time when supply chain has become the pinnacle of business performance, was something I couldn't pass up. I knew that combined with my background and recent leadership experience, it was the perfect time to be part of the Bergquist purchasing team. I couldn't be more grateful to work with an exceptional team of professionals once again."

In between his time at Bergquist, Stearns worked for Parker Hannifin Corporation as a distribution supervisor in 2012. He then transitioned to Newell Brands in 2013 as a distribution supervisor. For eight years, he worked his way up to operations manager, where he oversaw all aspects of inbound, outbound and transportation functions for the Bowling Green Distribution Center.