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Family
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FAMILY BUSINESS & CLOSELY HELD COMPANIES

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SDC locks in father's craft for family-run success story



Security Door Controls in Camarillo makes security hardware. From Left: David Geringer president; Shane Geringer, vice president of sales; Gloria Marchand, controller; Arthur V. Geringer, CEO and founder; and Rick Geringer, vice president of marketing.

SECURITY DOOR CONTROLS

Family: The Geringers

Founded: 1970s

Headquarters: Camarillo

Industry: Security Hardware

In their own words: "My father has always been a leader in the industry - RICK

LARGE VENTURA COUNTY FAMILY BUSINESS

By Dana Olsen
Staff Writer

Today, Security Door Controls employs 65 people in Camarillo and 50 more throughout the United States. When Art Geringer founded the security hardware company in the 1970s, it had two employees: himself and his son Rick.

Art Geringer, who's now 89 and in the office every day, grew up working for his father's architectural hardware business in Chicago. He went on to work for a contract hardware firm in Los Angeles before getting a job at a company that designs and manufactures automatic doors. It was while working as a sales distributor in the door business that Art saw the need for electric devices that locked doors in a safe way.

The problem with the locking mechanism most businesses had in place was that they used chains, which were deemed unsafe and illegal by the California State Fire Marshal.

"One day, the marshal called me and said they had a problem," Art told the Business Times. "In high-rise buildings, people were locking the stairwell, which is critical path to escape fire, from the inside. The marshal wanted a failsafe lock that would remain latched but unlock automatically. They wanted to switch from a mechanical lock to something electrical that would respond to a fire-alarm safety system."

Art designed a lock that relied on magnets rather than mechanical springs. In the 1970s, his was one of only two locks in the country approved for locking commercial stairwell and perimeter doors. "The lock was then adopted by other state fire marshals, and in 1972, they company was officially born," Rick said.

At first, the business was housed in

Art's garage in Tarzana. Rick, who joined his dad's business in 1977, was his father's first employee. He was joined by his brother, David Geringer, in 1984. "Once we got our own facility, David decided the family business would be a good life," Rick said. David's son, Shane, was hired in 1992; a year later, David and Rick's sister, Gloria Marchand, signed on.

With five family members as full-time employees, Security Door Controls is truly a closely held business.

"We have endured for many years and overcome many challenges, most of them due to our independence as a family business," said David, who is now the company's president. "We may be smaller than some of our competitors, but we've persevered for many years, mainly because of our father's ingenuity and innovation."

SDC has more than 40 patents — and four patents pending — for mechanical locks and exit devices, electromagnetic locks and many other types of equipment for electronic access control. While most other security companies manufacture their products overseas, Rick said, SDC creates 90 percent of its products in Camarillo.

The company has done security projects for the NASA Kennedy Space Center in Florida, New York City's Museum of Modern Art and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, among many others.

One example of a recent security project was for an Alzheimer's facility. Security Door Controls designed a mechanism that delays automatic doors from opening for 15 to 30 seconds to enhance patient safety. "My father has always been a leader in the industry," Rick said. "He's created so many products that are unique in the marketplace today."

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