

## ***Registration Forms Available for Fall Convention***

It's not too early to register for the MWQA Fall Convention! Join us for informative educational seminars, vendor fair, and more at the Holiday Inn in Lakeville, Minnesota on October 19-20.

We already have several great speakers lined up. Get all your continuing education credits needed to renew your license at our meeting. Registration forms can be [accessed here](#).



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## **Water Conditioning Pioneer Robert B. Hill Passes Away**

Robert Hill, founder of the Robert B. Hill Co., Minneapolis, died Saturday, September 4, at 98½ years. Robert found his home in water conditioning. He was a man of distinctive humor, focus and drive in business and in his personal life, living every one of his years with an enthusiasm that was contagious and with an unconventionality that even he would say was unique. He left a significant mark on water conditioning in Minnesota, through the many employees that he mentored and the vendors and customers that enjoyed the relationships he nurtured.

After a time selling cardboard and a stint with Coca Cola, he decided to strike out on his own in 1958. Ownership fit him, as he liked doing things his way – new and unorthodox all the better. The initial company was a residential dealer for Permutit Water Treatment – a firm with the largest commercial and industrial market share at the time. Their first semiautomatic home softener was a technical marvel: just measure salt into the top basket and start the timer. It wasn't necessary to relieve the pressure in the tank and gravity forced the brine through the packed resin bed – counterflow. Highly efficient by today's standards, if you knew when to regenerate it. Unfortunately, Permutit never developed a reliable automatic residential water softener, so Robert turned to manufacturing softeners. Not trained in engineering but superb in math, he had to learn quickly. The emphasis on a skilled staff made Robert B. Hill Co. the service choice for the commercial and industrial Permutit equipment in schools, hospitals and small cities. That experience taught the company to manufacture commercial units as Permutit faded from the market.

Robert always liked cooperating with the industry. Many competitors learned from him, and many joined cooperative or wholesale purchasing relationships. Robert believed this cooperation worked for the overall good of his company and the industry, and he participated in both WQA and Minnesota WQA, holding the office of MWQA President in the Association's early years. He liked new and unconventional ideas. Bulk salt delivery with bulk rail delivery was followed by in-house salt bagging. These were big, risky steps -- certainly not typical of water conditioning dealers. And only Robert could purchase and

engineer the equipment necessary to do that economically.

Robert had an employee Profit Sharing Trust Fund long before there were 401(k)s. Financial advice to his staff was always being given, as they bought first homes and began having children. Helping staff to build savings in the Trust Fund and later the 401(k) was always top of mind. He asked regularly for reports on 401(k) participation until a month before he died, and gave his last pitch on saving to the Salt Department at 95 years of age – his first and only PowerPoint presentation.

After Robert's retirement, the Company was managed by Phil Olsen and later Robert's son, Jeff Hill. Robert B. Hill Co. remains independent, now in the hands of Nick Bigelbach, who purchased the company in 2020.

Robert may have lived so long because he learned how to laugh at himself. He and Beverly enjoyed the company of so many others of all walks of life, always accepting them as they were. In addition to family and the water conditioning industry, he is remembered and admired by those who work and live at Friendship Village and those at Bass Lake, where he and Beverly spent over 55 years with their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and friends. Of late, he liked to say about the cabin and other travels, "your mom and I had a lot of fun!"

Preceded in death by daughter Marcia Hetletvedt and wife of 64 years Beverly, he is survived by sons Jeffrey (Amy) and Scott (Monica), son-in-law Dean Hetletvedt, grandchildren Alyssa Gilbert (Reed), Cody Hetletvedt (Maria), Katie Duffield Hill (Tom), Rob Hill (Ellen), Brooke Hetletvedt (Kevin), Julia Hill, and great-grandchildren Skya, John, Sage and Nico.

A Memorial Service will be held at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, on Monday September 27 at 2 p.m. (masks and social distancing at both). The service will also be live streamed at <https://www.westminstermpls.org/worship/sermons/livestream/>.



**Robert B. Hill, pictured at far left with John Rodgers of National Soft Water Company, and F. Wayne Packard of Culligan at right. The photo is from 1959.**



## New Plumbing Code Available Now

The new Minnesota Plumbing Code is now available. The 2020 code, which incorporates by reference the 2018 Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC), becomes effective Dec. 17, 2021. The current 2015 Minnesota Plumbing Code will remain in effect until the new rule's effective date.

The book is available for purchase through IAPMO and will be available for free viewing (not downloadable) on the site. [Here is the link for information about the Code and to order a copy.](#)



## Water Conditioning License Exam Instructions

Whether you are applying to be a Registered Unlicensed Water Conditioning worker or are already licensed and need to take another exam (ie Journeyworker to Master), the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry provides step-by-step instructions to guide you through the process. [Start here with the application forms.](#)

Make sure you include everything they require, including documented work experience forms that have been properly completed. If you have questions about the process, contact the MWQA for assistance.



## Welcome, New Members!

**Wirth Water LLC**  
10 Shoreview Lane  
Winnebago, MN 56098  
Phone: 319-512-6881  
Contact: Matthew Wirth

**Pentair Filtration Solutions**  
Filtration Solutions  
13845 Bishops Dr., Suite 200  
Brookfield, WI 53005  
Phone: 763-545-1730  
Contact: Adam Larson

If you know of a dealer or manufacturer who may be interested in joining, forward this email to them!



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Our mailing address is:

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