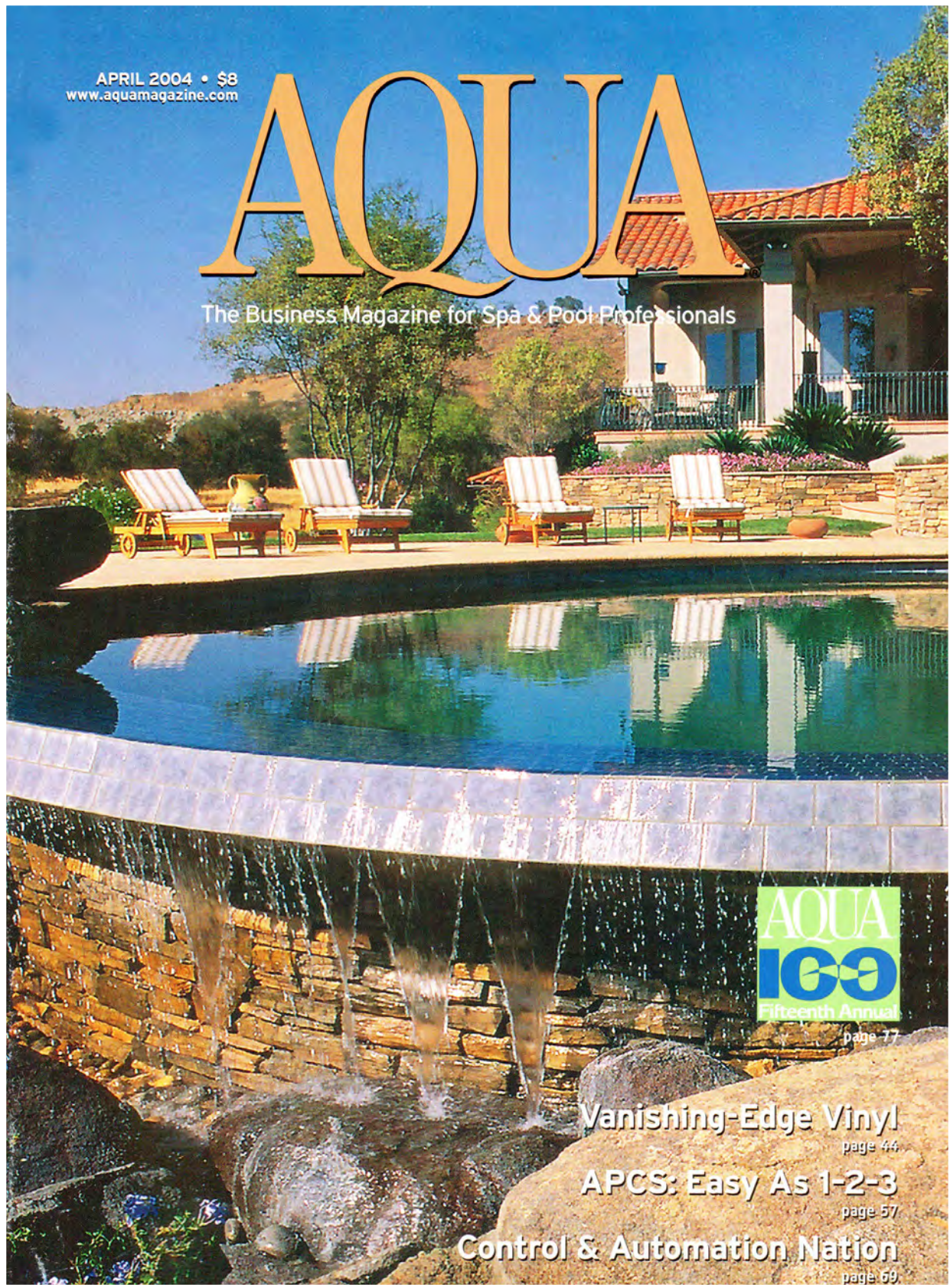


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Hall of Fame Inductee



Backyard Amenities

From top: Brad and Patty Stephens, Jessica Thompson, Ethan Newton, Sue Stearns, Shamel Musfy, Alex Mendoza, Lisa Gilchrist, Valerie Walsh and Gerald Partin

Nobody goes into business thinking about failure. Entrepreneurs are famously optimistic, and success rarely comes as a surprise. Sometimes, though, it comes a little sooner than expected.

"I never imagined we'd have the tremendous amount of success and growth we've had in such a short time," says Brad Stephens, who, along with his wife, Patty, owns Backyard Amenities. "I knew we'd be successful, but I never dreamt it would happen so fast.

"It's been a lot of hard work, but it has all been worth it, especially when you stop and realize that we've gone from a new company to one of the top pool companies in the entire Houston market in less than six years."

Brad began working in the pool industry straight out of high school, and while he enjoyed the work he always dreamed of striking out on his own. "While I was working for other people," he says, "I always thought of things I'd do differently if it were my business."

Six years ago, Brad got the chance to put those ideas into practice. One of the differences between Backyard Amenities and other builders is the amount of involvement he and Patty have with every project. Brad, who is still the only salesperson Backyard Amenities has ever had, oversees every aspect of construction, from beginning to end. While this makes for a very busy schedule, it provides customers with the assurance that they won't get passed from salesperson to construction crew to who-knows-who-else. In other words, at Backyard Amenities, the buck stops at Brad's desk.

Patty's job is to design and draw all the pools and to oversee

the operations end of the business — no small job for a company that's built over 800 pools in such a short time.

But both Brad and Patty are quick to give much of the credit to their employees, who they say are key to their company's success.

"We feel that to run and maintain a strong business, through good ethics and practices, you must start and carry this throughout your entire business," Brad says. "This means you treat your employees the way you want them to treat your customers and you. You have to set a good example."

While Brad and Patty are extremely proud to have earned AQUA Hall of Fame status so quickly, nothing makes them more proud than their solid reputation among customers, which Patty credits for the company's meteoric rise in the competitive Houston market. "That's something you can't buy," Patty says. "You must earn it."

BACKYARD AMENITIES

Location: Baytown, Texas

Principals: Brad Stephens, president; Patty Stephens, secretary treasurer

Founded: 1998

Outlets: 1

Employees: 10 year-round, 10 in-season

Products Sold: custom gunite pools/spas, chemicals, supplies, outdoor kitchens, accessories

