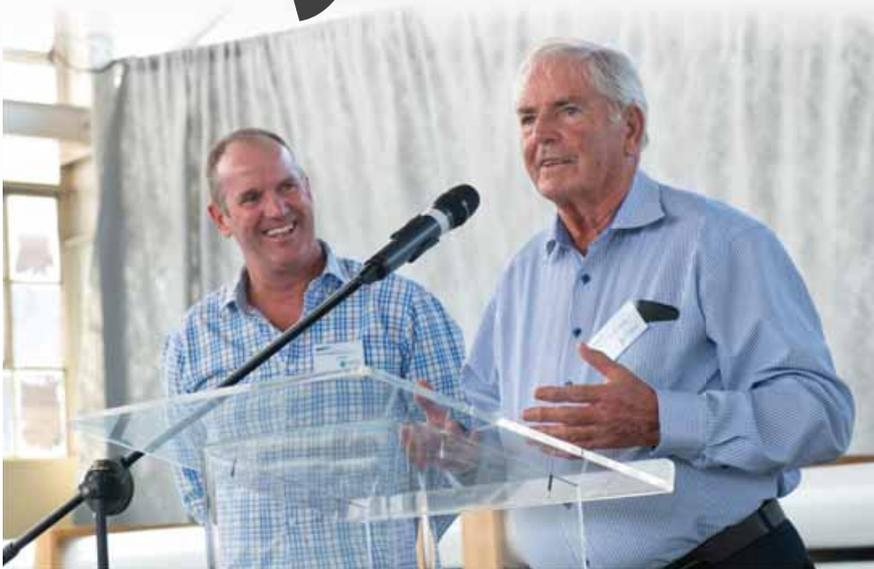


Celebrating 40 years



PHOTOGRAPH: DEBBIE BESELING

South African provider of water, sewage and industrial effluent treatment technology Prentec recently celebrated its 40th anniversary, writes **Frances Ringwood**.

FOR A LOCAL water company to reach four decades is a mammoth achievement given the vicissitudes and changes the sector has undergone during that stretch of time. Prentec celebrated this milestone in providing life-giving water at a celebration held last year at its business premises in Kempton Park, Gauteng. The who's who of the water industry were in attendance.

Prentec founder John Buchanan, now retired, flew in from Midrand to talk about Prentec's achievements. "When I started the company in 1974, the objective I had in mind was to establish a local company with the capabilities to provide a process design for a sewage plant. Prentec in fact takes its name from the phrase, process engineering technology.

"Process engineering technology was what the company specialised in from the beginning. My goal at that time was to

have a water and wastewater treatment company where all designs could be done in-house; from the process, mechanical, electrical, process control, preassembly, delivery, erection and operation. I believed if I could

"Prentec, through strong partnerships, good skills development programmes and solid leadership appointments, has fulfilled that initial vision of becoming a leading South African company in the provision of world-class process engineering solutions."

Stewart Buchanan, MD, Prentec

do that, I would have done something good for the country."

"I want everyone who knows the company to recognise it for doing everything in-house. By 1980, I realised that we'd need to have our own manufacturing facility. It was in 1981 that I bought 9 000 m² of land in Chloorkop, Kempton Park, and we started to build this complex. In 1985, we started building the office block and factory, which was officially opened in 1989. This was followed

by the second bay in 1992 and the third bay in 2009," says Buchanan, who it happens was also the first editor of a water-sector trade magazine in South Africa.

Milestones

Managing director of Prentec Stewart Buchanan remembers his first working experience at the family company. "My father told

Prentec's MD Stewart Buchanan and his father John Buchanan, founder of Prentec in 1974

the director Glen Ford on my first day that if I didn't pull my weight, he could fire me," he says, laughing and remembering

one among many moments over the years coloured by both levity and hard work.

One of the first clients in Prentec's business was Eskom, under Prentec Contract No. 002. The company built a water-softening plant for one of Eskom's power stations in Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal. Forty years later, Eskom continues to be a client. Stewart Buchanan attributes much of the company's success to longstanding relationships such as these.

Innovation vision

Speaking at the event, process director, Adrian Viljoen emphasised the company's growth and skills development, as well as its focus on constant innovation. "We can configure custom solutions, which is crucially important in today's ever-changing environment. We are continuously developing to meet these needs."

Commenting on some of the company's latest innovations, Viljoen says, "We are on the brink of commercialising our freeze desalination technology. This promises to address many of the brine problems associated with desalination inland." Many who have worked with

the company will already know of its impressive seawater desalination and brine-water reclamation achievements.

"Prentec, through strong partnerships, good skills development programmes and solid leadership appointments, has fulfilled that initial vision of becoming a leading South African company in the provision of world-class process engineering solutions. Here's to the next 40 years," concludes Stewart Buchanan. **35**