

## TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH TECHNOLOGY IS TOUGH!

Last month the Meter Setter told a story of Edwin Ford's ability to develop products to solve water utility problems. This month we will look at another of Edwin's inventions, the "Ford Gulper." The Gulper was designed and developed only to be outdated by improvements in technology before it could be widely produced and marketed.

In 1921, when Edwin Ford was perfecting the Crescent Box for the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, George Earl, the chief engineer and superintendent, mentioned to Ford that gas-burning refrigerators, common at the time, consumed a very low flow of water as a coolant. Flows of less than one-quarter gallon per minute were difficult to register on a positive displacement meter, and Mr. Earl was concerned about the loss of revenue. He suggested that it might be possible to accumulate the small flows and put them through the meter in a quick, large flow or "gulp."

This was the kind of challenge Edwin Ford

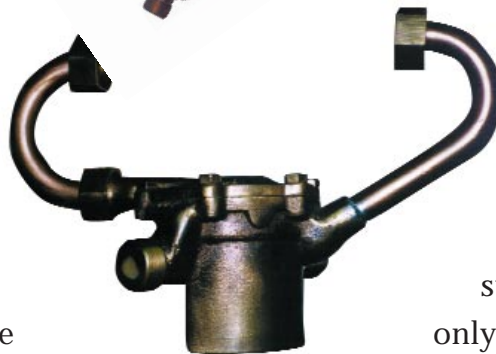
welcomed and he reasoned that other utilities would be interested in buying a product that would solve this problem. His response was the development of the Ford Gulper, a unique invention that turned out to have negligible impact on sales but was, as John Ford said years later, "A technical success but a commercial failure."

The death-knell for the short-lived Gulper was the disappearance a short time later, of water-cooled refrigerators from the market. A few hundred Gulpers were sold, mostly for special testing purposes. John Ford took a call in the early 1960's from a town in the central California valley where the superintendent said his system's only Gulper had quit working. "Can I buy a new one?", he said.

"Well," John said, "We haven't made any for a long time, but I will go out in the shop and see if I can find some spare parts." He did, and he shipped them without charge to California. And so the Gulper passed into history. The only one left is still on display in the company offices.



Top View



The Ford Gulper

