

# BAC Valves – the power of teamwork

*Cryogenic testing in progress.*

The Spanish valve manufacturer BAC Valves has a long history within the valve industry. In the 1950s the company was founded and since then it has enjoyed a healthy and steady growth from supporting the local industry to selling their valves to the global oil and gas and (petro) chemical industry. This is BAC Valves' first cover story in Valve World magazine, so we sat down with Mr. Esteve Bernal, CCO, and Mr. Josep Ma Sánchez, Commercial Manager. We talked to them about the history of their company, the current status, products and the support of their customers from all around the world. Also we asked them how they foresee the coming years in the valve industry and what they think the role of BAC Valves will be.

By Christian Borrmann & Gillian Gane

Asked what the origins of BAC Valves are, Mr. Bernal answers that "the company was founded in 1958 by Mr. Emili Bach, now President of the company, when he was in his late 20s." Through his connections, Mr. Bach learned about the need of valves in the textile industry sector in the region of Catalonia, Spain, and he decided to start up a company to manufacture ball valves in the 1960s.



*Bunker.*

"That was basically the starting point and from there he took on technical people and started to design and develop his own ball valve, using his and his team's technical know-how together with parts from local foundries and materials from the area," explains Mr. Bernal and he continues: "In the late '60s to early '70s people from outside Spain began to contact him. For example, from the Netherlands where there was a boom in the petrochemical industry at that time. At that point it became very important to him to establish a trade mark – BAC – and also to work

with the most important companies in the petrochemical industry and he began distributing to several major oil companies in the Netherlands."

Mr. Sanchez adds: "The mission was very clear – to become a specialist in ball valves – and in the early '90s, we introduced a high performance butterfly valve, double eccentric, to complement our existing focus on quarter turn valves.

Another important feature for BAC was to get approvals from the major global companies in order to continue growing and exporting and working with customer



*BAC Valves' directors: front left Emili Bach, front right Carles Bach, back left Esteve Bernal, back right Josep Armengol.*





Valves.

specifications, customising products according to the customers' requirements. "This has increased over the last 10 years to where we are now, and it is a large part of the growth in this type of business," says Mr. Bernal proudly.

### Products and...

BAC Valves specialty products are the quarter turn valves and ball valves. The range of valves goes from cryogenic valves to metal seated, high temperature valves. Says Mr. Bernal: "This is a field that we specialise in. We also produce high alloy and high pressure valves for very severe corrosion applications in the field for the oil & gas industry."

In order to guarantee their clients get exactly what they ask for BAC keeps the whole production line in house. Mr. Sanchez: "We have all our offices and factories in the same facility at the same location here in Catalonia, employing now around 110 people, of which 40 are engineers. We have a management system in place on which we focus a lot of importance in order to provide the service our customers require from us. With many of our customers we are very involved in testing programmes, working with those who wish to invest in the development of products with manufacturers, such as major oil companies, gaining approval

for the products that we supply to them in the high quality segment for these products."

"At BAC we always try to see where we can make improvements on our products, make something better. Then we try to standardise this product for two main reasons," Mr. Bernal points out. "First, having a standardised product makes the production easier and also helps to meet the demands of the customers. The second reason is that we always like to work with the sub suppliers, which forms a very important part of our business. We depend a lot on them, as they provide us with the raw materials we need for our products, so we spend a lot of time and research on the selection and approval of stock suppliers of materials, forgings, castings, gaskets, etc.

### ...global projects

Being a longstanding global supplier of valves for a large variety of oil & gas and (petro)chemical companies means that the products are used in a wide variety of applications and projects. Mr. Bernal: "We have been heavily involved in all kinds of chemical projects for more than 25 years. Also we are working closely together with various oil & gas companies from Russia and the Middle East, where we are still

supporting plants during maintenance and repair operations and of course, there are still a lot of projects under construction and planned for the coming years."

Another important market for BAC is South America and here especially Brazil, where the company supplies a lot of valves to. "We keep a good distribution there and we have supplied important valves to key projects in the past years." However, one of the most recent projects BAC was involved in over the past years was supplying valves for a Spanish thermal solar plant as Mr. Sanchez explains. "In this plant they use thermal oil which is heated by the sun to 400°C. The valves are special application because they have to be metal seated and able to withstand 400°C."

In order to support this and other global projects, the company uses three separate distribution channels. "We have different distribution channels: one is direct with the end user, the second is through distributors and the third, also an important distribution channel is through the EPC contractors and engineering companies that are working for the end customers. So those are basically the three distribution channels we use – end users, distributors and EPC contractors," says Mr. Sanchez.



Workshop.



Cladding.

Apart from the distribution channels, BAC also provides supporting services to their customers. "Next to the engineering that we do in-house based on the clients' requirements, we also offer a huge range of special tests such as cryogenic test, fugitive emission test, hydrostatic, high temperature and so on. Looking at our after sales market, we give our warranty for our products and we have a team dedicated to helping customers on site if required," says Mr. Bernal and he continues: "Because we don't have offices all around the world and only operate out of our facility in Spain, we have agreements with different companies around the world that can offer services to a customer in case they need a repair or they need to apply any tests and we can correspond these tests to these companies or to our distributors."

### Future trends and the role of BAC valves

Asked how he foresees the coming time in the valve industry, Mr. Bernal replies that "the oil & gas industries and the connected (petro) chemical industry are driving the growth of the valve market. As valve companies, we have to work closely together with the users to deliver the products that are needed for the various applications, no matter how challenging these may be." – "We see ourselves in a good position in the current market situation. Our valves are used in special and demanding applications and we have

close connections with various end-users and EPC companies," agrees Mr. Sanchez. Looking closer at the good situation and forecast that Mr. Sanchez described, Mr. Bernal explains that "we have invested and grown a lot in the Middle East and Russia over the past years and now we can use this strong position to consolidate the company. But we will not rest on our achievements – we are planning to increase our involvement in markets such as Saudi and Russia, where we have full licence agreements. We developed these agreements to grow BAC in those areas by supplying services and new valve products, which we are constantly developing." Mr. Bernal believes that in three years from now BAC Valves can be a more consolidated company in those areas and "we will have closer ties with the potential customers that we are working with."

Mr. Sanchez points out that "In the end, what we want is to have a very good

relationship with these customers so that they will put their trust in us and we are putting a lot of support and effort to this. And I think that we will become more like this so as to tie links with these important customers with whom we have been investing and to consolidate placements. Further, we are continually investing a lot into research and development and testing materials. We have a full programme for every year for researching raw materials testing which means working with our customers. We have a full testing facility in-house that we test 100% of the valves delivered. We also work closely with sub suppliers to really test their materials and their mounting in our valves."

"Basically our industry is very diverse in its particularities but I think we have responsibilities to our sub suppliers and customers, that all of us here at BAC try to provide the best service to our customers," concludes Mr. Bernal.

### About Mr. Emili Bach



Mr. Emili Bach, the founder of BAC Valves is a person who knows what he wants. He built the company up from scratch and is very proud of the status his company now enjoys. He is still very active and heavily involved in the company as President. Mr. Bernal: "He is a very organised person who always fights for his ideas and wants to improve overall the performance of the whole company. This is what impresses our customers each time when they come and visit us." Today, he is working together with his son Mr. Carles Bach (CEO) on the continuation of the company.

### Final words from Mr. Carles Bach



"Our 55 year history has given us a deep know-how and solid foundation in order to follow our ambitious strategic plan. Together with this, our high investments in technology and high end manufacturing facilities help us to achieve our sole objective which is "to give the best solutions to our clients" by providing solutions in materials technology according to their specifications and in design, in order to fulfill all their requirements and help our customers to run their projects minimizing risks and costs. We become part of their team from the initial enquiry to the end of the project. This is our philosophy."