

# Welcome to a party!

By Kimmo Kuikanmäki

Next year Kojair celebrates its 40 years history by arranging a big celebration for its customers and partners in June 2009 (if you are either one you can already reserve it in your calendar).

**MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY** Kojair's history began in the late '60s when the University of Helsinki and the pharmaceutical company Star from Tampere asked Kojair Oy if they would be interested in making laminar flow cabinets, a new invention from the big world. They were, and they made their first two laminar flow cabinets, one for the University of Helsinki and another one for Star (the cabinet made for University of Helsinki was later returned to Kojair and is now displayed there).

A relatively large domestic pharmaceutical industry was an important factor allowing Kojair to grow during its early years. Kojair Oy, an air-conditioning manufacturer, founded a department to make laminar flow cabinets and that department later on became Kojair Oy. Management buy-outs were made by the current CEO Pertti Mäntylä and other investors (who also hold senior positions in Kojair) in 1992.

In 2008, the ownership will be broadened to other key persons in the company. "Only two out of the many companies that started operating in the field of clean air technology around the world in the 1960s have remained independent. Kojair is one these, and is determined to remain independent," tells Mr. Mäntylä.

As Kojair has been operating in a new

field of technology it has been tempting to do everything within the field. It hasn't been able to resist the temptation: some ten years ago Kojair built clean rooms, too, but has later discontinued that line of products and has refocused on its strongest line of products.

"The first product of Kojair, laminar flow cabinet, has always been the most important product," Mr. Mäntylä says. Within laminar flow cabinets the most important products are microbiological safety cabinets. Kojair has some dozen product lines for laboratories, half a dozen for industry and one line for hospital operation rooms. Mr. Mäntylä continues: "The current flagship product is Biowizard line of Class II microbiological safety cabinets" (current best-seller, also an application of laminar flow cabinets). Some special products are lead protected cabinets for handling radioactive isotopes and the solutions for corrosive environments. All Kojair's product lines have been tested by TÜV.

Kojair's traditional strengths have been ergonomics, safety and design. With the staff that has a combined experience of hundreds of years in making laminar flow cabinets, Kojair wants to be the biggest player on the European market by providing its customers with state-of-the-art solutions for their needs. The latest innova-



Pertti Mäntylä, the CEO of Kojair Oy showing a laminar flow cabinet.

tion is silent laminar flow cabinet (<50 dB) which improves customers' productivity by reducing disturbing background noise of the laboratory. For Kojair customer satisfaction is extremely important. For that reason Kojair actively offers customers tailor-made solutions unlike most of its competitors. To support their new focus on service Kojair bought the service company W.H. Mahl Rheinraum + Labortechnik GmbH, from Germany.

Kojair has a strong will for organic growth. The last three years its sales have grown 20-30% annually. Last year the sales were EUR 9 million and this year the sales are expected to exceed EUR 10 million.

"Of our current sales 30% comes from the Nordic countries (half of that from Finland), 30% from central Europe (including



Golden line cabinets assembled in Biocenter Copenhagen.



8 KR and 6 fume cupboards.

“The state-of-the-art products (especially the silence) have helped Kojair to win many big contracts in Nordic the countries,” Mr. Mäntylä tells. The latest big fishes have been 70 Biowizard Golden line laminar flow cabinets to a Biocenter in Copenhagen, Denmark, 110 cabinets were sold to Rikshospitalet in Trondheim, Norway and 60 cabinets to Radium Hospitalet in Oslo, Norway. And big contracts are being made to other directions as well. During the last three years, Kojair has managed to win two tenders of AIDS and Tuberculosis projects in Russia financed by the World Bank. New marketing cooperation has also been started with sampling robot manufacturers: as in some applications clean air solutions are required some robot manufacturers have started to sell Kojair’s cabinets with their robots, to provide clean air solutions to their customers.

So, Kojair doesn’t show any signs of growing old and tired when it is turning 40 years old, rather the opposite. And that reminds me about something: where’s my calendar? I have an appointment to make in June 2009. ❖

France and the UK), 30% from Russia and Eastern Europe and 10% from elsewhere,” says Mr. Mäntylä.

Although the market efforts are concentrated to Europe Kojair sells its products globally. Products sold to the UN have been sent to Central America and Central Africa. Directly, Kojair has sold its products as far away as Vladivostok, Russia and Singapore.

The growth of sales has been accompanied with the growth of geographical pres-

ence. The first sales office abroad was opened in Hungary in the mid ‘80s. Five years ago, Kojair replaced its agent for Germany and Central Europe with a sales office of their own in the Netherlands. That proved to be a good move as the sales there began to increase fast. Later, presence there was further expanded by buying a service company in Germany. Last year, a sales office was opened in Sweden to take care of the customers in Sweden, Norway and Denmark.



The law firm’s life science unit possesses considerable competence and experience in the life science fields of pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and medical technology. The unit is supervised by the attorneys Staffan Wilow and Stefan Walhagen, assisted by attorney Gillis Åkesson.

The firm is referred to as ”Highly experienced and recognised practitioner, concentrating on commercial issues, such as technical transfers and licensing, good regulatory practice, as well as IP and related litigation.” (PLC Cross-border Life Sciences Handbook 2006/07).

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