

*A design so unique, it's patented . . .*

## The Protecto-Guard Story

The energy crunch that began in the early 70's brought a revival of the ceiling fan. Public and private industry quickly realized that ceiling fans could save substantial energy dollars by heat destratification and also by increasing the efficiency of air conditioning. Northwest Environmental Systems, Inc. was in on the ground floor of this revival and as a result became a major supplier of industrial ceiling fans, fan controls and accessories.

In 1982 Northwest's president, Paul Fowler, talked to the head maintenance engineer of our local public school system, suggesting that the schools consider ceiling fans as an economical way to keep some of the large, high-ceiling areas warmer. The engineer laughed and said, "Not a chance!". He agreed that the fans were necessary, but it seems that he had heard about another school district that had installed ceiling fans in their gymnasium and the students were using the tennis ball machines as automatic weapons with the ceiling fans as targets. He agreed that he liked the idea of fans, but would only consider using them if we were able to provide a more substantial guard than those on the market at that time.

This protest was valid. The need for a strong, effective and attractive fan guard was frequently an obstacle to fan installations. Schools **needed** a better guard. We knew that. And existing fan guards were cumbersome, their welds prone to break, their wires spaced too far apart for real safety, and--let's face it--they were downright ugly. Many of our distributors were requesting a better guard for schools, warehouses and public buildings. OSHA was recommending guards for any fan that was mounted less than ten feet from the floor in public areas, and warehouses were concerned about their aerial equipment used in areas with fans. But many customers just wouldn't accept what they felt were inferior quality guards.

Our president consulted with a local engineer who had a metal shop where he developed, manufactured and patented special order metal products. Together they built the first Protecto-Guard according to a wire design conceived by Mr. Fowler. The challenges were specific. This guard had to stop penetration of relatively small objects, yet not interfere with air circulation. Construction design had to be of the highest quality to withstand forceful blows, and at the same time be attractive even in the most modern decor. Installation on the fan had to be simple, and it would also be desirable for the guard to have a pitch that would allow any "flying objects" to slide off.

Success! And they realized that what they had developed was so unique that it should be patented. The special looped wire design with only 1 1/2" spacing at the circumference provided the required safety for both fans and people, yet allowed maximum air flow. This same wire design, combined with heavy-duty ten gauge wire and resistance/triple resistance welding provided superior strength. A shiny zinc coating on this unique sunburst pattern, truly made the Protecto-Guard hi-tech attractive as well as rust and corrosion proof. The two-piece construction allowed ease of installation as well as inherent lifetime strength. It also made possible the gentle slope which would allow some objects to roll off.

This same patented design, created in 1982, is still used today. We take great pride in the meticulous manufacturing process we use for each Protecto-Guard that guarantees it stands head and shoulders above the competition for quality, strength, function and appearance.

And yes...true to his word, the maintenance engineer did order Northwest fans and guards for our local school system.