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By Ted Johnson

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Inventor Finds Formula for Fun in Business

Industrial lubricant entrepreneur, 70, began a new career making and marketing his own brand of all-purpose cleaner.

ANAHEIM—By the time Adam Huber started his third decade producing lubricants and oils for industrial machines, he knew he could be called a successful entrepreneur.

But to Huber, he hadn't quite made it.

In the mid-1980s when he was near retirement age, Huber got a longtime idea off the ground as he began testing a product that would be sold to consumers, not companies.

Finally, in 1989, at age 67, he began marketing Protect All, a cleaner that polishes and waxes cars, boats, appliances, furniture, windows—almost any surface front to back, inside and out.

With a strong grass-roots campaign, he has since sold nearly 500,000 bottles of Protect All. His success stirred his inventive juices and, last October, he started selling a new car care product, Quick & Easy Wash, that cleans vehicles with a minimal amount of water.

"It is truly the American dream, to work all of your life then to have it happen," said Huber, now 70, as he walked through his Anaheim warehouse. "It's invigorating. It keeps you young. I'm having so much fun I can't quit. That's what it's all about."

If success came late in life, the idea didn't.

In the early 1970s, when he used his motor home frequently, Huber said he would spend hours cleaning the recreational vehicle. The vinyl seats would take one kind of polish, the windows another.

"I was already in the industrial products business and I said, 'This is a bunch of baloney. We should be able to come up with something that works on all the surfaces.'"

After going through 25 different formulas, he found the one that worked. But he did nothing with it for more than 10 years, continuing instead to run his industrial products business Champions Choice, Inc., in Anaheim.

It wasn't until 1984, when his children were grown, that he picked up the old formula again. Protect All debuted after five years of testing and planning.

He still runs Champions Choice, but his newest company, Protect All, Inc., "is a lot more fun," he said, "I realized that I do best coming up with a product that fills a void."

So far, the products have attracted the attention of RV, plane and motorcycle owners. They have written to recreation industry magazines to praise Protect All for its versatility.

"The RV owners have all these different products they have to use," said Mark Burge, general manager of Camping World in Anaheim. "They get tired of using one polish for the vinyl, another for the windows."

Protect All, the product "that works on every surface," is the answer, Huber said.

"If you've got a 27-foot motor home, you would normally need five to eight products, and it would take hours to do it," he said.

Huber also is enthused about the favorable reviews given water-saving Quick & Easy Wash during California's drought. Using a half gallon of water and a capful of Quick & Easy, a person can wash a car with no rinsing.

Huber's new products compete in a crowded field of cleaners and polishes that is dominated by Armor All Products Corp. in Aliso Viejo. Each has its own claim, and many inventors are ready to stand by their formulas to the end.

While Protect All barely commands a share of the market, Huber is adamant that the product will rise to No.

1 nationwide.

Protect All, Inc. has just eight employees to produce and package the product at the company's 12,000-square-foot headquarters in Anaheim. The company advertises in camping, flying and motor biking magazines, and bottles are sold by mail and at many retail outlets like Camping World. Huber also promotes and sells his product at over 50 RV, camping and light plane shows a year.

Huber regularly invites customers to see him test the product at Protect All's plant.

"He's quite a salesperson," Burge said. "He was out here the first three days we started selling his product. Usually, the president of a company sends out his sales people . . . but he was right out there, demonstrating his product on his car.

Huber savors letters from satisfied customers like a military veteran would a war medal. With vivid detail, Huber tells stories of those who have used Protect All. There was the man who wiped lovebugs off his windshield after a long trip on the Pennsylvania turnpike and the Detroit customer who washes his car in his garage during the winter.

"Nothing makes you happier than those hundreds of letters and telephone calls," he said.

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