

HalenHardy Revolutionizes Particles Removal From Industrial Work Clothes

By Gina Mazza
For SMC's Working Parts

Self-prescribed serial entrepreneur Donny Beaver would say that entrepreneurship mimics alchemy and art more than science. "It requires a problem-solving curiosity," he suggests, "always asking the question, 'Is there a better way?'"

For nearly 50 years, Beaver has been working his own version of transmuting base metals into gold by asking that very question, uncovering hidden needs in the marketplace and inventing solutions. His ore is more along the lines of industrial sludge, mud, hazardous dusts and other "undesirable stuff that nobody pays attention to," he says. "I basically solve crappy workplace problems that no one else wants to deal with."

Perhaps best recognized as the co-founder and "Head Hog" of New Pig Corp. in 1985—which pioneered breakthrough environmental cleanup products and delivery systems for spill prevention—Beaver has started at least eight companies since the age of 10, when he formed a small lawn-mowing and snow-shoveling service in his Bellwood, Blair County neighborhood.

Fast forward to January 2013: HalenHardy, LLC is co-founded by Beaver and Carl Cohen, Esq. to address specific challenges faced by mobile workforces. As CEO of the new venture, Beaver is still in the creative trenches designing tools that tackle dust and muck in industrial settings—often with solutions so obvious that they might cause one to wonder, *Why didn't I think of that?* "My strength lies in basically developing a family of very simple products that require sign-off at the C-suite level," he summarizes.

The first three quarters of 2013 were spent in R&D and market development to determine what space HalenHardy wanted to occupy. The fourth quarter was frenetic, with four categories of products releasing over the span of several months. "It was kind of like the Product of the Month Club around here," Donny jokes.

The first rollout in September 2013 was the MASHH Mobile Air Shower (see Mashh.com), designed to follow mobile workforces that are exposed to potentially hazardous dusts. "It's a relative sophisticated and not inexpensive piece of equipment that is new to the world," he describes. "It's basically an instant decontamination chamber."

The idea to invent a mobile air shower that blows silica sand off oil and gas workers' clothing struck him in May 2012 at HomeWaters in Spruce Creek, Pennsylvania, a fly fishing resort that Beaver—yes, you guessed it—also founded. He heard guests at the resort discussing the danger of workers' inhaling silica sand used to prop open fractures in the shale . . . and eureka struck. HalenHardy projects a year's lead time before they begin to see momentum for MASHH that will translate into sales and positive earnings. "We didn't think it would be something people would gravitate to immediately. There is no known previous market for it and it has no competition."

While Beaver discovered that oil and gas companies were receptive to the idea of the shower, they weren't willing to invest in it until they

understood how crucial the silica sand exposure problem was. Inhaling respirable crystalline silica (RCS) is a serious threat to nearly two million workers in the U.S., particularly those in high-risk jobs such as abrasive blasting, foundry work, stonecutting, rock drilling, quarry work and tunneling. Crystalline silica has been classified as a human lung carcinogen, and breathing silica dust can cause silicosis. The disease can be disabling or even fatal, and there is no cure.

To make this known, HalenHardy announced in October 2013 that it had partnered with a world-renowned scientist, Bob Glenn of South Carolina, to create a service offering called Siscososis Prevention Advisors (visit Silicosisprevention.com). "We coaxed him out of retirement to help advise companies on instituting silicosis prevention programs."

While beta testing the MASHH air shower, the team became concerned that mud dragged from the gas field would muck up the grates and filters on the floor, so they tested a series of brushes that could scrub it off. As a result, MudKill was launched in February 2014 to remove mud from workers' boots. "This product addresses a big safety concern, as slips, trips and falls are the number one cause of fatalities on a job site, especially where there are wet, mucky surfaces," Donny explains. HalenHardy is targeting this product to construction, agribusiness, utilities and the oil and gas industries. "Workers can stop, scrape, scrub or scuff mud off at the MudKill station. It's easily mobile."

Simultaneous to producing MASHH and MudKill, Donny and his sons, Josh and Troy—who both work in the business alongside him—were researching proposed silica sand regulations from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. "We noticed that blocking off access to certain areas of the well site was the most effective way to limit exposure to workers not directly involved in transferring sand," he recounts. "I said, 'Well, maybe we could come up with something to keep people the heck out'."

In short order, the HeckOut product line was announced. Launching in March 2014, it features banner barricades, called "bannicades", that are easily movable around job sites to block access. "It solves the big challenge of excluding the wrong people from entering the area." It's a patent-pending, highly specialized ratcheting system made of very durable materials that can wrap around and latch onto stationary devices. "We've married it with a signage system that meets the new Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals," Donny adds.

With all of these product and service categories in the works, "We're busy for a couple of years," Beaver says. "We're intensely focused on targeting a few thousand bigger companies whose liability is so great that, if something goes wrong, they're in a lot of trouble." And while HalenHardy is getting inquiries from all over the globe, they've chosen to drop their pebble in western Pennsylvania first and Houston, Texas second. "These two epicenters represent every type of business you'd want to deal with on the planet, in terms of geography—from major river systems and ocean systems to dry, arid climates."

The HalenHardy team realizes that there's a great deal to be done with growing the company, but Beaver is no stranger to hard work. "If there's a rhythm to all this, what I've learned is that there is first a heavy lifting stage. That's when the pioneers are out in the field moving rock. We're in that stage right now. It's relentless, and I'm working harder than most guys

my age; but if you dig down to bedrock and do it well, when you get above ground, there's time for leisure. It always takes a one- or two-year burst of this crazy breakneck stuff, but once the track is laid, it's okay to let someone else be the engineer. It's fun for me to pioneer then get out the way."

With those words, Beaver alludes that there's more to come from him in the future, although he also hints that HalenHardy is his and Carl's swan song. Still, he wakes up every day with wide eyes and wonder. "In general, I feel the same way today as I did when my best friends in grade school and I made a snow plow from a piece of plywood and a rope so we could shovel five times faster," he muses. "We were like, 'Wow, problem solved and not only are people paying us for it, they're taking a Kodak snapshot and giving us high fives.'

"New Pig was one of those great divides and defining points, which for me happened mid-career when I was 33. Now, here I stand at 61, and it's still marvelous to solve crappy problems, and have people send us money and write us nice letters. So, what's retirement? It's meeting my maker. I say, 'Work until midnight' because work is its own reward."