



Julia & Frank Sherron

Julia and Frank Sherron were relaxing on the beach one day having a tasty cold adult beverage. Julia with her white wine, Frank with his beer. After about five minutes, Frank's beer was still cold, safe within a koozie. Julia's wine was warm and the glass dripped with sweat. She said that she wished she had a koozie for her wine glass. She told her friends about her idea. "One of our friends said, 'A koozie for a wine glass would have to be Woozie,'" she says. "It seemed like a cute name."

Back home in Vass, Julia started Googling looking for a koozie for a wine glass. She was certain that someone had already come up with the idea. But her searches kept coming up empty. "I began to ponder if this was an opportunity or not," she says. She decided that if the wine koozie didn't exist, she would make one. She approached it cerebrally. She studied different materials and their properties, eventually deciding on neoprene. She educated her self about wine glasses – their different sizes being a key concern – and decided that the smart thing to do would be to design for a mid-sized glass first.

She and Frank went to trade shows. They learned to protect the idea by trademarking the name and applying for a patent (the Woozie is currently patent pending). Julia went to Walmart and bought a pair of gym shorts that she cut up and sewed into the first Woozie. Frank, a banker by trade, was in-between jobs. He believed in her idea and helped out. They sent the prototype to a manufacturer and ordered 500 Woozies and started testing the market. They gave the Woozie to friends, sent it to people who own gift shops and asked what they thought.

Needless to say, the feedback was good. The Sherrons got several stores to carry the Woozie. They turned the basement of their log cabin-style house in the woods of Vass into an office. They both work on the Woozie full time and have hired two additional people. Frank found that he loves to sell and he pushed the Woozie hard at craft shows. "I thought of the idea," Julia says, "but he made it a success."

The Woozie's big break-through came by accident. The Sherrons have friends who have a niece living in New York who is friends with one of the producers of The Today Show. They talked about getting the Woozie on the show, but never heard anything. Then out of the blue, one of the producers emailed them and said that the Woozie might be featured on the fourth hour segment called Kathy Lee and Hoda's Favorite Things. They had two days to prepare. The effect was instantaneous. On the day of the broadcast, 37,000 people visited the Woozie Web site. Julia and Frank called all their vendors. They were all sold out. "It was like Kathy Lee and Hoda were a stimulus package," Julia says. "We kind of climbed a mountain this summer." ■



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