

Woozie: (noun) a cozy for a wine glass

Get a Little

Woozie™



By BJ Cothran

Photos Courtesy of
Woozie and BJ Cothran



Have you ever picked up something new and wonderful and said,

“Wish I’d thought of that!”

Lots of people think they have brilliant ideas but only a few take those ideas from start to finish. Julia and Frank Sherron of Topsail did exactly that. They saw a need and found a way to make it happen. In the course of a year, the hottest new item to hit the wine accessories market—Woozies—was born.

It all started in the summer of 2008 right here on Topsail. “Frank, our two sons and some friends were on the deck with cans comfortably covered with cozies,” said Julia. “When I joined them I had a glass of chilled white wine. The glass immediately became wet and the wine began to warm. I commented that I wish I had an insulator for my wine glass like they had for their cans! Someone said a wine glass cozy would have to be a Woozie.”



Frank & Julia

And that was the beginning of it all. Frank and Julia weren’t like a lot of people who come up with an interesting idea and just let it go at that. The two jumped right in with both feet the very next day and did their homework. First they put the internet to good use, doing multiple searches to see if any wine glass insulators were on the market.

“We couldn’t find a single one,” said Frank.

“And we found there were no wine products by the name of Woozie, so that was another good sign.”

“Next I cut up every cozy we had in the house,” said Julia. “I pulled out the sewing machine and tried several different designs.”

From there the fun began. They tested those handmade designs on various glasses, trying out a variety of ways to make Woozies fit many styles and shapes. The Sherrons also shared their new idea with friends and family to get feedback on everything from design to color, price point to product presentation. At this stage of development, everything was kept very hush-hush and everyone was sworn to secrecy so that the Sherrons would have time to get their product ready and on the market.

So what is a Woozie really?

Well, it's a cozy for a wine glass. Sure, it looks cool. But why do you actually need one?

"It works to keep the wine at a constant temp and as an added benefit, if you tip your glass over, it cushions the fall without breaking the glass," said Frank. "It truly solves the problem of protecting the wine from the outside temp and the warmth of your hand. And it just feels good."

That good feeling has a lot to do with the material. When the final design was decided on, Julia realized she needed larger pieces of neoprene to make the prototype. "Neoprene is not easy to find, but an extra large pair of neoprene work-out shorts from a local shopping mart did the job," she said. "That prototype was sent to a manufacturer that was willing to produce several pieces and then do a small quantity run for us."

Their first order!

Their first order was for nine different colors. "What a thrill it was to receive that first shipment," said Julia. "I went through the colors, sorting them, counting them, and trying them on wine glasses. It was hard to believe that we actually had the Woozies that started only a few months earlier as an idea!"

"Those became our samples and really helped us spread the word about Woozies," added Frank. "Woozie is now a registered trademark and the design is patent pending."

From idea to product in hand is a big accomplishment, but if they're sitting at home in a box, nobody can discover what a wonderful product it is. At this point, the Sherrons had to dive into the world of gift marts and distributors and finding ways to get

their product into the hands of consumers and retail markets.

"We attended a gift show in Myrtle Beach in December. When we got there we realized that we were totally unprepared for that show and really didn't know what we were doing," said Frank. "It was very frustrating."

"We did get good responses from folks about Woozies, even though we had the pricing wrong, the product presentation lacked appeal, and we were far from being able to sell and ship," said Julia. "But we met a key person at that show who could get Woozie manufactured for a reasonable price. Meeting him was divine intervention."

"Our first real gift show was the Atlanta Gift Mart in January," said Frank. "We'd made changes, got our pricing right, and were ready to go."

"We packed the car with our booth display and drove to Atlanta," said Julia. "I was very nervous since I had never done anything like this before. I was a stay-at-home mom and Frank's a banker. We had never been a part of the world of gifts."

But they didn't let anything stop them. These North Carolina natives had the entrepreneurial spirit. They used their past experience and knowledge to make their product a success. When they arrived at the mart, they began to set up. As luck would have it, the floor manager offered them the empty booth beside them, doubling their space.

"I had only brought enough decorations for one booth, so this really threw me off," said Julia. "Frank helped me see it was a big plus to have more space and after a few tears, I put it together."



Wow! Someone else thinks they're cute!

All those months of hard work paid off when the Sherrons wrote their first order.

"I thought, wow, someone other than us thinks this is a cute, fun product!" said Julia. "We had a good response at that show and once again divine intervention came our way in the form of a man we were introduced to who recruits, hires, and trains representative groups to sell products. He is based in Las Vegas and is now our VP of Sales and Marketing."

"When we finished the Atlanta show, we took pictures of ourselves in the booth," said Frank. "It was almost unbelievable that we were there and doing this crazy thing."

Their first big order came from David Ruffin, a friend in Raleigh, who wanted to give Woozies with his company name on them, on a wine glass, gift-bagged for his company party. "It was such a thrill to see that order packaged and ready to go!" said Julia.

So what advice would they give to someone with an idea of their own? "First, be careful who you tell," said Frank. "You will have to talk to people, but have them sign a confidentiality statement before disclosing your idea. Second, consider trademarks and/or patents if you believe you have something unique. Third, be prepared that launching an idea or product takes time and money. Fourth, go for it!"

For the Sherrons, this has definitely been a Woozie year! They've been picked up by several rep groups from all over the country. They're doing many gift shows and are even getting reorders from those initial sales.

"Our challenge now is handling inventory and fulfilling orders," said Frank. "It's a whole new world."

"We've had a lot of help along the way from family, friends, customers, and the good Lord," said Julia. "And we're very grateful and appreciative."

Even though this darling new product started on Topsail, its appeal is widespread and as Frank said, "Folks buying them from north to south and from coast to coast tell us that people were ready to get a little Woozie!" 🍷

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