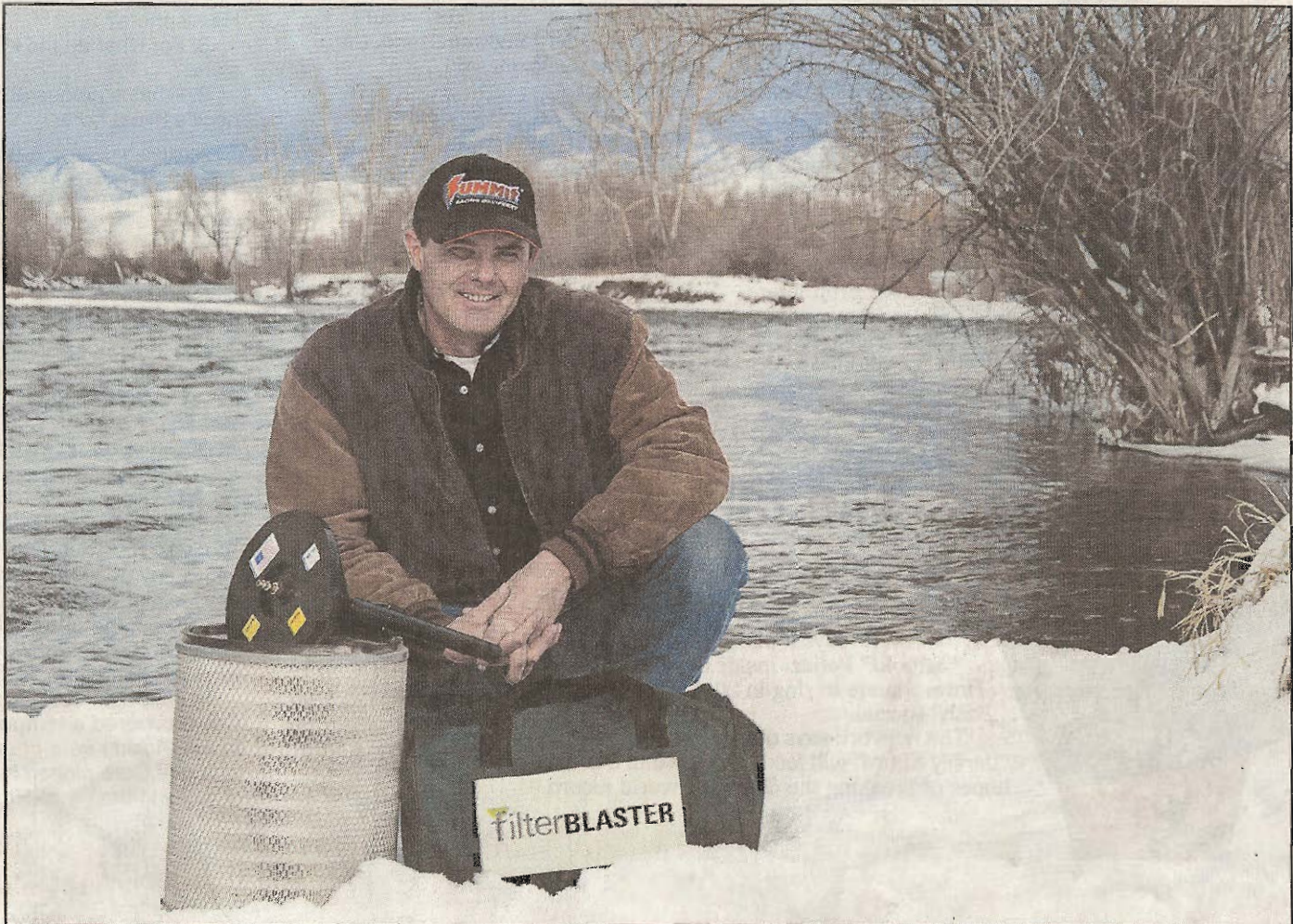


Having a breakthrough

Dennis Grieve and the device he invented, the Air Filter Blaster, sit along the banks of the Salmon River.

Ilona McCarty
For the Post
Register



Salmon man invents the Air Filter Blaster

■ Dennis Grieve, with help from a furniture store owner and the Development Workshop, stands ready to mass-market his device.

By GINA KNUDSON
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SALMON — There is a split second between bad luck and genius.

It was a bitterly cold night in Gunnison, Colo., when Dennis Grieve begrudgingly accept-

ed an assignment to fix a broken piece of equipment in the middle of nowhere.

It was quitting time. The temperature was about 20 below zero. That's when his boss at Gunnison Energy Corp. singled him out of a work crew to make the 50-mile drive out Colorado's Grand Mesa, where the company was installing a natural gas

pipeline.

Initially, Grieve cursed his luck.

When he arrived at the site, Grieve found a front-end loader with a

clogged air filter — and the inspiration that changed his life.

Today, the Salmon man, with help from an Idaho Falls furniture store owner and the Development Workshop, stands ready to mass-market his revolutionary device.

Before Grieve got into the act, the typical way to clean a clogged air filter was to bang it

On the INTERNET

Watch a YouTube demonstration of the Air Filter Blaster:

■ www.airfilterblaster.com



The Air Filter Blaster's centrifugal air induction chamber unit was developed by a Salmon man.

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around a bit to jostle the dust and grit free, or use compressed air at close range to blow the particles loose. Both methods are hard on the filter and not entirely effective.

A clogged filter can cause equipment or vehicles to burn more fuel; a damaged filter can ruin an engine.

As Grieve stared at the filter

on that frigid Colorado night, a thought occurred to him: Blowing air into the filter was backward. Reversing the process, so the air forced the dust out, made much more sense. His mind and heart raced

■ Grieve saved up money to apply for a patent in October 2007

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on the trip back to town.

Soon, he was carving up a Nerf basketball to simulate his design. For two weeks, he worked on a prototype. Still, he couldn't shake the feelings of self-doubt.

"I figured someone else had already thought of this," he said. "It was really a simple idea."

Assuming, of course, you understand the technical aspects involved in creating a centrifugal air induction chamber.

Grieve tried out the concept on his buddies at the pipeline company. He asked experienced mechanics. Nobody, it seemed, had heard of anyone using his common-sense technique.

In October 2007, Grieve scraped up the money to apply for a patent. A year later, Grieve and his wife, Gita, moved to Salmon. The former hunting guide and outfitter figured the cozy community would be the right kind of place to raise his young son.

He also liked Idaho's business climate.

His decision to move to eastern Idaho also led him to the manufacturing

expertise he needed to take his invention to the next level.

Dale Catmull took Grieve's prototype and created the molds needed for plastic part manufacturing.

Catmull, better known for his Idaho Falls furniture store, had been taking machinery classes at Brigham Young University-Idaho whenever they were offered. The classes paid off. Catmull has been "sidelining" in manufacturing for more than 15 years.

While many specialists won't cast molds without strict specifications, Catmull doesn't mind helping clients with a design.

"We can take an idea like Dennis' and make sure the parts will all work right together," he said.

With Catmull's molds in hand, Grieve contracted with the Development Workshop in Idaho Falls to manufacture the device itself.

The Development Workshop has a 40-year history of providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It also has locations in both Idaho Falls and Salmon, not to mention modern injection molding machines.

For the moment, Grieve and one employee can handle assembly of the parts at his Salmon shop.

Trade shows and Internet sales have created

a trickle of orders for his company, Salmon River Innovations. But excitement is growing around the clever device.

Tom Perrigo, a childhood friend of Grieve's, heard about his invention and signed on as a business partner.

As a member of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network, Perrigo sees his fair share of so-called green products. He said vendors always are claiming to have the "next magic box."

"But this kind of thing is exactly what people are looking for," Perrigo said. "It's relatively inexpensive (standard units start at \$199), yet has a relatively significant impact on fuel savings."

The next stop for the Air Filter Blaster is the World Ag Expo in February, where the invention already has been named one of the "Top 10" innovative products of 2011.

"This makes sense if you are a farmer with just a couple of tractors," Grieve said, "but it's magnified if you're a government fleet manager or the executive of a company with a lot of vehicles."

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