

## 100 IDEAS

Haag, 59, who started the company in November, 1985, with partners Floyd Farha and George Hemstreet. A computerized microscope examines urine cells that have been stained with a fluorescent dye. Cells with an elevated DNA content—an indicator of cancer—appear brighter than normal cells and are tagged by the computer. A diagnostician makes the final analysis of the tagged cells by a visual exam.

By sending off urine samples collected in a special kit to the company's Oklahoma City lab, urologists, pathologists, and hospitals can have an answer for anxious patients by the following day. Haag picks up the tab for shipping the test kit to Oklahoma; the lab test itself costs \$110.

Revenues totaled \$95,000 in 1987 and are expected to increase to \$600,000 this year. Financed initially with \$500,000 raised through a private round of financing, the company received an additional \$1.4 million in venture capital in September, 1987. —M.G.

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#### Scuba Lite

Snuba International  
Placerville, Calif.

**START-UP: \$225,000**

THE MARKET FOR scuba diving is devoted but limited. Learning to dive takes a substantial amount of time. Then, to pursue the sport you need money for the equipment and plenty of leisurely vacations in exotic locales. But scuba hobbyist Michael Stafford thought that with the number of travelers to tropical destinations on the increase, he could market a "beginner's scuba" that would be cheaper and easier than scuba diving but more challenging than snorkeling. He calls it Snuba.

The product itself is a flotation device containing an hour's supply of compressed air for shallow-water diving. Stafford contends that only an hour's training is needed to

operate it safely, making it ideal for tourists looking for an afternoon's diversion. Sales are aimed at resorts in Hawaii, the Bahamas, Florida, and similar vacation sites.

Stafford visits each client resort and trains staff on the equipment. Right now Stafford is selling the equipment to resorts for about \$2,000; the resorts rent it to tourists for about \$70 for a half-day's use. But his goal is to develop joint ventures with the resorts.

Snuba is actually half of a brother act. Twin brother Patrick was first in the water with his company, Sub Sea Systems Inc., which sells acrylic passenger submarines to the same market. Both Patrick and his partner, Jim Mayfield, are co-owners of Snuba. The partners estimate that Snuba International's 1988 revenues will hit \$1.3 million. —W.S.

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#### Meals for Tots

My Own Meals Inc.  
Deerfield, Ill.

**START-UP: \$140,000**

YOU COULD SAY this business was founded on guilt. Juggling a career and motherhood, Mary Anne Jackson, 35, found herself devoting Sunday nights to preparing tasty, nutritious meals that would be easy for a baby-sitter to serve her young daughter when she was at work. When she lost her job at food giant Beatrice Co. in a corporate restructuring, Jackson turned that Sunday night routine into a business.

Her company is the first to mass-market packaged meals for kids aged two to eight. Its five meals, with names like My Turkey Meatballs and Chicken, Please, retail for less than \$3 apiece. Entrées are pressure-cooked and vacuum-sealed in plastic pouches using a retort process, rendering them shelf-stable. As a result, meals are easily thrown in a purse and heated

at a friend's house. Because they aren't frozen, they heat up in a few minutes. The retort packaging also enables Jackson to vie for shelf space in supermarkets rather than slots in the overcrowded frozen food section, which are harder to come by.

Since April the company has been selling meals through an Illinois supermarket chain and through the mail. To date Jackson has raised nearly \$700,000 from individuals for 30% of the company, which is expected to ring up \$500,000 in sales this year and to be profitable by the end of 1989. —E.E.

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#### Software Sleuths

Business Software  
Technology Inc.

Westborough, Mass.

**START-UP: \$25,000**

UNTIL RECENTLY, WHENEVER computer programmers revised software there was no way to track the changes. Then Nick Rini, 47, and John Burton, 36, came to the rescue. The two entrepreneurs left their jobs at Cullinet Software Inc. in Westwood, Mass., to develop Endeavor, a program that can trace software revisions on IBM computer systems.

An insurance company, for example, may have 2,000 programmers writing and revising software as they gather new information on claims. Endeavor allows the company to check back in order to see who made what changes when.

The software also polices unauthorized revisions. "A disgruntled employee who adds a glitch to the program can easily be identified," says Burton, because the software requires a programmer to sign on with a personal identification code.

Burton and Rini, plus three other cofounders, invested a total of \$25,000 to found Business Software Technology Inc. (BST). BST introduced the software program—which costs \$60,000 to

\$125,000, depending on the size of the company's system—in December, 1986. Within a year the company had sold 100 programs to companies such as VISA, DuPont, Mellon Bank, and the National Broadcasting Co.

BST earned more than \$700,000 on revenues of \$6 million in 1987; the company, which also offers consulting services, expects business to grow by 50% this year.

—W.C.

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#### Things That Go Thump in the Night

Wellness Innovations Corp.  
Toronto, Ont.

**START-UP: \$420,000**

IT'S NOT, ED Noble insists, a vibrator. It's a seven-pound hand-held body massager with eight massaging spheres that pivot up and down 28 times a second, stroking a quarter-inch into each muscle to which it is applied.

"I developed it during my 10 years in private practice as a chiropractor in Toronto, and I left the practice in order to devote full time to developing it for the market," Noble recounts.

In the early '80s Noble sold the Thumper to fellow chiropractors for \$800 a unit. "The price was expensive and the sales were low," he allows. After investing some \$20,000 of his own savings, he began the tedious process of retooling it for mass production. Money soon ran short, and he turned to private investors, selling a 45% interest in his new company, Wellness Innovations Corp., in return for \$400,000. The product was redesigned and reached the market last year.

The new focus is on the upscale health-conscious consumer. A stylish booklet presents the product, now priced at \$299, as a New Age alternative to a chiropractic visit. The manager of a Sharper Image store in New York calls the Thumper "a very successful product," and says the chain has sold