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MAKING CENTS

EARNING A LIVING IN VIRGINIA BEACH

Boat mooring system is afloat

BY LORI A. DENNEY
STAFF WRITER

Hugh Brydges, 41, never thought an idea he dreamed up 27 years ago would affect his career and make him a bona fide inventor that people would take seriously.

But that is what has happened since Brydges invented and patented the Sea Safe Mooring System. The product, which moors boats in the center of their slips, has gone nationwide and will soon be offered worldwide.

"This is something very low-tech. The batteries don't run out," joked Brydges, a Virginia Beach native.

Brydges' idea is simple: A buoy made of pvc material is filled with sand and attached to a rope, which is then guided through a pulley that is screwed into a piling. The rope is then attached to the boat, anchoring the vessel in the middle of its slip.

The size of the boat determines the number of weight and pulley systems used. For instance, a 30-foot runabout could take as many as two sets of Sea Safe Mooring systems. One set consists of two buoys and two pulley and rope systems.

The cost is \$149 a set for smaller boats and \$179 a set for sea-rated hardware.

The weight on all four corners and the attached lines is what keeps the boat in the dead-center of a slip. Even during wind squalls, the



Staff photo by DAVID B. HOLLINGSWORTH

Hugh B. Brydges' invention, the Sea Safe Mooring System, anchors his boat in the middle of the slip.

weights and pulleys automatically adjust for the changing seas, Brydges said.

The mooring system can be used by motorboats, sailboats and even jet skis.

A major Florida boat dealer, Boston Whaler, was so impressed with the product that the company is endorsing the idea and selling them to new boat owners, Brydges added.

The product was also featured in the August edition of Motorboating and Sailing magazine and will be featured in the September edition of Boating and the October edition of Yachting magazines.

Brydges and his longtime friend and accountant, Jenny Freeman, are fielding hundreds of calls daily

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to their Great Neck area home about the product. So many, in fact, that they're hiring a full-time operator to take orders. Right now, parts are being made in several places and are sent to a Richmond shipping and packaging company to be assembled and sent out. Brydges also plans to hire an entire sales force to sell the product. He's selling about 100 a week, he said.

Like most marketable ideas, Brydges came up with the mooring system idea out of necessity. During storms, he was the one sent out to let slack out of the lines mooring his small boat and his father's large boat.

Because his father's boat was more expensive, Brydges quickly

devised a system of ropes, pulleys and weights to moor his own boat, leaving one less boat to worry about during a storm.

Brydges first used bricks as weights and set up the same system for free for many of his boating friends. Today, for Virginia Beach residents, Brydges offers the mooring system at a 10 percent discount because, he says, "Virginia Beach has been so good to me."

Six years ago, during a bout with cancer and after a career in commercial real estate, Brydges decided to hire a patent attorney to find out if the idea had ever been patented. To his surprise, it hadn't been. Thus began his quest to patent and market the mooring system.

Brydges credits many of his friends with helping to get the idea together. Longtime businessman Jim Arnhold of Arnhold Marketing is president of Brydges' corporation, Sea Safe Inc. Arnhold has managed the business end of things, attending negotiations and the like. Still other friends have helped by offering Brydges a place to stay when he was in between homes or volunteered their services to get the business up and running.

"I've got a knack for thinking things up," said Brydges, "but I'm no bean counter. All I want to do now is go back to the drawing board with my other ideas."

Call Sea Safe Inc. at 496-8828.