



Heroes **by Aaron Crowley**

Some people are meant to be heroes. The rest of us live vicariously through their heroic exploits by telling their stories.

I am one such story-teller. My brother Nate is one such hero. While camping up on the beautiful Clackamas River with his high school buddies, he saved his best friend from drowning. The troupe had decided to swim the river and upon reaching the other side Nate looked back to see his buddy Luke struggling, only half way across. He swam back out into the middle of the river and rescued him.

I wasn't there but my assumption is that the last thing Luke wanted to hear from his friends on the shore was advice on how to improve his back stroke.

So goes my assumption about stone fabricators struggling to keep their nostrils above water in this roiling economic current; the last thing any of us want to hear is some slick, sexy, fix-all solution to this present predicament we find ourselves in.

As such, this article will not be a three-step process to "profiting in a recession" and I'll keep the sexy clichés to a minimum.

Instead I'd like to tell the story about how my relationship with Braxton Bragg began almost 10 years ago to illustrate a broader principle that might just serve all of us well, whatever our particular circumstances may be.

When I first began showing our Stone Sleeves to product managers at the big catalogue companies, I received almost universal feedback on why my idea for waterproof wet polishing sleeves *wouldn't* work. "No one's ever going to pay that much for a pair of sleeves!" was the most common response.

But then Braxton Bragg's product manager returned my phone call. He had the pair of sleeves I'd sent him to review and he said, "You know, what I've found is that the ideas we all think are going to be big, often times bomb. And the ones we think will fail, often times fly. So why don't you send me a box of 50 pairs and we'll give 'em a try."

So profound was the impact of that conversation, it is as if it happened yesterday. It was to become a springboard for another company that has found success providing products and services that stone fabricators want.

The principle lesson is even more profound and is supported by the many products enterprising entrepreneurs have delivered to our industry in recent years, all of them making our businesses more profitable and our lives easier.

The EZ Dishwasher Brackets, the Rubenator Milling Bits, and the Omni Cubed product line, have all increased our productivity and eliminate headaches at the same time.

None of us know when this mad river is going to recede and none of us really know what it will take to make sure we're still in business when it does. What we do know is that a constant pursuit of new ideas will probably make the difference.

We can not give up when our big idea bombs. We must not give in to the fear that our next idea won't fly.

So long as we relentlessly pursue better ways to improve our product and the process by which we deliver it to our customers, we increase the likelihood that they will support our companies by buying from us.

We must try, try, try and keep trying. We must test every theory and measure every result and not stop until we find the idea that keeps each of us afloat.