

# contents

Colorado

**biz**

Volume 31, No. 9

September 2004

[www.cobizmag.com](http://www.cobizmag.com)

## features

---

18

### **THE ENVELOPES, PLEASE ...**

ColoradoBiz salutes the winners of the 17th Annual Top Company of the Year competition, and the Enterprising Teacher of the Year.



TOM SAUREY

**Manufacturing**  
Tuff Shed Inc., Denver

**EMPHASIS: MARKETING/PRODUCT  
INNOVATION**

When Tom Saurey is asked how he came to start his company, Tuff Shed Inc., a manufacturer of out-buildings and

garages, he remembers hocking his pickup truck to buy a load of cedar shakes that he thought would get him into the lumber business.

One of his customers in his home state of Idaho, however, used the shakes to roof some outdoor sheds, and after working for another lumberyard for a short time, Saurey and the Idaho partner joined up to build and sell the sheds, first in Salt Lake and Tueson.

Now, Tuff Shed — Saurey is its sole owner now — sells its buildings through 800 Home Depot stores across the country, and the Denver-based company has just over 1,000 employees making and selling buildings and garages in 40 store/manufacturing plants in 27 states.

Saurey said last year Tuff Shed passed its nearest competitor and now is the nation's No. 1 builder of sheds in terms of revenue, number of employees and number of sales locations.

"I always dreamed of making it big," he said. "I thought it (the market) would be big. I didn't know how big."

Not that there weren't slow periods along the way: "We've actually opened stores probably quicker than we should have," he said. But the company was always able to "work our way out of" growing too fast and concentrate on building profits.

"And after we got healthy again, we started growing again," said Saurey.

Along that growth path, the company has patented a key-locking handle for its sheds; it has a patent pending on its door system; it developed a steel flooring system exclusive to its brand; and it has developed its own fasteners.

It generally builds the walls of its sheds in its combination factory-stores, then assembles the buildings in a buyer's backyard, but it also has moved into garage construction and can build up to a five-car garage for a customer.

Shed prices average from \$1,500 to \$2,000, Saurey said, but garage prices, de-

pending on the size of the building, can start at about \$6,000 to \$7,000 and go up to as much as \$50,000. Garage sales, he said, now amount to about 20 percent of Tuff Shed's business.

Home Depot, which sells Tuff Shed, now acts as an even larger sales force for the company, Saurey said, and that relationship expanded two-fold just this year when Tuff Shed bought another company that had also been a shed-supplier to the national big-box home-improvement retailer.

Tuff Shed started selling product in 400 Home Depot stores in Utah, Nevada and parts of California, but this year's purchase in February gained it access to 200 more stores, and Home Depot added another 200 stores after the purchase closed.

When he looks back on it, Saurey certainly doesn't regret buying that load of cedar shakes to get into the lumber business, even if he did have to "hock" his truck to pay then-high interest rates on a

load of lumber that took him into a different career altogether. "It was a good education for a 20-year-old," he said of that first venture.

It also proved to be a stepping stone for a national industry leader.