Chip industry not small potatoes for Tyler man

Associated Press

TYLER — Dana Boles watches with a keen eye the process that he says he hopes will grow from small potatoes to big potatoes in the chips industry.

With four family members running the company with him, Boles has manufactured home-made potato chips for Tyler, Longview and Dallas grocery chains about six months.

Boles says every chip of Boles Old-Fashioned Potato Chips is carefully made.

"We're new in the business, you know, so we want to get the best out," says Boles, a former Robert E. Lee High School and Tyler Junior College student.

"These potatoes are right out of the field, right off the truck," he says, pointing to spuds on a conveyor. The conveyor carries 20,000 pounds of potatoes daily on their first step to becoming Boles Old Fashioned Potato Chips.

Boles, 29, began his potato chip business with an agreement with Brookshire's 10 Tyler stores to get shelf space for the product.

Boles used fast-talking, elbow-rubbing and plain, old-fashioned salesmanship to secure a spot for his product in most Tyler grocery stores.

Talk now is not of beating the competition. Instead, it focuses on when the old-fashioned, hand-made potato chip will be popular in Tyler. The chips currently sell for $1.39 a bag.

Boles knows the signs to look for, thanks to a visit to a firm in the East using the same technique.

"I went up (to Massachusetts) to learn the business," he says. "They got so big, so fast, that two months later, they found they needed 18 cookers."

Boles currently has one cooker.

"In other parts of the country, it's the fastest growing industry," he says. He says Tyler is a good market area.

"We think it's good if we maintain our sales," he says. "Somebody always has potato chips on sale. We don't. It's a specialty product and costs more to make it."

Still, the chips haven't convinced grocery chains to stock them in all stores. The only chain selling Boles chips is Brookshire's.

"But overnight, it could all explode," Boles says.

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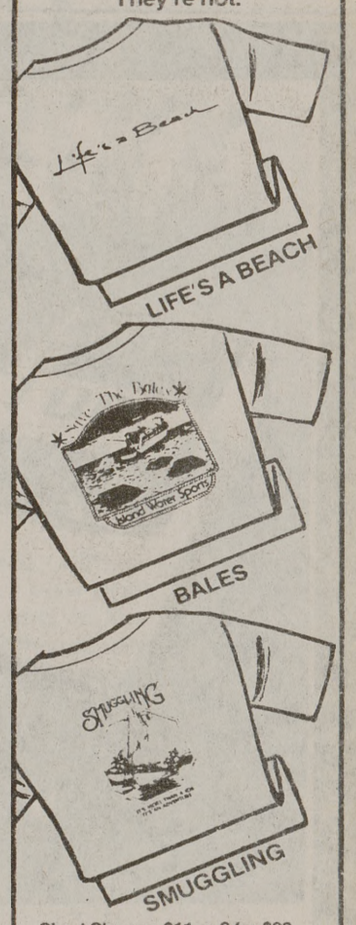

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