

There's No Stopping His Drain Products

HAIR-CATCHING PRODUCT LINE A HIT WITH ONLINE AND MAJOR STORE RETAILERS **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

Every so often if a product seems useful and helps to solve a problem I might have at home, I try it out while interviewing the inventor. I'm sure many of you can relate to hairy gunk piling up in your drains—especially if you are a pet owner—so I was curious.

Serge Karnegie invented tub and sink drain products the TubShroom®, SinkShroom® and ShowerShroom®. All of them accommodate 1.5-inch tub drains, 1.25-inch sink drains and 2-inch stand-up shower drains, respectively.

My observations after using the products:

TubShroom—It's important to note that you cannot take a bath with the TubShroom in place. If you want to take a bath, remove the TubShroom (very easy!) and put in a drain stopper to hold the water. After your bath, remove the drain stopper and quickly replace the TubShroom to catch the hair and other gunk before it goes down your pipes with the bath water.

SinkShroom—Make sure you start out with a clean, free-flowing drain. My bathroom sink tends to run slowly so I found that after I removed the regular stopper and inserted the SinkShroom in place, the drain ran even more slowly. But it did catch hair.

ShowerShroom—My husband uses the shower stall and says the product worked quite well!

The 'Shroom products make great stocking stuffers, so they're perfect for holiday ordering.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Serge, tell us about your inventing background.

Serge Karnegie (SK): When I was about 13, my father enrolled me into a so-called electronics hobby club center, where later I came up with my own video game. Although primitive by today's standards, it was considered a huge achievement by fellow students and our teacher. It was considered an invention by everyone.

Later, I created an improvised teleprompter. My mother was a news anchor at a local TV station. It was a huge hit, since the news was read off paper. I guess I should have pursued a career in the tech world, but I ended up in sales and marketing.

EGT: Tell us more about what's needed to use the TubShroom, the original product in your line.

SK: The TubShroom is intended for use in bathtubs, or any drain that's 1.5 inches to 1.75 inches in diameter. But to take a bath, a user has to use a stopper. There are many stopper options on the market that work just fine.

In walk-in showers, however, the drain diameter is 2 inches. We came out with a unit earlier this year that accommodates such drains. We call it the ShowerShroom.

EGT: How many prototypes did it take until you got the right one for the TubShroom?

SK: I made the very first prototype using a piece of a PVC pipe and some rubber. It was a perfectly functioning unit, for what it was intended. Then CAD design was made according to specs of the prototype. The first silicone prototypes were perfect right off the bat and needed no tweaking. We were ready for production.

EGT: Tell us about your crowdfunding experiences.

SK: I think that was one of the most exciting parts of the venture. (The TubShroom campaign, launched in September 2015 with a \$12,000 goal, raised \$59,267 from 2,059 backers. The SinkShroom campaign, launched in July 2016 with a \$7,500 goal, raised \$67,159 from 2,383 backers. And last March, the ShowerShroom

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“When you hit that Launch button and pledges start rolling in pretty much the same minute, the joy and excitement that overtake you is hard to describe.”

—SERGE KARNEGIE, ON HIS CROWDFUNDING EFFORTS



campaign beat its \$5,000 goal by raising \$21,963 from 754 backers.)

When you hit that Launch button and pledges start rolling in pretty much the same minute, the joy and excitement that overtake you is hard to describe. That's when you realize that your creation is being recognized and is very important for the creator. Other than that, it was a very interesting learning experience. Kickstarter backers are a very special community. I'm very thankful for them.

EGT: Are you manufacturing in the United States or overseas?

SK: We tried—or should I say, considered—manufacturing our products in the United States, but the cost of the materials and labor were just too much for a startup to bear. The decision was made to take it to Asia.

EGT: Tell us about your experience with your patents.

SK: We filed for a provisional utility patent early in the process to ensure that we would be protected in the event that the product took off. Likewise, for the design patent. We knew our product was unique enough that it could receive protection with the right patents.

The process isn't cheap, unfortunately, and we learned a lot from our lawyer about what approach made the most sense to protect our product. We have since filed in several foreign countries, where our product is already being sold.

EGT: Who designed your logo and packaging?

SK: I imagined all the artwork myself, then, to the best of my ability, made drawings and my designer made it look beautiful.

EGT: Are you selling only online now, or are you selling to retail?

SK: In the online space, TubShroom is enjoying tremendous popularity on Amazon. The almost five-star ratings have now surpassed 10,000 reviews. Outside cyberspace, at least one of our three products can be

found in such nationwide retail chains as Bed Bath & Beyond, Target, Lowe's, CVS, Ace hardware, Menard's, Boscov's and many more.

EGT: Any plans to add other products?

SK: Yes, we are currently in pre-production phase of our StopShroom™. It's a universal stopper that can be used in conjunction with our TubShroom and SinkShroom, as well as on its own in bathtubs, utility or kitchen sinks. It's an attractive and highly functional new product.

EGT: Have you encountered obstacles in developing your products?

SK: Yes. At some point, it turned out that the original design of the TubShroom was too complex, and it was too difficult—if not impossible—to create the tooling for it. Tooling is what they call a mold that's used to shape the final product.

Eventually the technicians figured out a solution, much to our excitement. That was a nerve wrecker because we already committed to a delivery date to our Kickstarter backers, which we absolutely did not want to miss. Fortunately for everyone involved, we were able to resolve it just in time and deliver on time.

EGT: Any words of encouragement you might offer our readers?

SK: If you have an idea for a product, don't give up. Give it a chance for success. It's an adventure worth taking. 🍀

Details: tubshroom.com

Books by **Edie Tolchin** (egt@edietolchin.com) include “Fanny on Fire” (fannyonfire.com) and “Secrets of Successful Inventing.” She has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000. Edie has owned EGT Global Trading since 1997, assisting inventors with product safety issues and China manufacturing.



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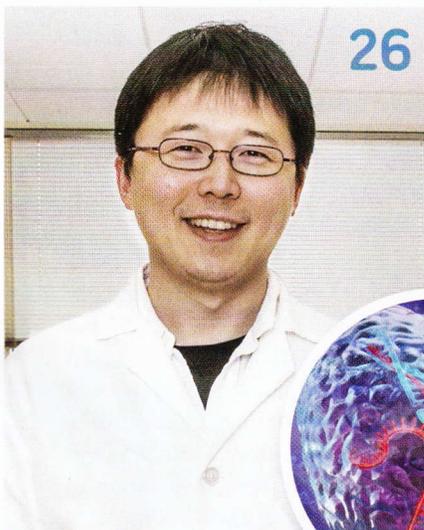
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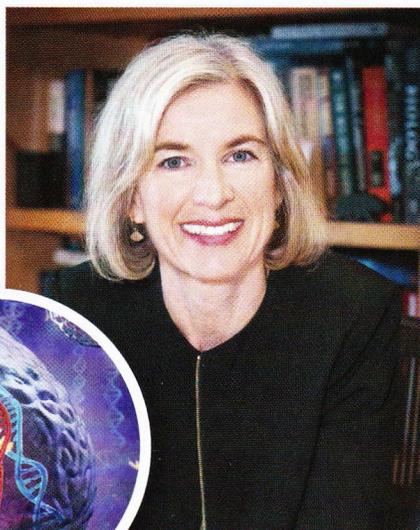
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THEIR WORK IS NEVER DONE

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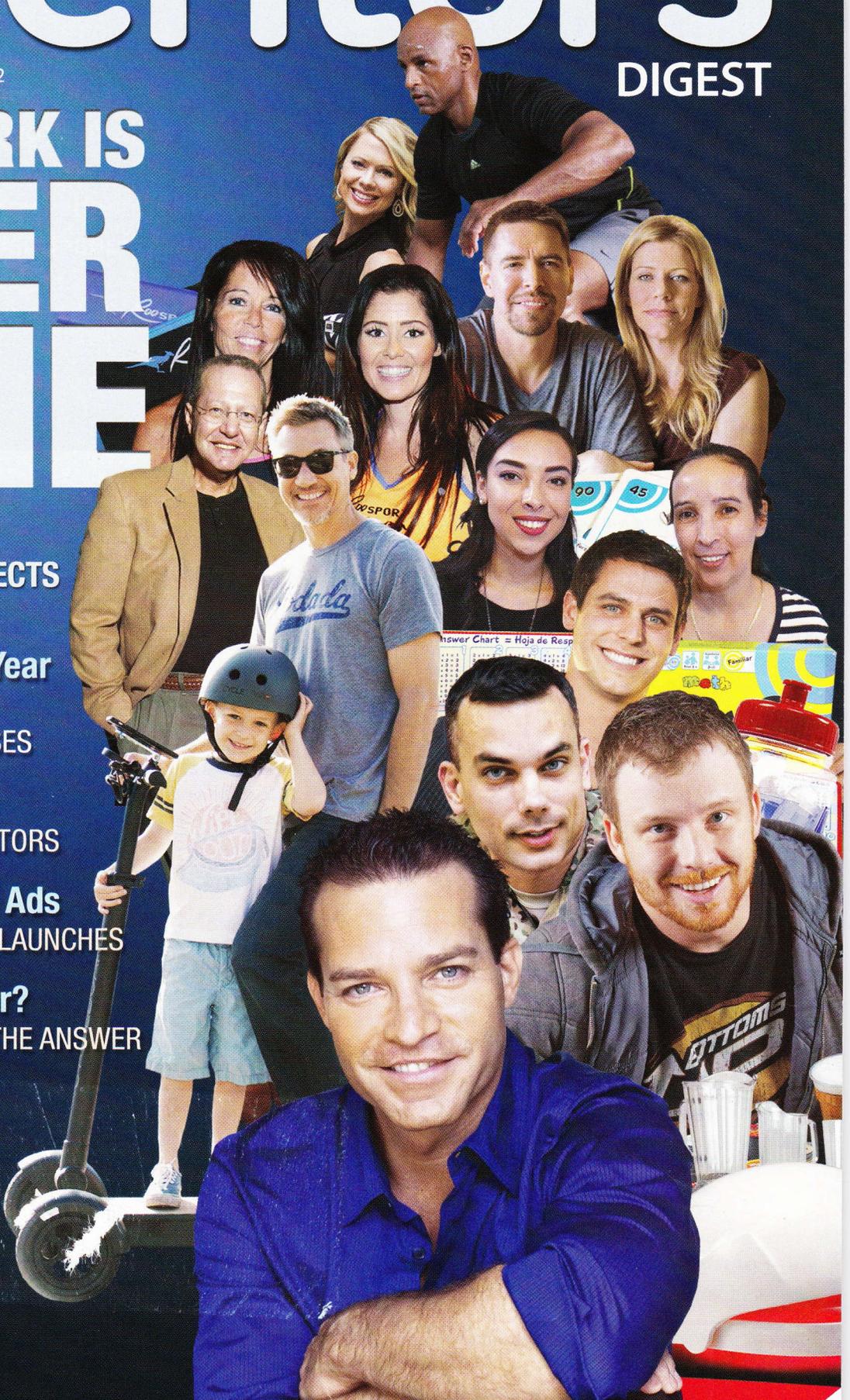
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