

Follow-up file

Whatever happened to David Snell?

By JENNIFER CHAMBERLAIN / The Dallas Morning News
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If there's one thing David Snell has learned during six years in the crawfish business, it's this: Texans can't get enough crawfish.

David Snell "It's just amazing how many people here really like crawfish; it's like there's some nostalgia about it or something," he said.

That yearning for the savory mudbugs has propelled Mr. Snell's Cajun Crawfish Co. from a seasonal side business to a full-time job for the Dallas entrepreneur. In February 2003, Mr. Snell left his job as an information technology recruiter to concentrate on his catering business, which specializes in providing on-site crawfish boils to corporate and individual clients.

The growth has been phenomenal, Mr. Snell said, going from about \$44,000 in sales two years ago, to more than \$170,000 for the first six months of this year.

Mr. Snell's company also rents and sells crawfish boil equipment and sells live crawfish, drawing customers from as far as the Bahamas.

Additionally, the bankruptcy of a competitor, Bayou Boys of Lewisville, opened the door to another business.

"I paid off all their phone bills before they went into bankruptcy and had their number forwarded to me, and that led to an entirely new business in the fall, being the Cajun fried turkey and turducken business," Mr. Snell said, turducken referring to the popular delicacy consisting of a turkey stuffed with a duck stuffed, in turn, with a chicken.

Despite the expansion, Mr. Snell said, he's been able to keep his costs low through partnerships with other businesses. In exchange for freezer space, he caters charitable events for local grocery stores. He also formed a partnership with the Grapevine restaurant Big Fish, which has allowed him to expand his menu beyond what can be cooked on a crawfish trailer.

As if all that weren't enough, Mr. Snell maintains a separate business, Starlight Flight, which provides aerial tours. That venture keeps the aviation graduate flying at least once a week.

Looking forward, Mr. Snell said he expects to continue on the entrepreneurial path. And he expects big things for Cajun Crawfish.

"Five years from now, I either foresee having other people running this business while I'm off to starting some new business, or, if I'm involved with this still, well into franchising or expanding the business into different markets under the Cajun Crawfish Co. name," he said.

Though happy about his success, Mr. Snell said there are times it all seems far removed from the corporate world.

"It's weird to go from being a corporate recruiter and pilot to 'the crawfish guy,' " he said. "I'm like, 'As long as the check is big enough, you can call me whatever you want to call me.' "

How to reach him: Call 972-337-2645 or go to <http://www.cajun-crawfishco.com> or www.starlightflight.com.
Online at: <http://www.dallasnews.com/s/dws/bus/sundaystartup/stories/110504dnbussunstarfolo.4e4da.html>

