

"We meet design needs," WESCO Fountains' Jeff Horvath



By Roxanne Fraver,
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CF: What is the nature of your company?

JH: WESCO Fountains Inc. engineers, designs, and manufactures equipment packages for commercial fountains. Floating or lake fountains, interactive "play" fountains, and large architectural fountains are brought to us as an idea by a developer, architect, or

owner. We engineer the hydraulics and equipment necessary to meet the design demands. The equipment packages can be quite elaborate and do not add to the water feature's beautiful surroundings. So, we house the equipment in subterranean equipment vaults, which are hidden in ground and made accessible by inconspicuous lids. The vaults are made of fiberglass and range in size from 6'x 6' to 8'x 12'. Because we are the manufacturer, we are also able to create custom sizes for special requirements. It is our goal to engineer the vaults for the greatest efficiency of the water feature, utilizing the least amount of space without hindering quality. Our services are turnkey—not only do we design the fountains, but we also have a project management department to handle the construction and installation. We recently acquired a company that invented and manufactures fiberglass composite slide-in truck campers. Roamer Industries, maker of Roamer truck campers, offer campers that are fiberglass on the inside, and outside of the unit. Roamer is one of the most lightweight, aerodynamic truck campers on the market today.

CF: What is your company's background?

JH: WESCO Fountains was incorporated in 1980 in Venice, Florida, and focused on manufacturing the "Cadillac" of floating or lake fountains. Many of the first fountains installed are still in operation today. By working with area developers, WESCO was asked to help on larger, architectural fountains for commercial projects. The growth in Florida stimulated the need for a fountain company in the area. As the demand and WESCO's reputation grew for its sound engineering and quality equipment, so did the company. In order to increase production volume, the decision was made that moving to a larger facility was necessary. In 2001, the company built a new 25,000 square foot facility in

Nokomis, located right on Florida's main interstate for convenient accessibility. The state-of-the-art facility as well as adding key positions to its sales force and support staff enabled the company to reach and surpass its goals. Currently, WESCO is on track to break all of its prior sales records and has all indications of 2005 being another stellar year. WESCO also manufactures many of its own components used in the equipment packages: fountain, nozzles, junction boxes, wet/dry landscape lighting, as well as having a UL listed electrical department. All of the electrical panels used in the fountain packages are

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Employees: 33



designed by the electrical engineer on staff and built in-house.

The Roamer campers were started in Michigan in 1994 and moved to Sarasota, Florida in 1998. The acquisition of the company by WESCO happened at the end of 2003. The fiberglass technology used to make the campers surpassed the methods being used by WESCO. Bringing in this knowledge, equipment, and methods enabled WESCO to substantially reduce material usage and production times. Seeing the potential of the Roamer campers, WESCO's owner Jeff Horvath decided to make improvements to the design and reintroduced the camper to the market in 2004. Efforts were then focused on streamlining manufacturing and making some additional design changes for introduction in the 2005 models.

CF: What obstacles does your company face today in the regulatory or technical arenas?

JH: WESCO is a small company specializing in custom made architectural fountains. Being small and customized in our offerings limits the quantity we can manufacture at one time of one product. Cost savings generally are found in large quantities. Finding a cost effective way to produce parts has proven to be difficult. Most of the new technologies require investments in tooling and equipment. It is

difficult to make these investments profitable. Also, many of the raw materials utilized in equipment manufacturing have increased dramatically, adding to the challenges.

CF: What are your marketing efforts?

JH: WESCO Fountains Inc. advertises in Landscape Architect and Specifier News on a regular basis. Press releases are sent out announcing new products and company achievements to trade publications whenever warranted. Currently, we are in the process of updating our entire web site, www.wescofountains.com. Quarterly newsletters are published and sent out to our database of over 11,000 contacts. Additional targeted mailers are also completed as dictated by our sales team. Roamer Industries is advertised in Western Horseman and RV Journal, as well as press release and web site advertising. Roamer also exhibits at the Florida RV Supershow in Tampa at the state fairgrounds in January.

CF: What development or research would you like to see happen to improve the industry?

JH: With the effort to reduce emissions, the closed molding processes available today work well, but are still too costly for the company. Improvements are necessary in creating less expensive tooling and equipment costs associated with the closed molding processes.

CF: Where do you see your business in five years?

JH: WESCO Fountains Inc. successfully operated from the same location in Venice for 17 years before outgrowing the facility. All financial efforts were focused on relocating to the new facility. WESCO has now been operating out of its new headquarters for 3 1/2 years and the planned growth expected from the move is being realized. In the coming years WESCO will have grown by 20.25%. A number of new products will be released to the market and our penetration nationwide will be greater. Roamer is planned to have grasped two percent of the slide-in truck camper market, as well as expanding its offerings and product line. **CF**

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