Johnny Harshman, founder and owner of HarshCo LLC since mid-2007, never tells his customers “no”, nor does he subcontract out his customers’ jobs that require 100% part inspection. He feels that the work must be done in-house, where he is accountable to the quality of work. Rather, he and his wife Janet work evenings, weekends, and sometimes 24 hours straight to get the customers’ jobs done on time.

HarshCo provides free pick-up and delivery to their customers, and when their customers’ requirements call for it, they inspect 100% of the parts.

Of the more than 30 customers HarshCo picked up in the last 18 months (strictly through referrals), Johnny thinks that 80% use HarshCo exclusively for their waterjet needs.

HarshCo is poised and ready for growth. HarshCo was a husband and wife team until recently, and so Johnny couldn’t go out marketing the company to new customers. With the recent hiring of his son, Kevin, and the addition of experienced workers, the team now numbers 5 employees, and Johnny will be able to go out and market the company.

By all standards, Johnny Harshman was successful prior to opening his shop. A manufacturers’ representative for the electrical utility industry for 17 years making a six-digit income, Johnny was able to live comfortably, buy toys he wanted, and live in a beautiful Frank Lloyd Wright-looking house sitting on 1.7 acres in Phoenix. During his off-hours, Johnny jogged, rode his motorcycle, and built metal products. His garage housed a Bridgeport manual mill, a 9” lathe, a drill press, grinders, tubing benders and notchers, a sheet metal brake, MIG and TIG welders, and a deburring machine. Johnny said, “We had all of the standard hobbyist machine shop tools. Well, maybe a little more than the typical hobbyist!”

The kids were grown and out of the house, and Johnny’s passion was for building things, for using his hands. He describes himself as a “self taught machin-
ist”, and he went on to elaborate, “What I don’t know, I read up on or learn from experienced people in the industry”.

He researched new processes for metalworking, analyzed businesses that could be somewhat imperious to a recession, and settled on waterjet cutting. “It’s the newest technology, and there are many parts you can make that are both thick and thin and require high tolerance, which is what the waterjet is perfect for”.

Next, Johnny had to decide on the waterjet manufacturer he was most comfortable with, both in terms of the relationship and in the technology. “North-South was the first (and only) to respond to me in a timely manner, with their solution, the Omax waterjet. "I liked their technology, too", Johnny said. “I like the mechanical pump versus the intensifier. I just don’t think that it makes sense to run with hydraulics. The Omax is an easy to maintain, cost effective piece of equipment. It’s all about ease of maintenance for me”.

And so HarshCo LLC was launched just 18 months ago. Johnny’s acreage and workshop on the property allowed him to start up the company without securing an additional facility. The on-premises shop, at 1500 square feet, required substantial power and electrical modifications, all of which Johnny did on his own — and so well that he easily received all building and electrical permits.

Today, HarshCo LLC cuts signs, electronic products, automotive suspension parts (both production and full custom race suspension parts), electrical panels (both aluminum and steel), parts for custom guitars, floor boards for Harley Davidson Baggers, and they do a substantial amount of prototyping work for a number of customers. One of the more gratifying prototypes they worked on was for a military vehicle which electrically and manually trips land mines on the side of the road. And one of the most infamous parts they made were seen on the TV show, Chopper Challenge. These were parts cut for Ssinister choppers. This company, like almost all that HarshCo LLC builds for, found him via word of mouth.

They even manufacture a completed product, a Jig Table, and Johnny says his goal is to manufacture more complete turnkey parts, either designed by HarshCo or built by them per customer specifications.

Just recently, the company expanded into tapping with a machine purchase. Prior to this, they could only do waterjet cutting. “Now we are getting into manufacturing”, Johnny said. They also purchased an Omax drill accessory (one of few shops in Arizona to do so), which facilitated their entry into the laminated or soft material cutting business, including PVC, acrylic and lexan. As I was interviewing the company, they were waterjet cutting a Plexiglas sign.

What’s next for HarshCo, LLC? If all continues on its current path, the company will purchase its second Omax waterjet by year end. And with the expanded staff, HarshCo sees ongoing growth. Maybe Johnny can take a ride on the motorcycle he hasn’t stepped onto since starting up the business full time.

For more information on HarshCo LLC, a company that still never says no, call Johnny Harshman at 602-617-7514 or visit their website at www.harshco.com.