

# Nuts about success

## Sense of humor, persistence powers business

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The late humorist Will Rogers once said, "We are all here for a spell; get all the good laughs you can." Rogers' [great-granddaughter](#), Jennifer Rogers-Etcheverry, seems to personify this sentiment.

The Bakersfield resident sells seasoned and candied almonds under the amusing banner "My Husband's Nuts." The name elicits all kinds of reactions, but in actuality Rogers-Etcheverry's husband has an almond orchard on Calloway Drive, and that was her original nut source. My Husband's Nuts has steadily grown since its founding in May 2003. Numerous local stores stock the nuts, and Internet sales are brisk, although she declined to give specific figures.

Rogers-Etcheverry recently sat down in an old bunk house on her husband's ranch for some serious talk about nuts.

**Q:** What is My Husband's Nuts, in a nutshell? No pun intended.

**A:** Seasoned and candied almonds. I do wholesale and resale.

**Q:** Why did you start this business?

**A:** Well, we (Rogers-Etcheverry and her husband, Mark) have been in farming ever since we've been married. We've been married 15 years. When the cotton market started going down so bad, we planted almonds. When we planted them, they were at an all-time high. Then of course, the next year they were at an all-time low. And so every year, during the holidays, he would say to me, "You need to be a little conservative this year." One year led to the next and I finally said, "You know what, what do I have to do? Sell your nuts for you?"

So my dad and my brother and Mark and I were sitting around at the house at Christmas. We were laughing over what the name could be and my brother said, "You could call it, 'My Husband's Nuts.'" We just joked about it. My dad lives in Tennessee, and he went back to Tennessee and he called me in a couple of days. He said, "Hey, I was telling some guy back here what we were talking about and he said he wants that name if we don't want it." And my dad, being a businessman (he's in the cattle business), said, "I think we should trademark the name and go for it." And I said, "Ohhh, I don't know." And my dad said, "I'll be your banker and you do the work." We went and got the name trademarked and formed a corporation.

**Q:** Do you have a background in retail?

**A:** I've been with Mary Kay cosmetics for 18 years, so I have a little bit of sales and a little bit of retail, just from that. But as far as starting a business, nothing. I've just had to go out there and ask a lot of questions.

**Q:** How long did it take to start the business?

**A:** (The idea originated in) Christmas 2002. We started working on it in January and the company was actually formed in May. We were in our first store August 1.

**Q:** How did that feel?

**A:** Oh my goodness. I cried.

**Continued ...**

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**Q:** Have you ever gotten a negative reaction to the business name?

**A:** You know what? I get a very positive reaction. I really do. Every now and then I'll get a man, it's always a man, that just doesn't want to say much. And I've heard every comment that comes across the table.

... I just eat it up. I get phone calls, honestly almost daily, or e-mails from people all over the United States that say, "I just love it." I got a call from a gal in Tahoe the other day that said she's been in sales all her life and has never seen anything like it. She wished me well. That just made my day.

**Q:** Who designed your label?

**A:** Well, because of my Will Rogers connection, I'm good friends with the grandson of Spencer Tracy, who's [Joe Spencer Tracy](#), and he's an artist. I went to him. My dad wanted a label of an old farm truck driving down a road of orchards. And poor Joe Tracy worked on this literally a month. Every time he sent something to me, it just wasn't grabbing me. I had a vision of a chick with her hand out all along. And so one night, Joe was just about to quit me. I said, "Will you just try this one thing? I'm going to fax you something and it's totally different." I literally drew a stick figure of her and the tree and her hand out. I faxed it to him. An hour later I heard my fax line and I ran into my office and it was her. I said, "That is it."

... It's all got to be fun. And when people say, "My Husband's Nuts?" it's like, "Well, my husband grows almonds and that's how this started."

**Q:** Take it any way you want.

**A:** Yeah. Some people say, "Your husband's crazy?"

**Q:** Your husband must be a good sport.

**A:** Oh, he has been, bless his heart.

**Q:** How many bags have you sold?

**A:** We have gone through three tons of almonds since August ... I didn't know what to expect. I really didn't.

**Q:** And the nuts come from your husband's orchard?

**A:** That's how we started. Now at this time, because of the market and everything, I'm actually going through the company that's seasoning them for me because it's more economical for me. (She declined to name the company.)

**Q:** How have you been promoting the business?

**A:** ... It's just word of mouth and me. These things are taking off. People see 'em and they laugh.

**Q:** What do you think is the key to your success?

**A:** Well, I've always said, "You can't give up, no matter what." I believe in my label and I believe in me. I've always been a go-getter. That kind of comes from my great-grandfather.