

Continuing to Grow In the Glass Business

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN Robert Smith stands in front of Glass Inc., his 2-year-old Meridian business. Smith, 43, recently relocated his business to a 35,000 square-foot complex on Grand Avenue. Photo by Freddie Carmichael/The Meridian Star By Freddie Carmichael/The Meridian Star Sept. 24, 2001 Meridian businessman Robert Smith dipped into family history when he named his glass company after one his dad started more than 35 years ago.

Smith started Glass Inc. in July 1999 with nine employees in a 5,000 square-foot building. More than two years later, Smith now operates from a 35,000 square-foot complex on Grand Avenue with 32 full-time workers.

"We just basically out-grew our first building pretty quickly," Smith, 43, said. "We started out serving people from around Meridian and we now have contracts with people and businesses all over the Southeast."

Smith's first nine employees were all under the age of 42 and had from 10-24 years of experience in the business. "We were a fairly young group," Smith said. "But the main thing we had was a lot of experience in our area."

Smith graduated with a bachelor's degree in construction engineering from Mississippi State University in 1981. He said he "basically just fell into the glass business." Smith's father, Bobby, originally entered the glass business more than 35 years ago with four of his friends. Together, they ran Glass Inc. in Greenwood in northwest Mississippi. Bobby Smith helped run the business for a few years before eventually selling it to a larger company, Binswanger. Robert Smith then went to work for Binswanger.

"I actually went to work for Binswanger, the company that bought out my dad's business, because he happened to know some people there," Smith said. "My first job with them was in New Orleans, La., and I moved here with the company in 1983."

Smith said he had several goals for his new company when he started it, and has exceeded all of them.

The company made nearly \$5 million in sales during its second year and became one of the top three glass companies in the state. Glass Inc. manufactures windows for business and residential buildings.

"I'm just real excited about where we're headed," Smith said. "One of my third-year goals was to be able to serve business as far south as the Coast and we were able to accomplish that in our first year."

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