



## FERNANDO WRIGHT

CEO  
TB Wright Group, LLC.

by Michael L. Jones

Fernando Parradiso Wright, Sr. never thought of himself as an inventor, but that is what he became after a bad experience at a Cracker Barrel restaurant in 2007. Wright and his then-girlfriend were seated at a table that hadn't been bussed. He thought to himself that there must be a way for restaurants to keep the tables cleaner between diners. A few nights later he woke up with the idea for the Table Butler, a multi-purpose organizing system that is currently available in the Louisville-area. Commercials for the product began airing locally in August. Over the next year, Wright plans to expand his distribution to more Wal-Mart stores throughout Kentucky and in the Atlanta area. Eventually he expects a nationwide rollout.

"I've learned so much over the last few years about manufacturing, distribution, and those sorts of things," Wright said. "I financed this all myself and these stores are used to dealing with big companies. Wal-Mart turned me down 31 times before I found a buyer who was interested. You've got to be persistent. God gave me the strength to keep going."

Wright has been tinkering all his life. The 54-year old was born in Birmingham, Alabama, but his family moved to Louisville when he was six because of his stepfather's job with L & N Railroad. His parents raised five children and money was always tight. Wright remembers he and his two brothers building scooters in his backyard with scrap wood and roller skate wheels. The experience helped shape his work ethic.

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"I've never been afraid of hard work, but I've always wanted to work for myself," Wright explained. "I had yards that I used to keep cut when I was 12, 13 years old. I was 17 when I started to buy property."

Wright was still a student at Iroquois High School when he read a Paul Simmons book about buying homes with little or no money down. He sold his car for collateral and convinced his parents to co-sign a loan so he could buy three rental properties. Catalyst Chemical Company bought two of them from him for a tidy profit. Eventually the real estate business was doing so well he dropped out of the University of Louisville, where he was playing football.

"After Catalyst bought those properties, I never looked back," Wright explained. "I had cash money and everything I had was paid for. I just ran with it. For a while I was buying houses, fixing them up, and then flipping them. But when the recession hit in 2008 nobody was buying anymore. I ended up with a lot rental property."

Most of Wright's attention now is focused on the TB Wright Group, the company he founded to distribute the Table Butler. He actually has another invention in the pipeline – a sock organizer that is still in the design stages. Once he has a distribution network set-up Wright said it will be easier to bring other products to market. Ultimately, he would like his company to be a place where other people could bring their ideas for him to manufacture. The divorced father of three – two girls and a boy – would especially like to encourage the next generation of inventors.

"I would definitely like to be in a position to give back to the community," Wright said. "I try to work with as many black businesses as I can. I want to help young black kids get experience in manufacturing. I'd like to see more of kids being creative. I think that's the problem in the world today, we don't take the time to encourage kids to follow their dreams."

