



Keeping You
and the
Environment Safe



Love Your Garbage Man

APPRECIATION FOR THE WINTER TIME WASTE WARRIORS

I often think that the average citizen of our cities has little clue as to the waste industry world. It's amazing that it's as flawless as it is. The only time anyone normally YELPS their garbage hauler online is when a pickup has been missed or a bill is off. The behind the scenes that lets garbage get picked up is frankly a thing of beauty in its own right.

My observations of the silent, yet noble Winter Time Waste Warriors began as a child back in San Jose, California. There was prune orchards back then, but I date myself! I used to watch and listen those foggy, cold January Mondays as the coughing, trudging and viewable ember from a cigarette butt dangling that would pass by my bedroom window. After opening our side gate, swiftly our trash cans would be dumped into the steel receptacle that was thrown over his shoulder, gate was closed, there would be that smokers cough, and off he would trudge to repeat this exercise house after house. Even at 5 years old, I would marvel at the coolness of that job.

Fast forward to an early route "sales" job" I had in the uniform rental business. My favorite mornings were spent at the BFI on Old Oakland Road. I would get there at 6 am, and unload uniform lockers. Aahh, the pleasant odor of clothes left in a closed locker for week to marinate.

The crew would be coming and going, telling me about their shirts needing a button or pants that miraculously shrunk two sizes over the holidays! I would look forward to the latest round of jokes that we would exchange, and in particular to chat with the one, who would recite prose and poetry, tell me of his MBA in English Literature, and why he felt that what he was doing now was by far the best career he could have. (He was smart in many ways) Cleaning out the lockers of 100+ drivers and mechanics gave me a new perspective of the world they worked in. The wet cold of San Jose in the winter mixed with the bouquet of aromas in those laundry sacks. I thought I worked hard throwing laundry, but these guys were the real A team.

Now I am at year 2005. Those memories had been stored, and my career had gone into the sales and management direction 100%. Then I was blessed with the career to provide dumpster lids and parts to the very people I had brushed fate with in earlier years. Then came a complete appreciation as to what

happens in the somewhat silent world of the waste industry. Getting to visit waste sites sometimes in the very wee chilly hours of the morning has a special place in my heart. I respect the harsher Chicago winter, and when I see two guys roll brushing paint on a can in a "heated" container shop, I marvel at the work, the quiet passion that goes into making that container look good. In a compactor repair shop, (10 degree weather) there is a guy laboring at cleaning out a compactor in the bitter cold. In comes a guy with a flatbed of damaged dumpsters to unload, the cold iron on him as he pushes the bin to its temporary home is just a thing of commonplace for him.

While others sleep and are heading to a warm office or workplace, this separate world continues. A guy is out hooking up a roll off at a construction site, working fast to get back to the temporary comfort of the cab. Down the street at a cafe, a driver in a Front Load truck pulls a can out of the corral, and lines the forks up for a deft stab into the fork-pockets, dumps and gets out and puts all back.

Back at the shop, journeyman welders cut a rusted, grunge filled bottom off of a steel dumpster and weld a new one in place, for the 4 yarder that has to be at a customer by noon.

I stop by the Fleet Shop and say hello, and marvel at guys changing a tire in the side yard, and another turning a wrench to remove a part. Oh, if that wrench slips. Brrrr and Ouch!

As I trudge back to my jeep, I comment under my breath, "damn it's cold", then realize the 100 steps back to my car was just a gentle reminder of what Winter Time Waste Warriors do all day. Soon summer will come, with temps approaching (and in parts of the country) passing 100 degrees and there a new set of Summertime Waste Warrior stories, of heat and odor. I will save that for next time.

Hats off and a huge thank you to the Winter Waste Warriors. Few see the work you do, the less than perfect conditions they are often done in, and the can do attitude shown en masse.

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