



Trash from the past reborn: Truck museum to open in Fla.

By JIM JOHNSON

SANFORD, Fla. — When John J. Jennings talks about creation of a trash truck museum honoring the legacy of the trash business, he talks as much about the people who have devoted their lives to the industry as he does about the vehicles themselves.

Sure, there will be plenty of old-time trucks and memorabilia on display when it opens in January — should the schedule hold — in Sanford, Fla.

But along with all that steel will be the story of an industry that Jennings, the CEO of Waste Pro USA Inc., loves.

There's an emotional attachment between the vehicles and Jennings, who has spent virtually all his life in and around the trash business.

At the museum, there's the first new truck he ever purchased (in 1975), as well as a truck his father, Mike, owned when he ran his own collection business — both of them shiny and restored.

While some of the vehicles are near and dear to Jennings' heart, there will be plenty of other trash trucks at the museum that will be representative of the industry during the past 80 or 90 years, he promised.

"I am a first generation American. But I am a second generation garbage man," Jennings said during an interview in Florida earlier this year.

"I have the best memories of waking up at 4 o'clock in the morning and sitting on the top of the stairs waiting for my father to get up at 4:15 so we could go down, have breakfast and get out on a garbage truck," he said.

He first learned how to drive his father's garbage truck in 1957 — at age 7.

Driven by "a love of the industry," Jennings has had the idea of a museum in the back of his mind for at least 20 years.

And when he found out an old American LaFrance fire truck factory was closed and for sale in Sanford, he figured the site would be perfect for the homage. A 37,000-square-foot building will be home to the museum while a 40,000-square-foot building will house Waste Pro's operations in Sanford when work is complete.



John Jennings



Waste Pro USA Inc.'s museum in Sanford, Fla., will include an eclectic mix of trash collection vehicles, including this colorful truck operated by Tropical Trash, a company CEO John J. Jennings acquired. The museum is on schedule to open in January.

Photos: Jim Johnson, Waste & Recycling News

While Jennings is the inspiration behind the museum, he wanted to make it clear that it's a widespread effort among many Waste Pro employees to bring the location to life. Even outside companies, such as Mack Trucks Inc., have donated items for display.

For the Garcia family, the museum has become a multigeneration project involving grandfather and grandson.

Antonio Garcia oversaw work of the historic vehicles until his retirement. And now his grandson Cedric Garcia has stepped into those shoes as the museum's chief restorer.

Antonio said taking the needed time is key to any proper restoration project. "We start out piece by piece. We want to get it the right way if you are going to show it to the public. You've got to get it right."

The half a dozen or so trucks that were finished and on display earlier this year when Jennings spoke looked like they could have come right off the showroom floor.

Although Jennings is in a business where productivity is the key to making a profit, he gives those involved with the museum whatever time they need to get the job done right.

"Patience. You have to have patience when you are doing the restoration. I've known John for years. I know how he wants to do stuff," Antonio said.

His grandson said he is proud to follow in his grandfather's footsteps. "I've always looked up to him. Everything I know I've gotten from him. He's my inspiration. I follow him. I follow his footsteps. I wouldn't be where I am if not for him," Cedric said.

Company spokesman Ron Pecora said the

See **MUSEUM**, Next Page



Waste Pro USA Inc.'s museum will feature the first new garbage truck ever purchased by CEO John J. Jennings, a white 1975 Ford. The truck was sitting in a field and was restored before being put on display at the museum.



On display is a 1926 GMC flatbed that is representative of the collection truck Mike Jennings worked on when he came to the United States as a 17-year-old from Ireland in 1930. Jennings is the father of John Jennings, CEO of Waste Pro USA Inc.

Photos: Jim Johnson, Waste & Recycling News



Cedric Garcia is following in his grandfather's footsteps as the museum's chief restorer.



100 YEARS OF THE GARBAGE TRUCK



One of the Waste Pro museum's showpieces is this 1946 Dodge with an open Gar Wood Industries Inc. body once owned by Mike Jennings, the father of CEO John Jennings.

MUSEUM: Continued from Page 12

museum taps into a sense of pride at Waste Pro; many employees have taken an interest.

"We actually do restoration from the frames up," Jennings said. "We're bringing those trucks back to a state to what they were when they were doing their job."

Jennings figured earlier this year that Waste Pro has spent more than \$1 million on the project so far, not including the price of the property. "The cost we have in some of these trucks is almost the cost of a new truck," he said.

One of the museum's showpieces is a 1946 Dodge with an open Gar Wood Industries Inc. body once owned by Jennings' father. Years later,

he tracked down the Dodge and the 1975 Ford he bought new at the time and repurchased them.

There's also a 1926 GMC flatbed truck that is representative of the collection truck his father worked on when he came over as a 17-year-old from Ireland in 1930.

All, Jennings said, are reminders of his roots. "It keeps me grounded, I think. It reminds me

of what the industry is. This is an industry, no matter what technological advances are made, [that] is still ... old-fashioned, hard-working," he said.

"That is why, personally, I have so much respect for the guys out there. They do a job that 99% of America is not physically equipped to do," Jennings said. ■

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