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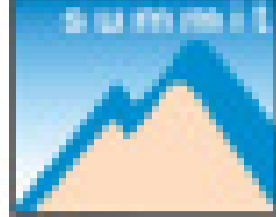








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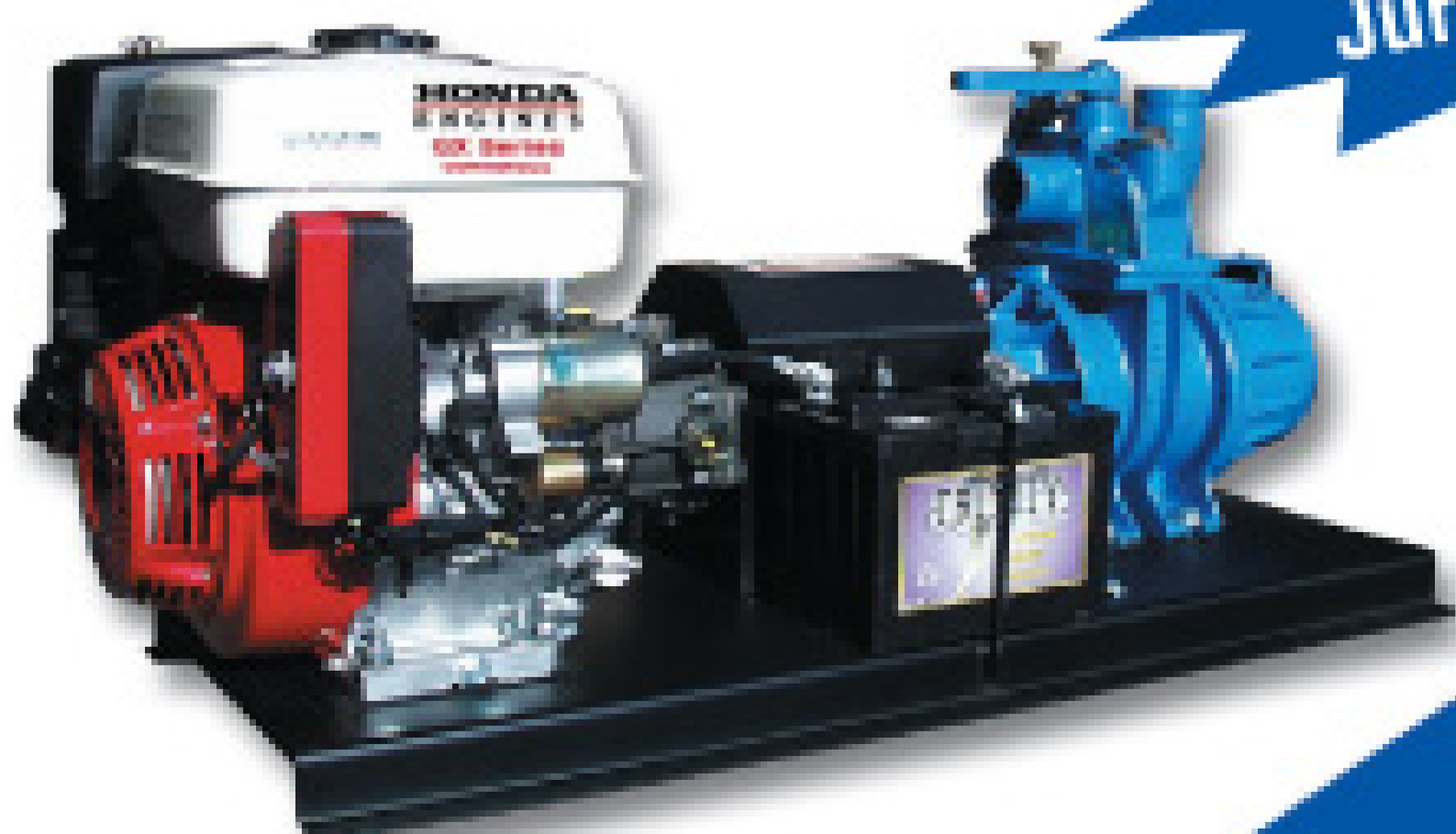
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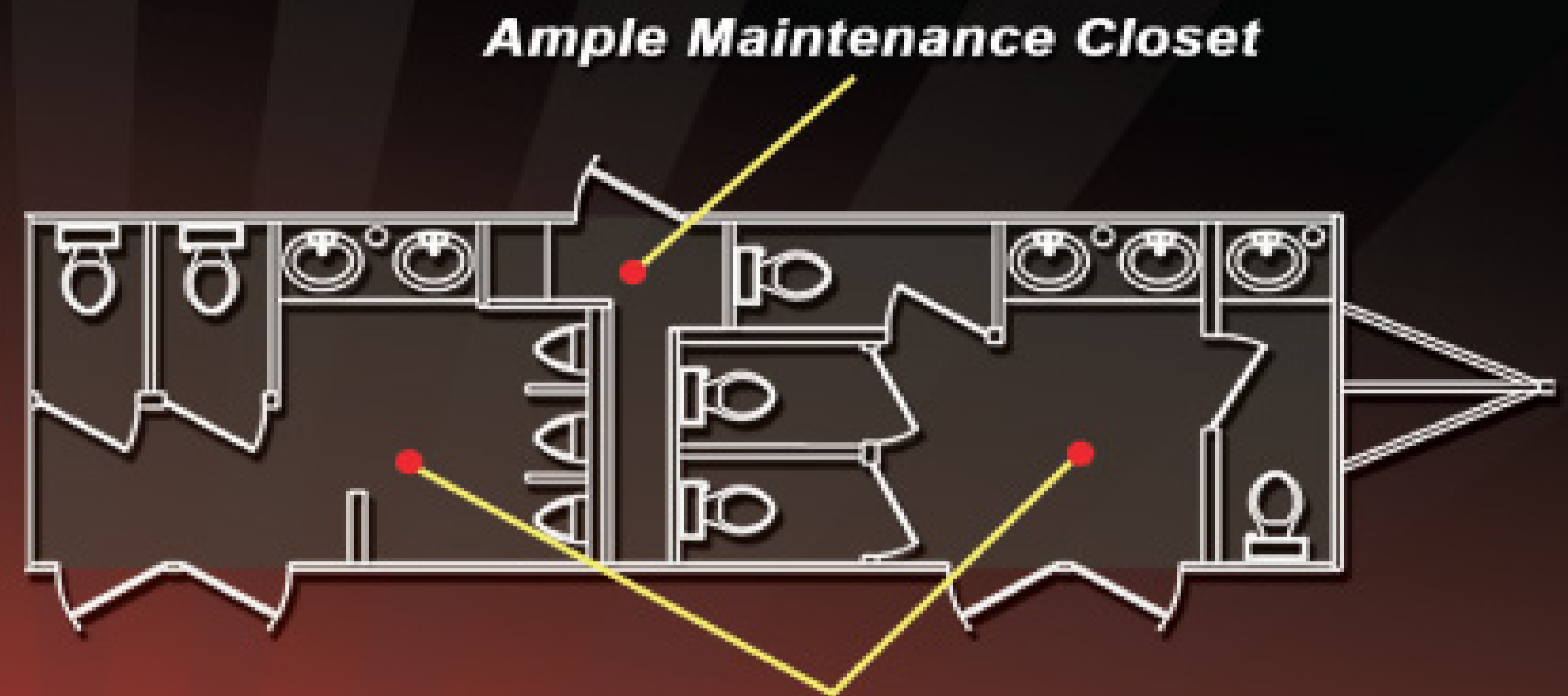
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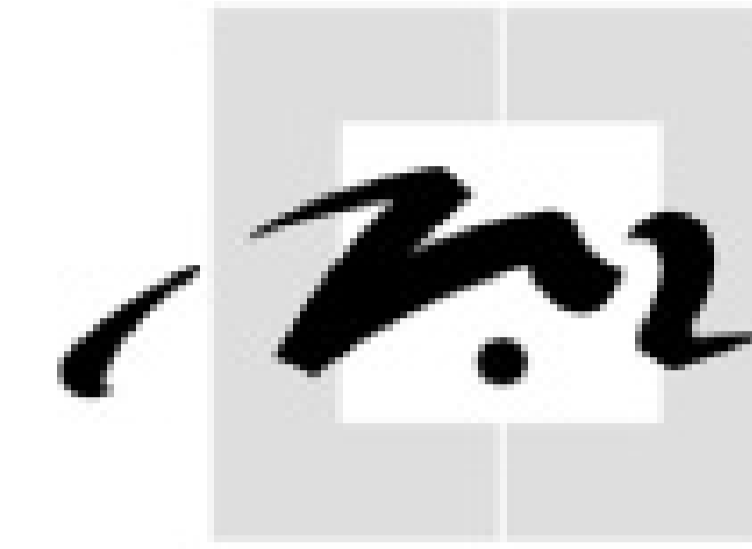
Scour the pages of PRO for the following entertaining and informative features that will help boost the bottom line for your portable sanitation business:

From the Editor catches up with the VanPolen family of McBain, Mich., who pulled together last fall to keep their portable restroom business going after husband and father Bill VanPolen died. A **PROfile** story on the family last December prompted an Illinois portable restroom contractor, Russ Gulliford, to jump in and pay the VanPolens' expenses to attend the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo earlier this year. The family met Gulliford at the Louisville event and became fast friends. Nine months after Bill's death, Dollene and Mary VanPolen are forging ahead with the business and contemplating whether they can keep it going for the long haul.

PROfile heads to corn country to visit with Rob Miller, owner of Blue Moon Satellites, Coralville, Iowa, who deals with a variety of small business issues, including hiring to handle expansion, providing the best customer service and keeping his hours under control. "Hard work and determination can take you places, but they can only take you so far ... I think I've reached that point. I need to grow," says Miller, who runs the day-to-day operations at Blue Moon. With a rising number of units and growing commitments, Miller finds himself making deliveries and cleaning runs for 60 to 70 hours a week in the busy summertime.

Take 5 visits gritty Brooklyn to see how Isaac Grazi added portable sanitation to his family's thriving party supply business. All Affairs Potty Rentals serves a booming spring, summer and fall market. Grazi's father, Sam, started the parent business, All Affairs Party Rentals, in 1979. Restrooms were a natural outgrowth of the party rental company. "We go mostly for special events," Grazi explains. "We're a rental company, with chairs, tables, and tents. About five years ago we decided to expand; we got a lot of phone calls for portable toilets, so we decided to go into that." Party or potty, the main customers are church festivals, community concerts and house or block parties.

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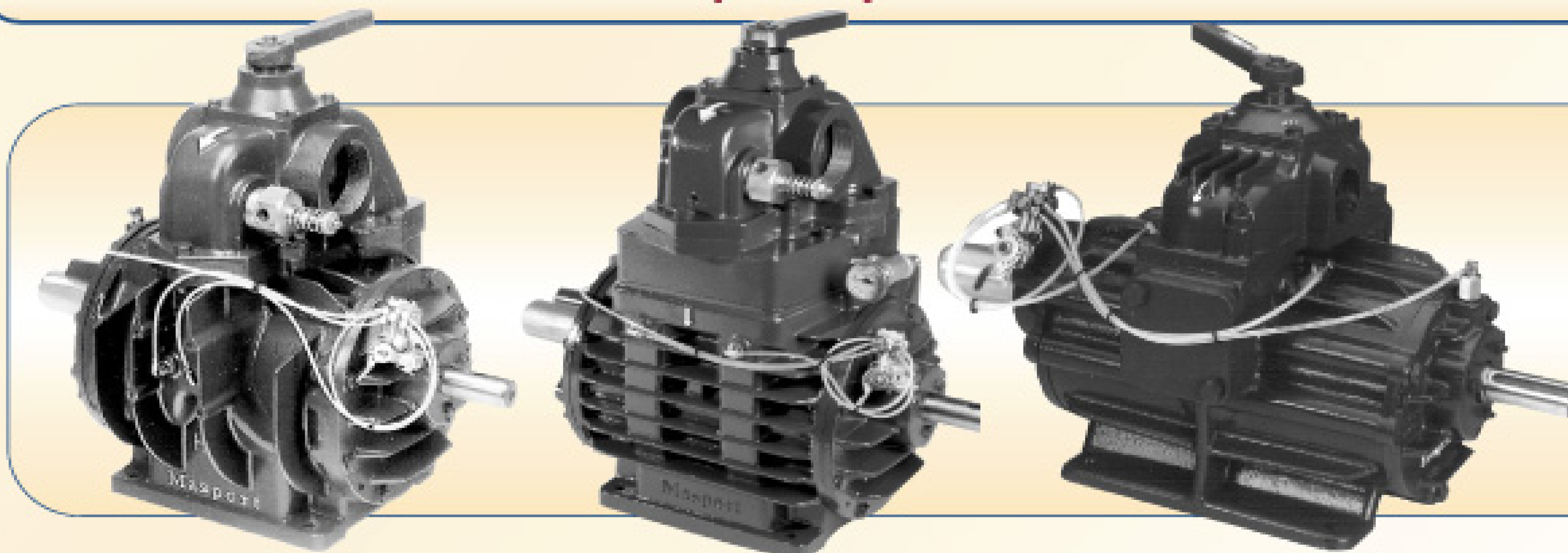


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One Day at a Time

VanPolen family forges ahead following tragedy, wondering whether they can keep the family portable sanitation business going

By Jim Kneiszel

Getting to know the VanPolen family over the past year has been both heartbreaking and awe-inspiring for me. The road they have had to travel as they coped with the illness and death of their husband and father, Bill, in October, 2007, has been difficult, to say the least.

Readers of *PRO* met the VanPolens last December when we ran a profile story about their company, VanPolen Portables in McBain, Mich. The other day I gave a call to Bill's wife, Dollene, and their daughter, Mary, to see how things were going as they soldiered on with the company that Bill had started many years ago. It was good to hear the entire family — including Mary's sisters, Kathy Vana and Shari Benthem — have found a few bright spots amid the grief and turmoil of running a business without its leader.



Dollene (center) and Mary VanPolen, as seen on the cover of the December 2007 issue of *PRO*, struggle to carry on after the death last year of family patriarch and company founder Bill VanPolen.

my gosh, if anything ever happened to me, I would want my kids to get involved and go with it if they could. I was just trying to offer some encouragement and I wanted to meet them."

Gulliford said he was impressed that the VanPolens' youngest daughter, Mary, sidetracked a career in the dental field to join the portable sanitation business; that all the VanPolens would pitch in and show a family's pride in a challenging service industry. He could envision the same tragic situation happening to any of the hundreds of family businesses in the portable sanitation industry.

His support of a grieving family was simply an extension of the sup-

port he's felt in the industry over the years, Gulliford said. He hopes any advice he shares with the VanPolens will help them through a difficult decision about maintaining or selling the business now that its patriarch is gone. He encouraged Dollene and Mary to work through some difficult times and not make a hasty decision.

"This is what makes the industry unique, how people bounce ideas off one another and share information," Gulliford said. "When I was small, I was intimidated by the big guys, but now I'm not afraid to ask other people for opinions. I hope I'm able to help companies that are smaller than I am."

ADJUSTING TO LOSS

Dollene VanPolen was thankful that a stranger reached out to her with financial support so her family could attend the Expo. She also welcomed the advice.

"I think God just sends some really neat people into your lives and this gave me faith in mankind again," she said of meeting Gulliford and his crew. "He put forth quite a bit of effort to help us go and that was really something."

Running the business by herself has been a struggle for Dollene as she deals with grief. She and the girls have joined a grief support group recently to deal with the loss.

"Some days it goes really well and some days we really miss him like crazy and wonder if we can do this without him," she

"I thought, my gosh, if anything ever happened to me, I would want my kids to get involved and go with it if they could. I was just trying to offer some

encouragement and I wanted to meet them."

Russ Gulliford



SUPPORT FROM A PRO

I had the good fortune of being witness to one of those special moments at the Pumper & Cleaner Environmental Expo in Louisville earlier this year. That's when the VanPolens met Russ Gulliford, a portable restroom contractor who was so moved by their story that he reached out to help them.

Gulliford, owner of Illinois Portable Toilets, Gulliford Septic Service and Quality Plumbing, Heating and Air in Urbana, Ill., called the

VanPolens after the story ran in *PRO* and offered to pay for the family to attend the Pumper & Cleaner Expo. He sent money so they could bring the entire family to Louisville, where they met and walked the exhibit hall together.

"It touched me," Gulliford said of the family's story. "I thought,

said. "If it weren't for the grieving, we could probably get out and do more."

As the VanPolens shared with Gulliford and his crew, staying on top of equipment maintenance has been the biggest challenge to keeping the business afloat. Bill VanPolen always kept the fleet in tip-top shape, while Dollene kept the books and the kids pitched in during the busy summer season. They've had to look outside for help with the vehicles.

"As far as the day-to-day running the business, we know how to do that, but if a truck breaks down, that's another story," Dollene said. As for Mary, Dollene said she "drives that truck and trailer around like it's nobody's business." But it's up to Mary whether she wants to stick with the business.

"Some days it goes really well and some days we really miss him like crazy and wonder if we can do this without him. If it weren't for the grieving, we could probably get out and do more."

Dollene VanPolen

For Mary, the transition from being a summer worker during college to being a major part of the business has been an eye-opener. Not having her father's wisdom as a backup has been hard, as has coping with the slow winter months.

"If I can just get through the winter months, I'm golden," she said. "It's hard when you only have two days of work. I don't relax very well. I want to have something to do every day."

LOOKING AHEAD

She may have found the answer to the slow months, however. During the past winter, Mary started promoting herself as a fill-in freelance dental hygienist to several clinics in the area. She found a demand for her services and she could imagine pursuing that work while continuing to operate the restroom business in the summer.

The Pumper & Cleaner Expo showed Mary many new possibilities for equipment and services, and networking with Gulliford and others at the event gave her hope for the future of VanPolen Portables. She plans to stick with the family business through the next year and see what happens.

One thing she knows for sure, she inherited her father's pride in a job well done and the reward of working for herself.

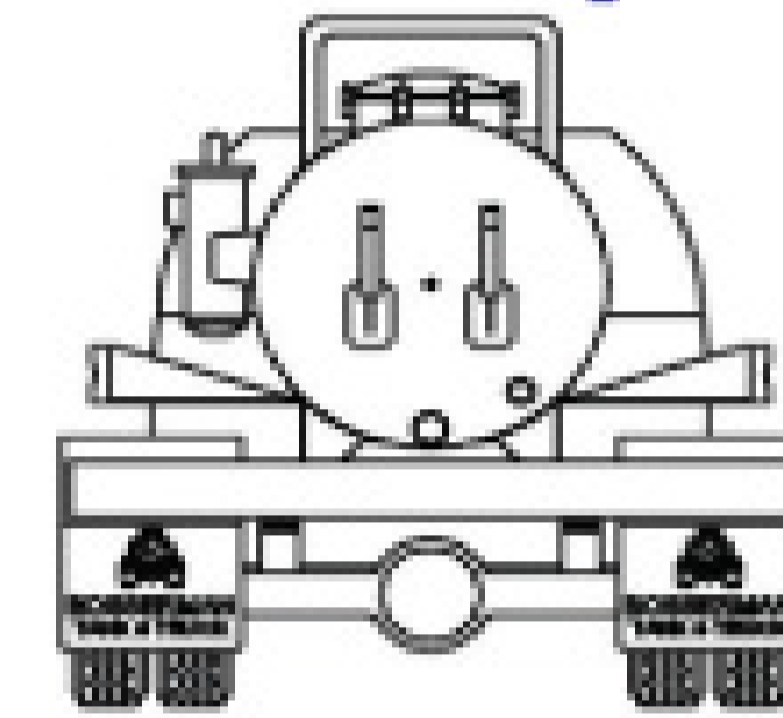
"You always want to take pride in what you have, and you want to do the best job you can for your business," she said. "The other day I was running a route and I was thinking, it's exciting just to be outside and doing my own thing and enjoying it." ■



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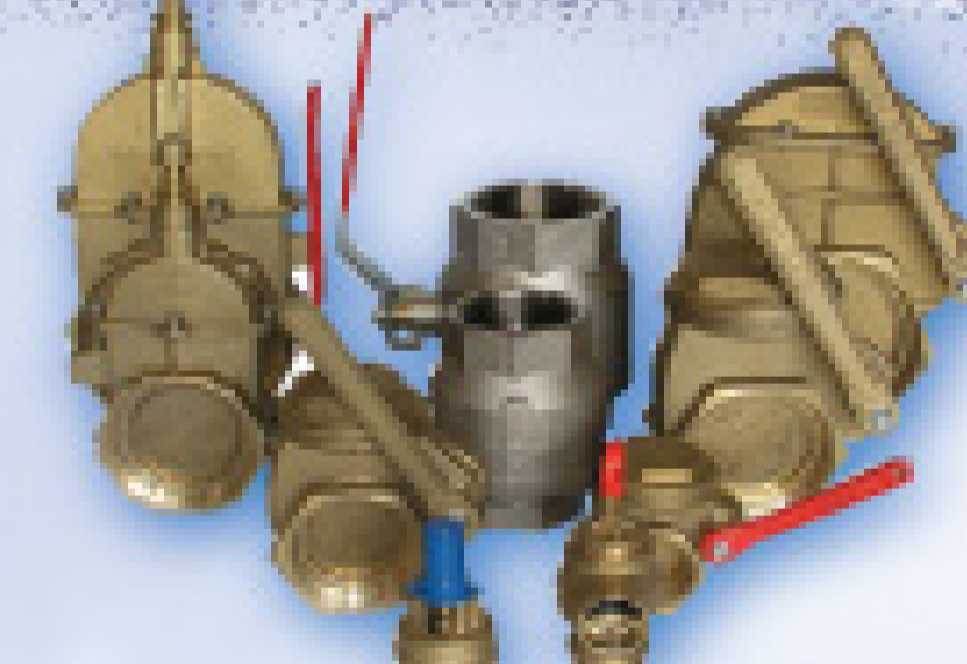


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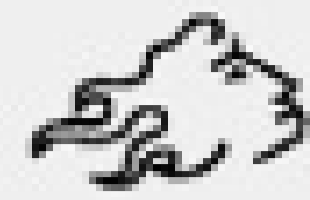
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Writer Judy Kneiszel has operated her own small business for a decade and is familiar with the many rewards and challenges of business ownership. Write to her with questions, comments or topic suggestions at thewordhouse@ameritech.net.

Web Site Pet Peeves



Getting a Web site up and running may have been a milestone for your company, but mere presence on the Web isn't enough anymore. As the Internet increasingly becomes people's first resource for finding a company to do business with, your Web site has to be better and faster than the competition's.

By Judy Kneiszel

Whether I'm researching a company for a writing assignment or shopping for my family, I look at lots of business Web sites every day — certainly enough to know what I don't like. Any one of my Web site pet peeves is enough to send me running, or should I say clicking, to a company's competition. Have you spent time on your business Web site lately and assessed it objectively? Maybe it's time to fix or eliminate any of the following annoyances you find on your Web site:

- 1 **Contact information is missing or hard to find.** While the Web is often people's first source of information, most potential customers still conduct business over the phone. Make sure your company's phone number is prominent, and a street address too. Even if I don't ever have to travel to the actual brick and mortar location, I still like to know where a business is located.
- 2 **Too much fluff before customers can get to the content.** People don't want to sit through some cutesy flash animation show before getting to the real information on your site. There is usually a box to click in order to skip the intro, but watching even that much is a waste of time.
- 3 **Links that don't work.** Check to make sure any links you have to other pages or sites still go where they are supposed to go. If not, update or delete them.
- 4 **Out of date information.** Make sure inventory and pricing details on your site are current. Don't make customers want an item, price or service they can't have.
- 5 **No humans.** Maybe it's just me, but I like to know there are people behind the technology. Include the names of your company's owners, managers and employees on the Web site. Pictures are nice too, because everyone likes to put a face with the name or with a voice on the phone.
- 6 **Music.** Always annoying and never necessary. Don't risk humiliating a potential customer who clicks on your site in their quiet office cubicle. You may have intended "America

the Beautiful," to show how patriotic you are but that sudden loud burst of music will have people clicking the "back" button faster than you can say "amber waves of grain."

- 7 **Dead ends.** Every page should include a link back to the home page for quick and easy navigation.
- 8 **Compatibility problems.** If customers have complained about your site not loading, ask what browser they are using and then work with your Web hosting company to find a solution. Your site should work smoothly with any browser.
- 9 **Hard-to-read text.** Make sure there is enough contrast between the text color and the background color and that text is large enough to read comfortably.
- 10 **Too many windows.** It gets annoying when everything a person clicks on opens a new window. By the time they are done visiting just one site they could have 10 or more windows floating around the desktop.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Having a Web site is a relatively inexpensive way to market a business, but to get the most for your money the information on the site must be accurate, complete and readable. Visit your site often so you know how it's working. In fact, it should be designated as your home page on your Web browser so you're always reminded to keep it current.

Time how fast images and pages load compared to similar sites, and make sure any problems you, your staff or your customers have with the site are dealt with promptly. An effective business Web site is easy to navigate and never, ever a source of annoyance to potential customers. ■



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Rob Miller unloads one of his portable restrooms on the University of Iowa campus in Iowa City in preparation for a weekend arts festival. (Photos by Mark Tade)

BLUE MOON, GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Small Iowa company triples in size, prompting its busy owner to consider hiring help to meet hectic summer demand

By Sharon Verbeten

Rob Miller liked the 1980s TV show *Moonlighting* so much he named his portable restroom business Blue Moon Satellites — in a nod to the program's Blue Moon Detective Agency.

But now, 14 years after he started his Coralville, Iowa, business, he works so much, he feels like he's moonlighting ... for himself.

"Hard work has never been an issue

for me," he says. "I knew what I was getting into." Still, the 41-year-old is hoping his one-man business can soon expand, offering him the manpower he needs and the free time he desires to spend with his wife and two small children.

"Hard work and determination can take you places, but they can only take you so far ... I think I've reached that point. I need to grow. I've come to where I can't expand anymore without help," says Miller, who runs the day-to-day operations at Blue Moon. His wife, Cindy, handles administrative work while at home with their son Peyton, 8, and daughter Ainsley, 4.

Miller loads some of his stock at his shop in Coralville, Iowa, in preparation for several weekend events. Miller uses a lift on the back of a pump truck to deliver single restrooms and a trailer for larger deliveries.

Blue Moon Satellites Coralville, Iowa

Owners: Rob and Cindy Miller

Founded: 1994

Employees: 3

Service Area: 30-mile radius near Iowa City

IOWA



Cindy & Rob Miller

GETTING STARTED

Miller purchased the restroom business in 1994 from his previous employer. He was operations manager for a firm that offered both trash pickup and portable restroom services; Miller purchased the latter, which then included just over 100 units.

"When I bought the business," he says, "I had them sign a (10-year) non-compete (clause)." Now, however, his former employer has returned to the restroom business. "It rubbed me wrong when I found out," he admits, but shrugs it off saying, "I have more than held my own."

Today, he's tripled the number of restrooms he started with, running a 350-unit concern; about half are Satellite Industries Inc. Tufways, the others are PolyJohn Enterprises Corp. PJ3 models, in addition to eight PolyJohn ADA units. He maintains a fleet with one 2003 Ford F-350 pickup, a 2002 Ford F-350 with Satellite Industries MD950 steel tank (650-gallon waste/300-



gallon freshwater) and a 1994 Chevrolet GMC 3500HD with Satellite Industries MD850 steel tank (600 waste/250 freshwater). Both trucks are equipped with Conde pumps.

But with a rising number of units and growing commitments, Miller finds himself making deliveries and cleaning runs for 60 to 70 hours a week in the busy summertime, with that dropping to a more manageable 40 hours in winter.

Working that many hours has helped Miller familiarize himself with the routes. And since he's the only driver, he's learned to streamline routes, seeing no current need to use GPS technology. "I know where I'm going, and I pay attention to street signs.

"Iowa City is a fairly compact city; I can get around pretty well. Over the years, I've learned traffic patterns. I've learned to adapt to what I need to get done."

BIG TEN CITY

Miller estimates that close to 70 percent of his business is construction, which slows down during Iowa's cold and snowy



Rob and Cindy Miller at their home near Kalona, Iowa, with their children Ainsley, 4, and Peyton, 8, and Cindy's parents Nancy and Keith Macek, who help with the business.

winters. "Construction pays the bills, and where I make my money is special events," he says.

The nearby thriving metropolis of Iowa City (home to the Big Ten's University of Iowa) has been a business boon for Blue Moon. "Probably our biggest special event client is the city of Iowa City (population 62,000)," Miller says. "They have quite a few art fairs during the summer months. We supply all the restrooms for them." Blue Moon services about five major city events. That visibility, coupled with top-notch units reserved for special events, has proven to be excellent word-of-mouth advertising.

"Everything that we take out for special events is fairly new and has never seen



a construction site," says Miller. His all-blue units are readily visible, sporting his company's logo — a smiling gold crescent moon.

Some of Blue Moon's highest visibility comes from its units — decked out with the familiar little gold crescent moon logo — dotting Iowa City on Iowa Hawkeye football weekends. While Blue Moon does not supply units to the university, Miller does supply restrooms to the surrounding residential areas.

"The football stadium sits in a residential area, and parking is fairly limited," Miller says. Homeowners often rent out their yards for fans to park, and many of them rent Miller's units as well. During the season, he supplies about 50 units to such venues.

The University of Iowa does bid out portable restrooms for their parking lot every year, but Miller says, "I haven't bid on it for six or seven years. If I won, I'd have to purchase another 100 units, and then I'd have to have bigger equipment. Just being

"Hard work and determination can take you places, but they can only take you so far. I think I've reached that point. I need to grow."

Rob Miller



Rob Miller works with some of the 350 units at his shop in Coralville, Iowa. About half of Miller's inventory are Tufways from Satellite Industries Inc., with the rest from PolyJohn Enterprises Corp.

"I would like to have two or three trucks on the road all the time and sit in the office a bit more. My goal is to maybe expand to another city."

Rob Miller

by myself, it would be way too much for me to handle."

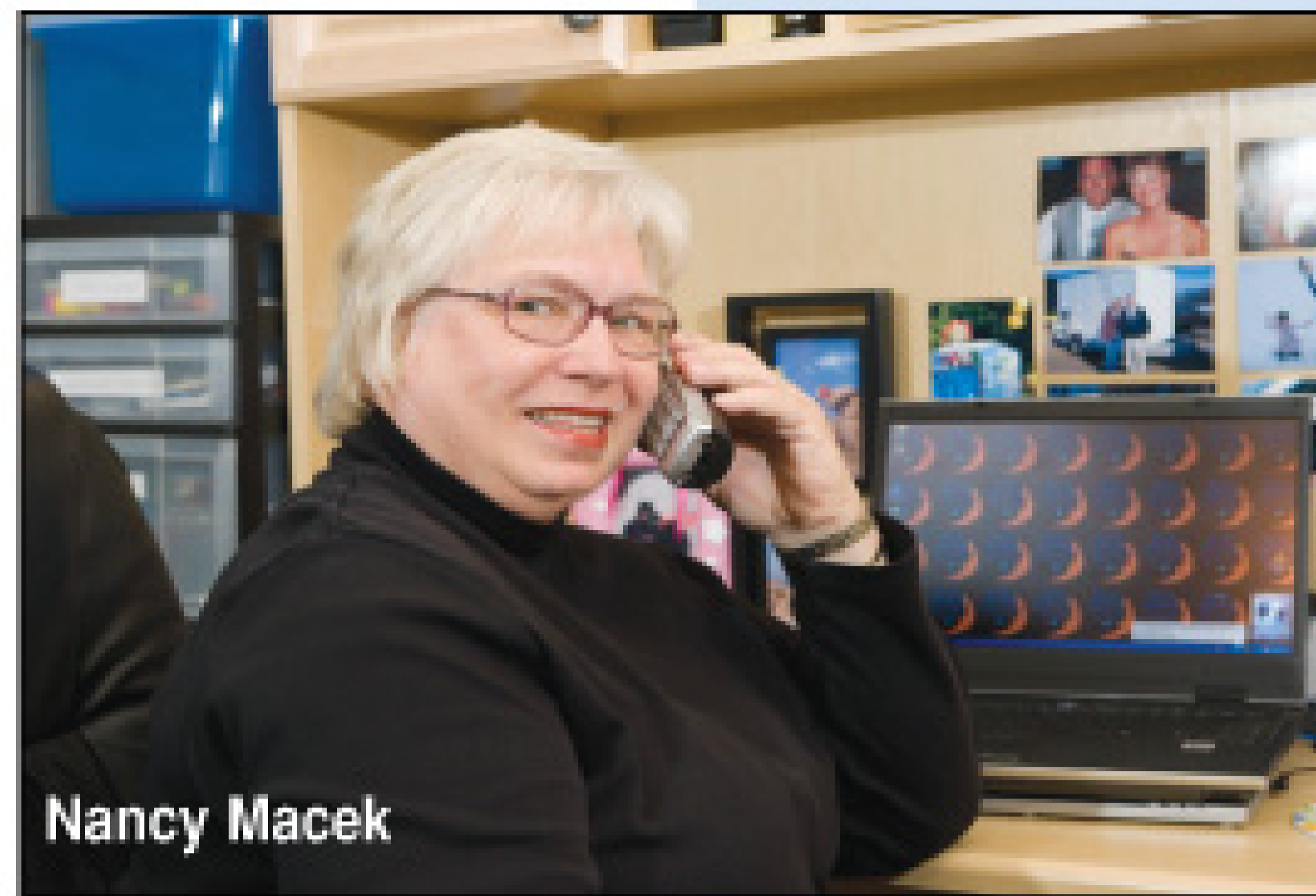
HIRING DILEMMA

Miller would bid on the Big Ten contract if he were able to hire another worker. Such a goal is just part of Miller's bigger picture — to grow his business wisely, maintain visibility and reserve some time for himself. "I don't even think about goals so much," he admits, but adds, "I do have goals, though ... I would like to have two or three trucks on the road all the time and sit in the office a bit more. My goal is to maybe expand to another city," he says. The latter, he adds, could include nearby Cedar Rapids; the second largest city in the state is only about 40 minutes away.

Right now, however, even Miller's fairly modest 30-mile radius keeps him hopping.

"I'm at overload most of the time," he admits. "I have turned customers away because I can only go so far; most of my customers understand that I'm a one-man show."

To that end, Miller realizes that for his business to continue growing, he likely



Nancy Macek

will have to add staff. But that's a bit of a tough pill for him to swallow. "I have a hard time turning loose somebody ... it's my name on the door," he says. "It's just a matter of finding the right person. Right now, we're coming into our slow period; I'll be actively looking in the spring."

Another big decision Miller may face sooner than later is a home for his business — and space for those 350 units. Blue Moon currently rents a shop in Coralville, where Miller keeps about one-third of his units. The rest are stored nearby on a friend's farm.

ON THE MOVE

But the city of Coralville is actively buying properties and acreage around his shop for development along the Iowa River. Miller views that prospect, however, not as a threat, but rather an opportunity.

"If they came in and bought the place tomorrow, I have a shop at my house, which is about 16 miles from town," he says. "Ideally, I'd like to build a place. Property values were pretty high, but they're starting to come down a bit."

Miller is actually anticipating the city will buy out his long-term lease, allowing him to move forward with those goals.

Until then, Miller remains busy, yet upbeat. And he says he

Mom-in-Law Answers the Call

Many men might secretly grouse about their mothers-in-law. Not Rob Miller. His mother-in-law is a longtime member of the Blue Moon Satellites team.

"She's been with me from the start," says Miller of his mother-in-law Nancy Macek, who is an employee of the company. "When I first started, I couldn't afford to have somebody in the office answering the phone," Miller says.

So setting up a remote telephone service from Macek's home in Iowa City was just the ticket. A business line rings into Macek's home, located about six miles from Miller's shop. Calls are also transferable to a cell phone should she need to go out.

Macek, 65, logs deliveries and pickups the old-fashioned way — not on a computer, but rather on a calendar near the phone. She then calls or e-mails Miller with details and directions. Summer is Blue Moon's busiest time, and Macek says she's at her desk most of the day.

Macek has been answering the Blue Moon phone for 14 years; today, she gladly does it while caring for her 95-year-old mother.

But when she started all those years ago, Macek was running a day-care facility, watching children in her home. Blue Moon was a welcome diversion.

"What was nice about Blue Moon was that you got to talk to an adult," she says.

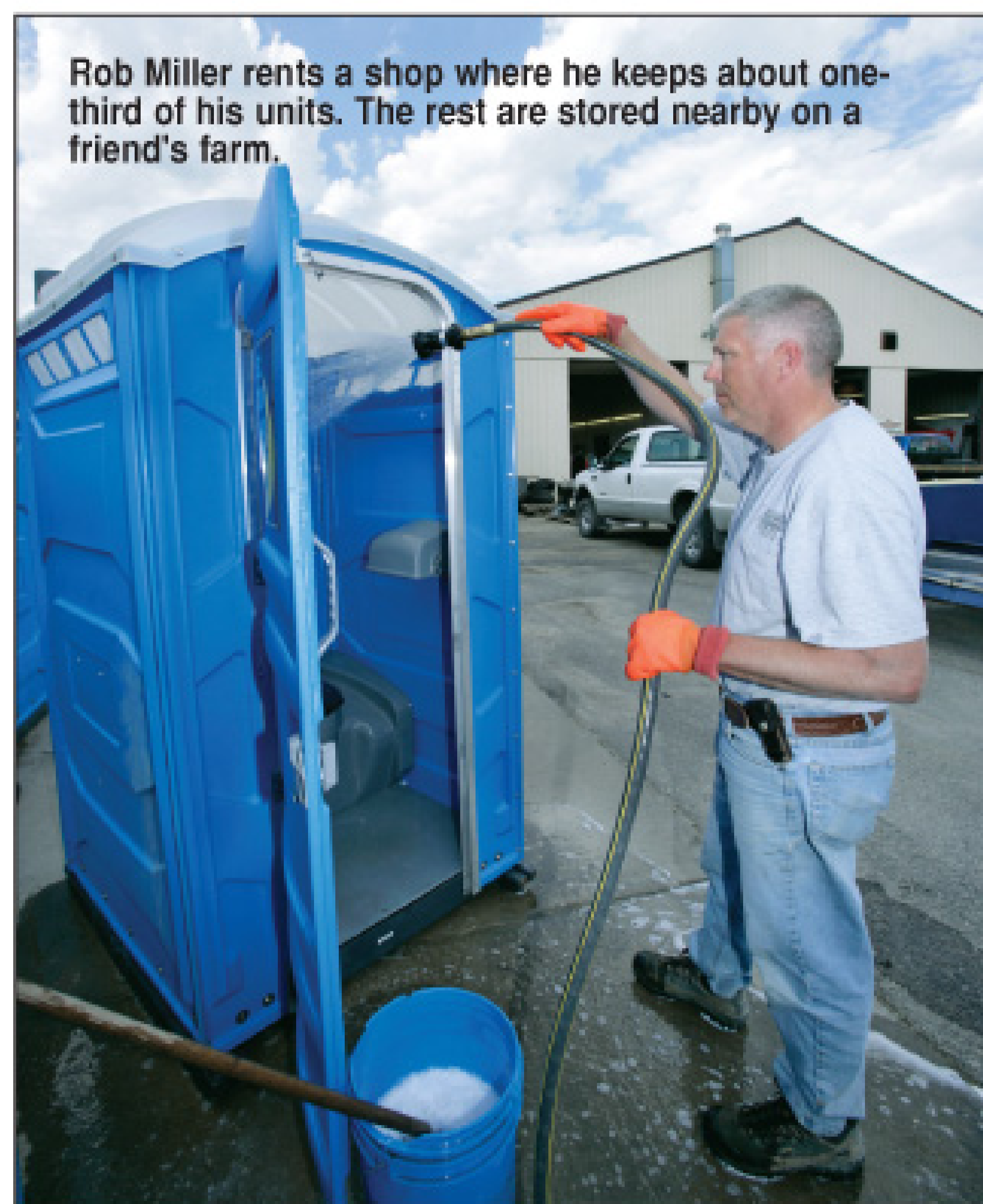
has no regrets about taking on the business.

"I knew that I could make really good money at what I was doing," he says. "It's afforded me a nice lifestyle, and it's made money for us. That was my main objective."

Having that positive attitude seems to be a trademark of Blue Moon — right down to that smiling crescent on the door. But Miller credits a quote he recalls from his childhood with keeping him grounded, even amid chaos.

"My grandmother used to have a saying hanging in her kitchen. It said, 'Today is the tomorrow that I worried about yesterday, and all is well.'

"It is what it is," he adds, "and I do what I can do." ■



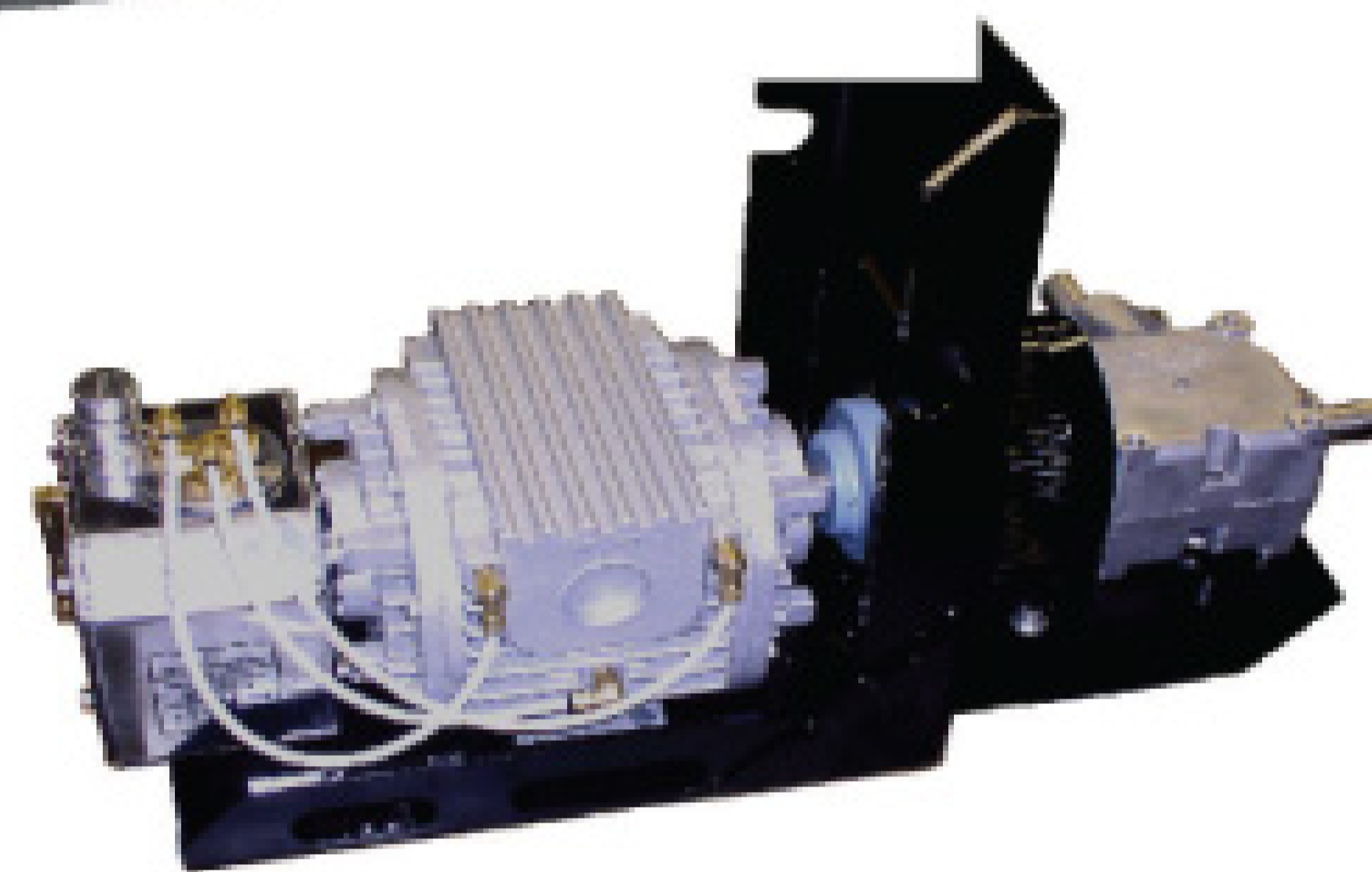
Rob Miller rents a shop where he keeps about one-third of his units. The rest are stored nearby on a friend's farm.

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On the Road to Success

While behind-the-wheel skills are a must, portable sanitation service drivers should be your maintenance technician, sales staff and public relations representatives

By Bob Carlson

Whether it's a small outfit with a single service vehicle or a large company with a substantial fleet of vacuum trucks, every portable sanitation business has to hire drivers to run their routes. And tied to those drivers are a host of expectations, both behind the wheel and outside the cab.

The owner and operator of a vacuum truck takes it upon himself to learn everything he can to run his truck. It's always been true that owners deal differently with their machinery than hired hands.

The people who get hired to drive vacuum trucks come in all sizes, shapes, and more importantly, attitudes. Some companies hand the keys over and say, "Go pump." Still others are more cautious and spend a lot of time in training.

At minimum, what should a company expect from its vacuum truck driver?

THE BASICS FOR ANY DRIVER

The first thing a vacuum truck driver needs: The appropriate driver's license for the truck he is driving. It's amazing how many people are still confused about which trucks need Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDL) and which trucks don't. This is a federal law, so don't be confused by local laws. The CDL requirements are the same across the country. If your truck has a gross vehicle weight (GVW) of 26,000 pounds or more, the driver needs a CDL.

Second, he or she should know how to drive. Another misnomer is that having a driver's license means anyone can drive well. Can your drivers operate a standard transmission truck when necessary? More and more people coming into the industry don't have that skill. Consequently, more automatics are being put into service to remove this requirement. Can your drivers operate effectively in reverse? For some reason, some people just can't back up a truck when they're required to use side rear view mirrors.

Third, do your drivers have adequate knowledge of traffic laws and fundamental safety? Every driver needs to understand speed limits, passing lanes and legal parking. Still, drivers get tickets every day for the silliest violations. Tickets raise insurance premiums and often create driving situations that are dangerous and unnecessary. As for safety, does the driver buckle up every day? Does he know where the jack is in case of breakdown? How about fire extinguishers? Is the truck carrying one? Where is it?

Those three things: a driver's license, the ability to drive

and knowledge of traffic laws and safety, are the basic ingredients of the driver. But there is a lot more to being a quality portable sanitation service truck driver.

THE SALESMAN

When the driver heads out to run a portable restroom route in the morning, does he and the truck look presentable? Is he clean, neat and properly uniformed, or has he thrown on yesterday's clothes because he doesn't want to get another uniform dirty? Same for the truck: Has it been washed and cleaned or does it look 10 years older than it is? The truck driver is the No. 1 salesman for any pumping company. This is because he is constantly demonstrating the quality of your service.

The driver is also likely to run into contractors and potential customers in the field. The way he looks and the way he does his job can produce many new future sales. Likewise, a lousy driver will cost you business over and over again. It is a competitive marketplace with lots of players ready to take your customers. The driver is a big factor in customer retention and customer loss.

Looking at your drivers, ask yourself if your company can be recommended to new customers?

CARING OR MAKING A PAYCHECK

Efficiency is important in the portable sanitation industry. Do your drivers get in, do the job in a professional, speedy manner and move on to the next site? Or do they stop at the convenience store for drinks and snacks in between stops? Do they know the best way to get around in the city, or are they wasting gas and time getting to the job? One sign to look for is simple: Is the truck always neat and orderly or is it a mess? Do your drivers care about their job or are they just making a paycheck? Are they looking out for the company in their daily tasks or are they looking out for themselves? The great driver is one who looks for better ways to do the job without shortchanging the quality of service. Let's face it, time is money and the more efficient the driver, the greater the company's profits.

It is a competitive marketplace with lots of players ready to take your customers. The driver is a big factor in customer retention and customer loss.

UNDERSTANDING THE TRUCK

If you are the owner and the operator of a truck, you quickly learn about the components of a vacuum truck and how they work. There are certain chores that require daily maintenance on a vacuum truck. These chores are simple and a good driver should be expected to perform them to maintain the truck properly. At the end of every workday, or at least before heading out the next day, these tasks need to be done:

- **Drain the secondary moisture trap.** The quickest way to damage your pump is to let waste sit in the secondary overnight and then start the pump the next day. The waste in the secondary zaps right on through to the pump, leaving everyone wondering what's wrong with that expensive pump.
- **Drain off the excess oil from the oil catch muffler.** Since you're already capturing waste in a bucket, drain off the excess oil that has been collected at the oil catch muffler.
- **Test the vacuum relief and pressure relief valves.** When starting the truck every morning, make sure the vacuum relief and the pressure relief valve are working.
- **Watch the pressure/vacuum gauge to make sure it reads consistently.** This needs to be checked day after day. Any changes mean something is going wrong. It's a simple, routine task to perform as the vacuum builds, or when dumping, when the pressure builds.
- **Give a visual inspection to hoses and valves.** It's always a good idea to visually check the condition of your hoses and valves. It can be a serious time-waster, and you might miss out on some paying work if your tired, old hose collapses in the middle of a hectic workday.

GETTING ALONG

As in any business, it's always important that the driver maintain a good relationship with fellow employees and customers. Does the driver give extra effort when a customer asks? As mentioned earlier, it's a great sales tool to give the customer something extra when they have a special need. This will pay dividends down the road.

If a co-worker needs help, do your drivers take the extra step to lend a hand? Even better is when drivers become leaders, teaching other employees the basics of being a good driver, giving tips and advice.

NOTHING HAPPENS WITHOUT THE DRIVER

The more a driver knows about the business, his truck, and the customers, the better off the business is going to be. Some drivers take to it naturally, growing in the job, while others need encouragement to do the job right. The entire industry is built on the driver. Without him, nothing happens. Customers won't drive the portable restroom in for a cleaning.

The more a driver can do for the company, the more valuable he becomes. And with that, profits grow and most likely the business expands. Sound good? ■



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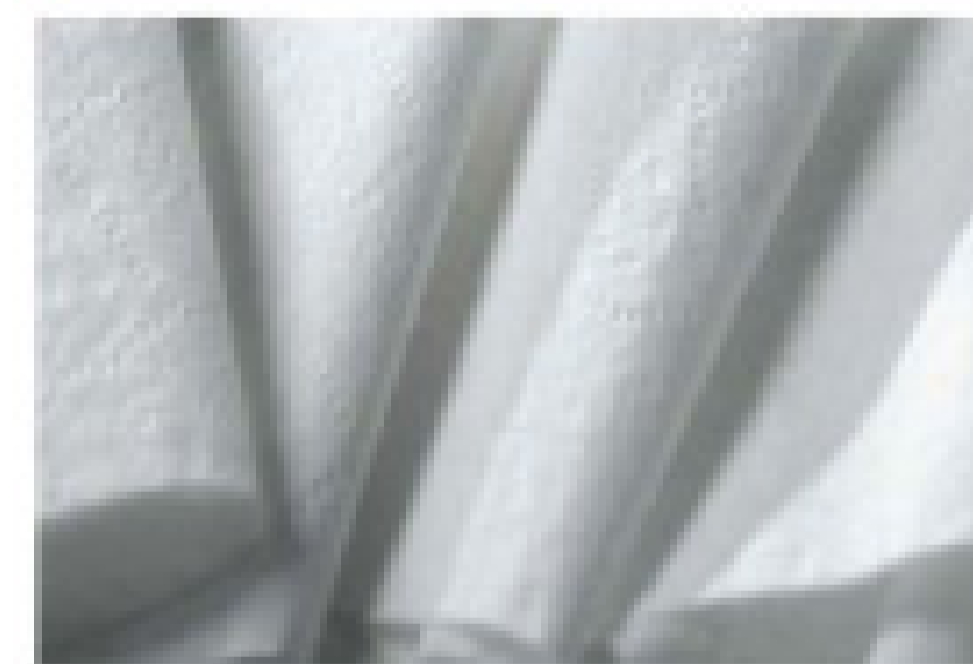
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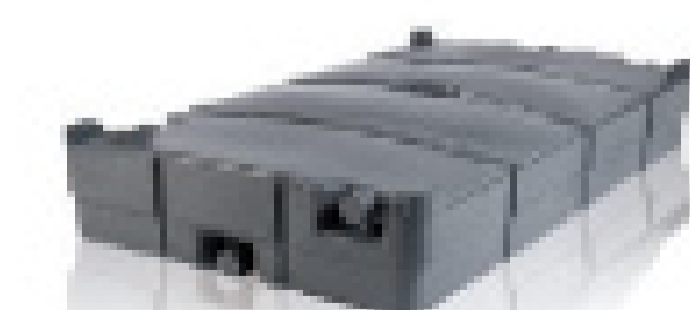


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All Affairs Potty Rentals technicians Jerry Rivera (left) and Angel Nieves set up a special event restroom in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn. (Photos by Sonny Maxon)

Take 5...

with **Isaac Grazi**

Let's Get the **PARTY STARTED!**

New York rental company adds portable sanitation subsidiary to provide one-stop shopping for big city event planners

EXPLORE FIVE ISSUES that affect **ISAAC GRAZI'S PORTABLE SANITATION BUSINESS:**

FINDING SYNERGIES WITH PARTY BUSINESS

Grazi is relatively new to the portable restroom business, but it was a natural outgrowth of the party rental company. "We go mostly for special events," Grazi explains. "We're a rental company, with chairs, tables, and tents. About five years ago we decided to expand; we got a lot of phone calls for portable toilets, so we decided to go into that." Party or potty, the main customers are church festivals, community concerts and house or block parties. The portable restroom business supplies some to the construction industry, particularly in the winter. Grazi says the portable restroom business surprised even him. "It was busier than I expected." The average event uses 10-20 units.

Drivers Ridvan Sokili and Ben Rekka load party rental supplies for a delivery. All Affairs started with party supplies, then added portable restrooms.



Above, Isaac Grazi and office manager Susan Nadaf go over color swatches for a party rental customer. At right, Isaac's father, Sam Grazi, talks to a customer.



By Erik Gunn

All Affairs Potty Rentals in the New York City borough of Brooklyn serves

a booming spring, summer and fall market for community festivals, concerts, parties and like events. Isaac Grazi's father, Sam, started the parent business, All Affairs Party Rentals, in 1979. Today the portable restroom part of the business employs five — a fraction of the 30 that the party-rental business employs.

Isaac Grazi, who is in charge of the portable restroom subsidiary, talked to *PRO* about the joys and challenges of running a portable restroom operation in the nation's largest city. "It's pretty exciting," he says. "You meet a lot of people. It's a good business in the city."



IF YOU CAN MAKE IT THERE ...

Based in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bensonhurst, All Affairs gets most of its customers from its home borough and neighboring Queens. Manhattan provides a small additional business, but Staten Island, "not so much." Crews transport waste to the closest of three New York sites operated by the Department of Environmental Protection, the city's sewage disposal and treatment agency: one in the Bronx, one on Staten Island and one in Brooklyn.

Summer is the busy time. One big event was Pepsi Smash Live, a concert held in Brooklyn Bridge Park that drew 5,000 people in 2006; All Affairs supplied 30 units.

Another source of business distinctive to the Big Apple is the film and TV industry. "We do a lot of movie shoots, and shoots for HBO (Home Box Office) and shows like *Law and Order*," Grazi says. They provided restrooms for a film shoot for *The Departed*, a Martin Scorsese movie starring Jack Nicholson, Leonardo DiCaprio, Matt Damon and Mark Wahlberg. But despite the glamorous sound of that assignment, Grazi admits he's never gotten to rub shoulders with the big stars. "I'm not on site that often," he says. "The drivers do tell me about them, though."



At left, Isaac Grazi poses with the Manhattan skyline in the background. Above, maneuverable Isuzu service vehicles are loaded and ready for a delivery at Brooklyn Bridge Park.



Restrooms are set up at Brooklyn Bridge Pier. Logistics are a big issue when All Affairs delivers units in the city.

TAKIN' IT THROUGH THE STREETS

Disposal regulation is relatively painless in New York, Grazi says. But the traffic police are another story. "It's very hard to move here," he says. "If you want to service a unit, they'll give you a ticket for double parking and things like that." Traffic on the city's crowded streets is perhaps the biggest challenge Grazi's company faces. "The driving in general is very difficult, especially in Manhattan. You don't want to get the trucks too big, especially when you're turning on narrow streets."



An Isuzu service truck sits at Brooklyn Bridge Pier.

"If you want to service a unit, they'll give you a ticket for double parking and things like that ... the driving in general is very difficult, especially in Manhattan. You don't want to get the trucks too big, especially when you're turning on narrow streets."

Isaac Grazi



Employee Sylvia Atreano presses tablecloths for delivery to a special event.

All Affairs keeps its inventory moving, thanks to a fleet of two vacuum trucks and another eight general-purpose hauling trucks. All Affairs relies on Isuzu trucks: A 2006 NQR with a 300-gallon waste/100-gallon freshwater steel tank from Lely Manufacturing; a 2004 NQR with a 700-gallon waste/300-gallon freshwater steel tank from Keith Huber Inc.; and another eight Isuzu trucks from Bruno Truck Sales in Brooklyn that are used strictly for hauling party rental supplies. "As we replaced them we had them custom made to fit toilets," Grazi says of those vehicles. "Each one of them can fit about 10 to 12 toilets."

All Affairs' inventory includes PolyJohn Enterprises Corp., ARMAL Co., and Five Peaks Technology units. The PolyJohns include 35 PJN3 units; 16 PJN3s equipped with sink and flush; four Fleet models with sink and flush; two Bravo hand-wash stations and two four-person hand-wash stations; and six Comfort Inn handicap-accessible units. The ARMAL units include 35 Starlight models and 116 older units. The 30 Five Peaks units are all Aspen models with flush and sink.

UP ON THE ROOF ... AND OUT TO AN ISLAND

All Affairs has had its share of challenging assignments. The company supplied 15 restrooms a month to construction crews working on Governor's Island, a 172-acre New York City landmark located a half mile off lower Manhattan and a quarter mile from Brooklyn. "The only way to get there is by ferry," Grazi says. But that wasn't the most challenging job. "In Brooklyn we had a rooftop Fourth of July party." The customers needed 12 to 13 restrooms. "We had to haul them up in freight elevators." Getting them up was one thing. Getting them down — full, because after all, who can get a tank truck up on the roof? — was the really hard part. It was a learning experience." Customers "don't tell us where they're going," Grazi says. "Now we ask."



The historic Brooklyn Bridge towers over this construction site placement.



Technicians Jerry Rivera and Angel Nieves drop six ARMAL Co. restrooms at a special event in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn.

5 WINTER HIBERNATION

Winter in New York means a lot less business, Grazi says. The busy season runs from April to November. "When it's busy, usually toward the end of the week, we have about 30 to 35 different events."

Then it gets quiet. Though rentals drop off dramatically, the company doesn't lay off its staff. "We have 50 or 60 toilets for construction jobs all season," Grazi says. "But that's not our main thing. They call us — we don't go after them." ■



Nieves replenishes paper products in a unit stationed in the Brooklyn warehouse district.

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Take 5 is a feature in which one PRO or industry leader shares unique business challenges with the entire portable sanitation community. It's a chance for service providers to meet over the back fence — and across the country — to learn more about each other and promote industry excellence. If you know a PRO who would be an interesting subject for Take 5, send their contact information to editor@promontly.com.

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Mike Adams is managing director of PolyJohn Enterprises Corp.



Boost Special Event Business

Start small and pay attention to details; special events customers will follow

By Mike Adams

For the past decade, special events have created the fastest-growing market for portable restrooms. More people are getting outdoors on weekends to enjoy parties, parades, festivals, music and fairs. Here are some tips to help you succeed in this growing market.

START SMALL

The most common way to get into the event market is to start small. Put aside a few special event units and market them to small towns, social clubs, church groups or party planners. As you develop experience with this market, ask customers for testimonials. If you are the kind of service provider who always does more than expected, your business will grow by word-of-mouth.

PROVIDE SOMETHING EXTRA

As the market matures, equipment and service standards have risen dramatically. Many of today's special-event planners are looking for the kind of amenities found in the higher-end restroom units. Sinks are also becoming a requirement for many events, especially those selling food. Add-ons, such as ADA units and flush rest-

rooms can be a great way to increase your revenue at an event.

Lorraine Wardy of Sarabia's Portable Restrooms in El Paso, Texas, has found a unique way to build revenue. She suggests using the sale of advertising space on special event banners to help lower the cost of rental and service. This has been particularly useful at fund-raising events. The American Cancer Society was able to defray the cost of restroom rentals by selling the advertising space on the banners. "It's a win/win situation for everyone. They sell the space, the money raised helps pay my fees, and the advertiser gets a prime location at the event," she says.

"You need to recognize your annual costs associated with building up your business to handle the summer workload and price that into your event model. Failing to account for these fixed costs is a mistake many inexperienced companies make."

Rich Vegter

LISTEN AND RESPOND

Many times event planners will try to save money by cutting the number of units rented. It is important to listen and respond to this or any other issue that will affect the quality of your service. Share your experience and industry information to discourage cutbacks that will reflect badly on you and the event. Event planners will remember when people complain about full units and long lines. They won't remember that they were responsible for cutting service.

DOUBLE-CHECK SERVICE AREA

This is where you find out if your planning has paid off. The day before, take a drive by and make sure the event hasn't been "reorganized." Check that heavy equipment, stage scaffolding or trucks aren't relocated and blocking your service routes. Kevin McWilliams whose business, Gotta Go Potties, Tobyhanna, Pa., services the Pocono 500 race at the Pocono International Raceway in Pennsylvania, found a sea of people blocking units at his first race. "We learned that if you were patient and friendly, the crowd would part for the 'potty' truck, but you must factor very slow driving into your service logistics."

WRAP UP, APPRAISE, PLAN

Prepare a post-event appraisal explaining what went right and what can be improved to share with the event organizers. With this tool, you can work with the planners to help make next year go smoothly. Finally, do a cost breakdown so that you can determine if the event was profitable and if you need to fine-tune future bids.

"It is easy to think special events are more profitable than they really are due to the big cash flow in the summer months," said Rich Vegter at Service Sanitation Inc. in Gary, Ind. "However, you need to recognize your annual costs associated with building up your business to handle the summer workload and price that into your event model. Failing to account for these fixed costs is a mistake many inexperienced companies make." ■

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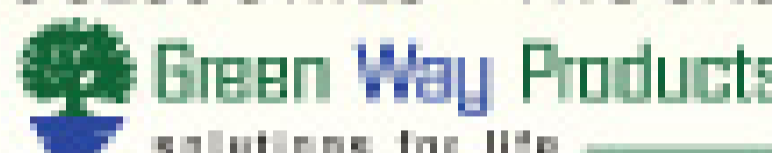
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Obituary

Keith Huber was a Vacuum Truck Pioneer



Keith Huber

Keith L. Huber, a vacuum truck pioneer who played an integral role in growing the efficiency of the liquid waste industry, died May 29 in a tractor accident on his family farm in LaFayette, Ill. He was 67.

Huber's Gulfport, Miss., company, Keith Huber Inc., was started in 1982 with its first product, the Dominator vacuum truck, still a mainstay of the industry. The company would rise to be known as the largest independent manufacturer of vacuum loading equipment in the U.S.

Huber was killed when a tractor he was operating overturned on the farm where he grew up in northwestern Illinois. At the time of the accident, Huber was restoring the farm to its appearance in the 1950s, according to Al Klaser, vice president of Keith Huber Inc.

"He was doing what he loved to do. It was his passion," Klaser said of Huber's restoration of the farm and a number of vintage Plymouths.

After growing up in Galva, Ill., Huber moved to the Gulf Coast and made his lasting mark in business. In addition to the vacuum truck business, Huber had extensive real estate holdings around Gulfport, including the 45-acre industrial park where the truck-building company is located, Klaser said.

One of Huber's innovations, the King Vac, became a go-to tool for pumpers in the late 1980s. In a 2004 interview with COLE Publishing, Huber said the King Vac "revolutionized vacuum equipment by producing both high air flow and deep vacuum. It was totally different from anything that had been done before."

The reputation of the King Vac was cemented in 1989 when it was discovered to be the perfect tool to unload skimmers that cleaned oil pulled from Alaska's Prince William Sound following the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

In 2004, Huber was recognized as one of a number of industry pioneers in a series of feature stories in *Pumper* and *Cleaner*. In the story, he recalled how his father released him from an obligation to work the family farm after one of Huber's tinkering projects yielded a popular snowmobile design.

Huber had taken his snowmobile to the Minnesota State Fair, and quickly received more orders for the product than he could produce. So he sold the design and his inventory to Mallard Coach, which manufactured the snowmobile under the Sno-Wing brand.

"My father said, 'Son, you made more money with that one sale than your dad has in his entire life of farming, so I guess I'm going to have to let you do what you love to do,'" Huber recalled. He would say that he started tinkering with machinery as a child, then somewhere along the line figured out, "it came incredibly easy for me. I guess Beethoven was born with his innate ability and I was born with mine in machinery design."

Before he turned his attention to vacuum trucks, Huber was credited with creating the first production model electronically controlled four-wheel golf car.

Klaser said the company is poised to move forward to build on its founder's legacy. He credited Huber for putting capable people in place to carry the company forward.

"We're certainly going to miss him, but we're well-prepared to move forward," Klaser said. "We really don't expect to skip a beat, and that's the way he would have wanted it."

Memorials in Huber's name may be made to the Maxine Huber Memorial Summer Camp Fund at Messiah Lutheran Church, 317 SW Third St., Galva, IL 61434, or Palmer College of Chiropractic, 1000 Brady St., Davenport, IA 52803. ■

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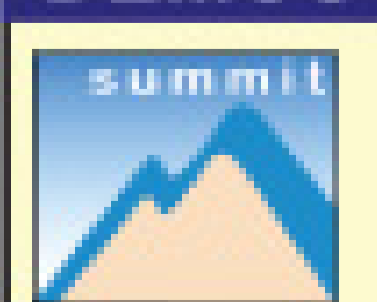
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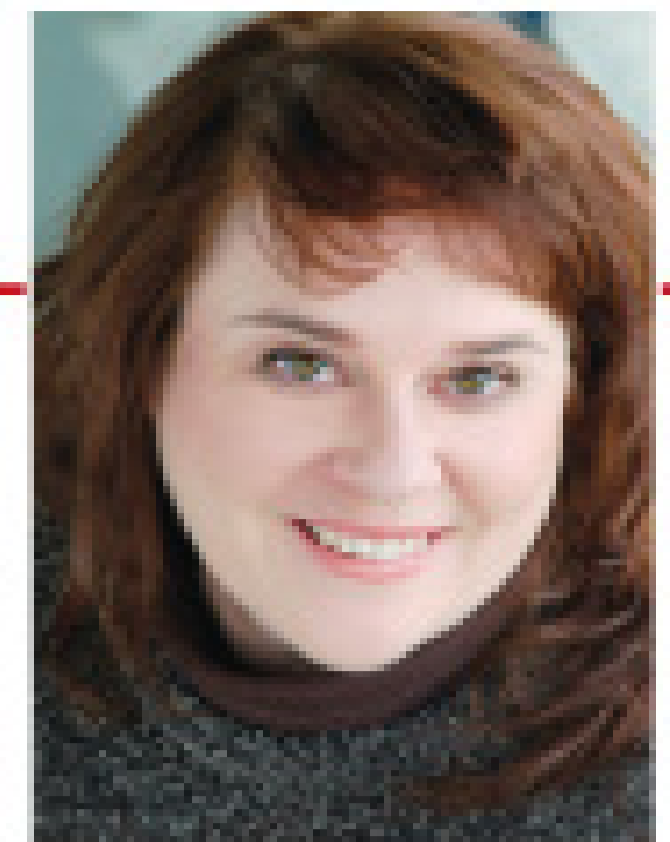


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Mary Shafer writes about issues important to PROs. Direct comments or questions to Shafer at thinktank@promonthly.com.



Pain at the Pump

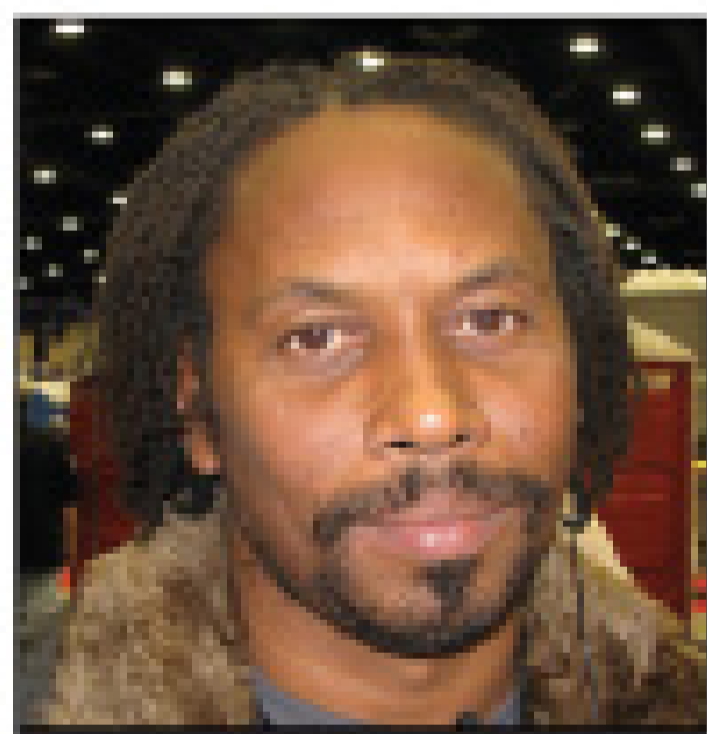
Small portable sanitation companies have a tough time finding efficiencies to offset rising fuel costs

By Mary Shafer

Skyrocketing fuel costs are one of the biggest burdens to any business that depends on motor vehicles to get the job done. Gas is hovering around \$4 a gallon this summer, and diesel fuel is already past that all over.

What's a PRO to do to stay on top of this direct bite out of the bottom line? The fact is, there's no way to run a portable sanitation business without vehicles, so you can't step over this intensifying challenge. One way to address the rising costs is to figure out ways to bring down fuel consumption.

Larger operations can afford to do a bit of belt-tightening, since there's always some waste to be identified and eliminated through route consolidation and efficiency. But smaller companies jostling for position in their markets are generally running lean as it is. These two PROs explain the holding pattern they've been forced into as they deal with the rising cost of a necessary commodity to stay in business.



Michael Johnson Sr.

Name: Michael Johnson Sr., general manager
Company: Del Zotto Products
Location: Freeport, Grand Bahamas
Employees: 11
Years in Business: 12

Michael Johnson Sr. manages Del Zotto Products, which fields about 45 restrooms, with about 70 percent of those serving

"Sooner or later, everyone will have to start passing on those higher prices, or no one will be profitable."

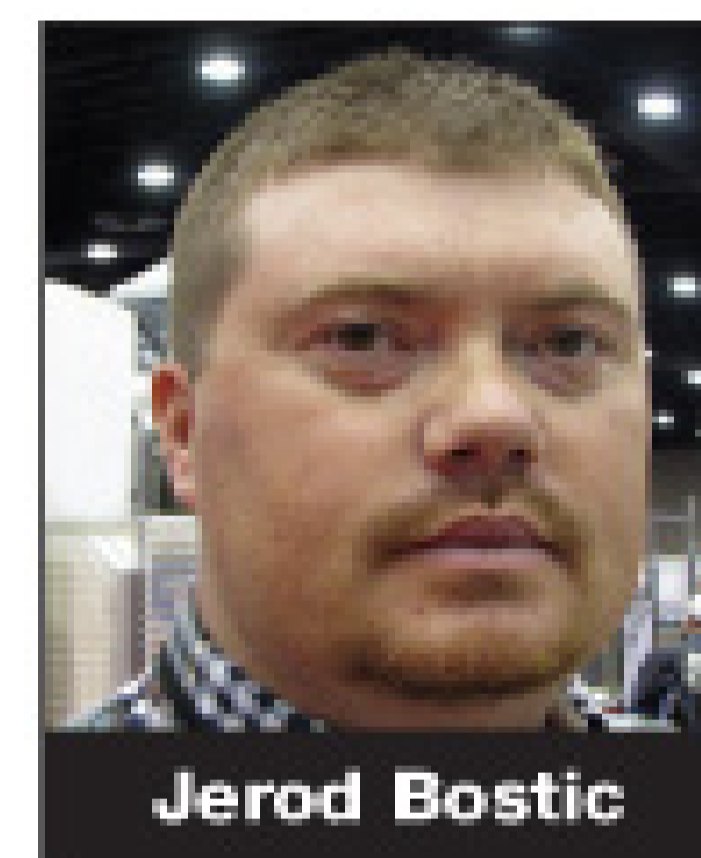
Michael Johnson Sr.

the construction trade and the rest deployed for tourist attractions and a few special events. This prime tourist destination suffers from the same high fuel prices as we do in the United States. Due to its relatively small geographic market, though, PROs find themselves in the unenviable position of having to remain seriously competitive, meaning they aren't

inclined to pass higher fuel costs on to their customers.

"We're eating gas price increases right now," says Johnson, noting the stiff competition for customers. "Sooner or later, everyone will have to start passing on those higher prices, or no one will be profitable."

For now, Johnson keeps a tight rein on dispatch, with an eye toward scheduling denser routes. "I try to get in as many stops on each run as possible," he explains, "to make each one as efficient as we can get it."



Jerod Bostic

Name: Jerod Bostic, owner
Company: Giles Septic Service
Location: Ripplemead, Va.
Employees: 1
Years in Business: 3

Jerod Bostic's company deploys 15 portable restrooms, primarily to construction contractors. He is in the process of growing his business from a part-time gig to a full-time profession. High fuel costs are definitely not helping the speed of that expansion, as they take a direct bite out of his profitability.

Because he has just the one small route, there's little Bostic can do to consolidate trips or rearrange runs to build more efficiency. So he's feeling the pressure.

"Right now, I'm having to eat those increases," Bostic says. "So far, no one (in our area) has passed those charges on to the customer, but I'm hoping in the near future somebody will."

Bostic doesn't want to be the first to set that precedent and make himself a target for contractors who would undercut the competition. However, if any of his competitors makes that move, he'll happily follow rather than continue to shoulder the entire burden of rising fuel costs. ■

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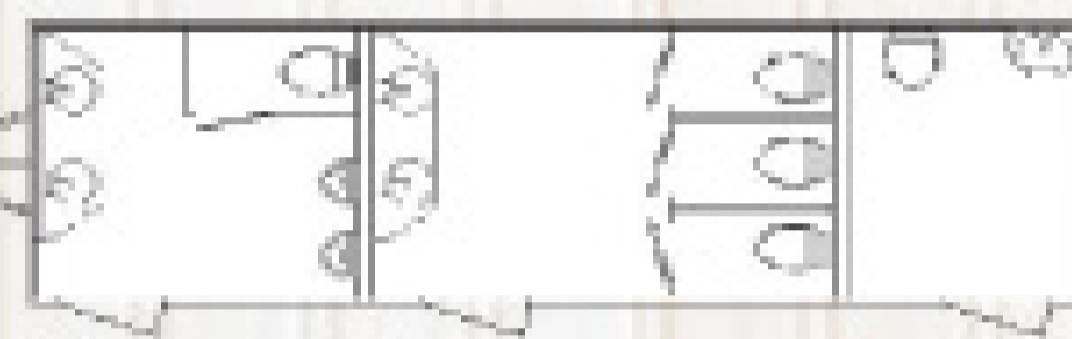
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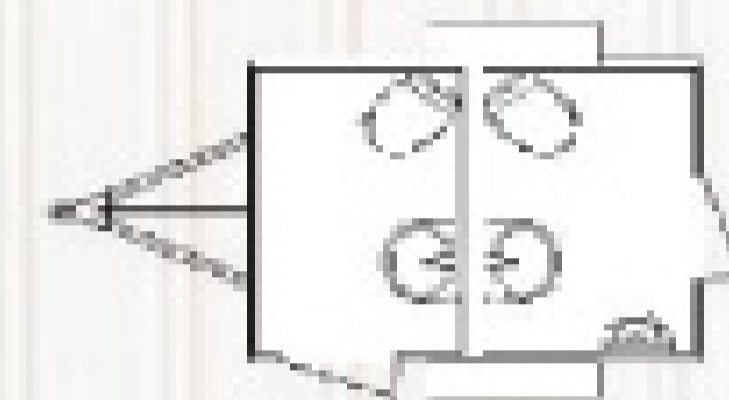
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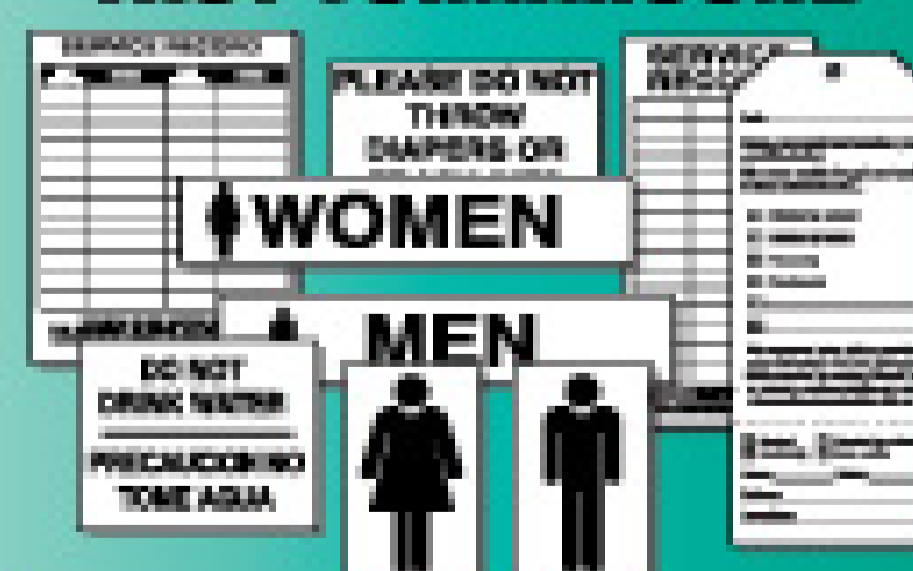
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Bob Carlson (left) and Jerry Kirkpatrick answer your questions in Truck Corner.



Relentless Rust

Incompatible couplings, inadequately welded tank baffles can lead to corrosion and early tank failure

QUESTION:
Why is the aluminum coupling atop my tank — where the pressure relief valve is located — continually being eaten away and corroded after only a few months of operation?

Robert Kerr
Denver, Colo.

ANSWER:
The pressure relief valve is made of brass. The aluminum coupling in the tank is, obviously, made of aluminum. What happens is the basic process of electrolysis. The two metals are not compatible in this application. The process of electrolysis eats away at the aluminum because it is the weaker of the two alloys. This has happened to many aluminum tanks when brass is installed into aluminum fittings. The answer to the problem is a simple one.

1. When the aluminum coupling is corroded, it will need to be replaced. It is likely a 2-inch coupling.
2. It will need to be replaced with a coupling that is 1/2-inch larger than what is currently being used.
3. And here is the key: A plastic insert (PVC) needs to be put into the aluminum fitting to insulate it from the brass fitting or valve. These plastic bushings are readily available from any hardware store.
4. Then install the brass valve into the plastic fitting. The plastic fitting serves as insulation between the two alloys and puts an end to the process of electrolysis and corrosion of the aluminum fittings.

Check Your Baffles For Solid Welds

QUESTION:
After three or four years, why are my baffles falling out? They literally fall down inside the tank? I thought baffles were supposed to be there forever to help reinforce the strength of the tank.

Jack McGhee
Boise, Idaho

ANSWER:
There are several reasons baffles can fall out inside the tank.

1. Corrosion of the welds, which leads to collapsing baffles, could be caused by the product you are hauling in the tank. The

payload may include chemicals high in pH, which could lead to electrolysis and destruction of the welds. As time goes by, welds are attacked by the chemicals and they give way. You may not be aware you're hauling highly acidic liquids or someone may be dumping chemicals in your portable restrooms that you are not aware of. Strange liquids and chemicals sometimes end up in portable restrooms.

2. Oftentimes baffles are simply stitch-welded inside the tank. Stitch welding is a way manufacturers can save time and money when they install the baffles. Stitch welding is pretty much what the name implies; baffles are secured with staggered welds rather than a continuous weld. So if one were looking at the finished welding job, it would appear "stitched." This method minimizes the attachment of the baffle to the shell of the tank. It also aids in the corrosion caused by the electrolysis. A tank built like this will last a few years without noticeable change, but then the baffles may start tumbling. A way to avoid this is seal-welding both sides of the baffles. This means a solid weld around the circumference of the baffle. This is the more expensive method, but ensures the best longevity.

3. Another potential reason for baffle failure is the welder isn't making a solid weld with full penetration from the baffle to the tank. The welder may have been careless or didn't know how to attach a baffle the best way.

4. It's a good idea to ask the tank manufacturer how he installs baffles. Are they stitch-welded or seal-welded? And when the tank is done, look inside to make sure you got what was promised. The rule of thumb is that stitch-welded baffles have a much shorter life.

When you get a chance, grab a flashlight and take a look at your baffles. It also wouldn't hurt to rinse your tank out every now and again. If you've got manways, open them up and rinse out the tank. Then you can inspect the condition of the inside of your tank, baffles and all.

Bob Carlson and Jerry Kirkpatrick of Arizona-based Glendale Welding have over 50 years combined experience dealing with portable sanitation truck issues. Fax questions to them, addressed to Truck Corner, at 623/937-3688, or send Bob and Jerry an e-mail at truckcorner@promonthly.com. ■

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