

# It's Only Rubbish - But It Has a Story

By John Rico

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THE END OF AN ERA - When you travel Vacaville's miles of streets today, you are definitely going to notice a change. The Basic fiber trash barrel has vanished, a casualty of bureaucracy.

Effective June 1, the Vacaville Sanitary Service was instructed by its liability carrier that the 55-gallon Basic drum was too heavy for employees to be handling.

This new edict in no way reflects on the muscle of present sanitary service employees, who have been lifting those barrels for years, many when filled to the brim weighing more than 100 pounds.

The limit for all future containers is 30-gallons. There may be some ingenious residents who will revamp the Basic 55 down to a permissible size 30, but that's to be seen.

The Basic Vegetable Products Co., world leader in the dehydration of onions and garlic, has used hundreds of thousands of those 55-gallon fiber barrels, shipping its finished onion and garlic product to customers from plants in Vacaville and King City.

Company officials follow a strict policy of not shipping products in containers which may in any way show a flaw. The discarded barrels are used for in-plant storage of materials, and when the supply of barrels exceeds that need, they are offered to the public. It is conservatively estimated that annually 10,000 of these containers were turned over for public use, most of them being diverted into trash barrels.

When asked just what Basic would do with the discarded containers now that they will no longer be available as trash receptacles the answer was; "We will turn them into trash."

Perhaps those Basic barrels did become a bit heavy when filled to the brim, but everyone will agree they have been more convenient, more serviceable, more inexpensive than anything you could purchase at your neighborhood store. But, that's the price we pay for progress.

Some of us who have lived here for a long time can well remember when the disposal of rubbish and garbage was no problem. In fact no one, city, county, state or federal government, bothered to tell residents what they could or could not do with their

discarded materials.

If you were fortunate enough to reside on a ranch, you dumped rubbish into a nearby creek, and you slopped the hogs with the garbage you had. If you were a downtowner, you found the nearest creek and used it as a disposal site. It was an acceptable practice. In fact, for many years Vacaville's dumpsites were in Ulatis Creek, just out Dobbin Street.

Back in 1907, Vacaville went modern, and^ purchased a 32-acre site out Brown Street from O.H. Allison for \$1500. This was to be Vacaville's first sewer farm. It was not until the 1920 period that the "farm" was also opened up as a rubbish dump.

When rubbish was dumped into the creeks, the winter rains carried most of the accumulation to the plains east of Elmira. When rubbish and garbage was taken to the sewer farm site, it was soon found that the confined area was not large enough to accommodate the growing tide of discards. The trench-and-fill procedure was a continuing problem, in an effort to bury as much of the refuse as possible, and to seek a means of keeping those cat-sized rats from flourishing there.

Our way of living can be interpreted in our rubbish. Today's rubbish, in comparison to yesteryear's, is quite expensive.

Years back when you purchased milk, it was in a returnable bottle; your soft drink was also in glass, as was beer and many other food items. Today, paper cartons, tin and aluminum cans, plastic containers and those millions of discarded automobile tires, have made the rubbish and garbage industry a flourishing enterprise.

It would be interesting to bulldoze a portion of the old city dump site on Brown Street, and unearth milk bottles from the Vaca Valley Creamery, Browns Valley Dairy, Wykoff s Dairy and Jim Schilingo's Dairy. Then you could find sodapop bottles from the Vacaville Soda and Ice Works; and hundreds of bottles which at one time contained cure-all patent medicines.

You will not find any aluminum cans, because such containers are newcomers to the packaging scene. In fact you will find only a few cans, because housewives frowned at the suggestion that they use a can opener.

Vacaville had growing pains, and with those pains came more rubbish. Despite opposition, the old dump site on Brown Street was closed in favor of a more remote area southeast of Elmira off Hay Road. This was back in January 1965.

Those Vacaville Sanitary workers should carry a degree of T and G Analysts. When

they make their weekly rounds, they can tell by the empty bottles as to your taste for bourbon; they can spot the housewife who is a frozen foods addict; they can observe your reading habits; and above all they can pin-point those families who do most of their eating out of a can.

Those Basic barrels may have been a bit too heavy for the sanitary service worker to lift, but he has enjoyed a continuing education from the contents.

The next time your sanitary service collector comes around, give him a broad smile. He knows more than you give him credit for.

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