

# BULK TRANSPORTER

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## Realizing potential

*Bulk Transporter*

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IN 1997 when Rick Jasa and his wife, Linda Ingram-Jasa, decided to form a tank truck company, the couple thought they might eventually add a foodgrade tank cleaning facility to the business.

In December 2005, the concept became a reality with the opening of a four-bay facility in Blair, Nebraska, operating under the name of Ingram Tank Wash Inc, an affiliate of their trucking company, Jasa Transit Inc.

“The wash rack is a good fit for us,” says Jasa. “Our major foodgrade customers are here in this area, and it makes it both efficient and economical for us to handle our cleaning, as well as serving other carriers.”

Before the wash rack was established, the couple developed a foodgrade bulk trucking company and grew the business to bring in \$8 million in revenue in 2005. With 72 tank trailers in the fleet, the carrier hauls soy bean oil and other vegetable oils and sweeteners, as well as flour and other foodgrade dry products.

Some hazardous materials used in the food industry, such as sodium hydroxide, are hauled by another affiliate company, I&J Transport Inc that commenced operations in 1991.

### Increased growth

Two foodgrade processors in the Blair (Omaha) area, as well as others more distant, keep the trailers rolling, and sudden increased demand in 2000 by one processor was a big stimulus for the carrier's growth. Almost all of the foodgrade hauling business requires frequent tank trailer cleaning, which was another reason the couple decided to start up the tank wash.

The newly-constructed tank cleaning facility and corporate offices are located on an 11.8-acre site the couple bought in 2002, prompted at that time by their plans for the tank wash.

At the tank wash, two bays are used for interior tank cleaning, one handles exterior trailer and truck washing, and the fourth is used to house cleaning equipment.

### Sani-Matic system

The facility was built from the ground up and includes a Sani-Matic Inc clean-in-place (CIP) system that provides vats for detergent and rinse solutions, as well as pumping and heating capabilities for the solutions.

Computer controls handle the program sequences of washing and rinsing steps. The equipment operates automatically, maintaining the required temperatures and monitoring the water for purity. It is linked into the Sani-Matic computer system so that the performance can be monitored by the supplier's technicians.

Four 350-gallon stainless steel vats are used in conjunction with three cleaning cycles. One vat contains detergent, two hold hot water, and the last has cold water.

A prerinse cycle maintains water at 140° F for five to seven minutes followed by a wash cycle at 190° F for 15 minutes, and a final rinse and cooldown.

Fristam Pumps Inc pumps drive the wash system, a Hurst 125-horsepower boiler supplies steam and hot water, and Ingersol Rand blowers handle trailer drying.

When cleaning is complete, the Sani-Matic system prints a ticket that reports the temperatures, times, and dates. The final cleaning step includes securing tank openings with TydenBrammall seals.

The bay that handles exterior vehicle washes is equipped with an automatic drive-through system from InterClean Equipment Inc. The commercial truck wash system operates continuously using recycled water. An A O Smith heater supplies hot water for the unit. A Culligan water softener also is used in the exterior cleaning.

A 4,000-gallon holding tank is in a reverse osmosis system, which helps eliminate spots after the vehicles are rinsed.

### **Wastewater system**

To process wastewater, an in-house-designed system captures wash water from the trailer and pumps it into a 7,000-gallon holding tank before being released into the city sewer.

The system provides for the capture of heels before wastewater empties into the drain. An oil separator system is used, and captured solids are hauled away. The wastewater's pH is tested daily to meet municipal standards.

One thing Jasa was determined to do was to install floor heat to keep the 9,600-square-foot tank wash comfortable during the Nebraska winters.

Three New York Thermal Inc ultra-compact, high-efficiency water heaters are mounted on a wall and supply the energy for the floor heat through a high capacity heat exchanger. "I saw a tank wash once that had floor heat and I knew then if I ever built one, that would be what I would choose," Jasa says. "We also extended the heat to the drive up area just outside the doors to eliminate problems with ice."

Floors and walls were formed with prestressed concrete, and the walls have a smooth finish that makes it easier to keep them clean.

Adjacent to the cleaning bays are an office and a driver lounge that includes showers, microwave, and other conveniences.

### **Helpful planning**

“We had some great help in planning this facility,” says Jasa, listing Steve Burger at Blue Grass Tank Wash and Bob Young of Lafayette Sani-Wash as two who contributed advice. “Their expertise was invaluable.”

As for expertise on the carrier side of the business, Jasa came to that task having worked in the tank truck industry since graduating from the University of Nebraska in 1970.

With a diploma under his arm, he began as a dispatcher for Ruan Transportation in 1976 and then worked with Herman Brothers, later renamed Transwood Inc, and then with Foodliner Inc. But in 1997 he and his wife, who is a teacher in the Omaha public schools, decided to form their own company with her as president and him as vice-president.

“That was a big decision,” Ingram-Jasa says. “Rick started working out of our home dispatching four trailers we had leased to haul flour to Ohio. We didn't hire an office employee until four years later. I handled the capital expenditures, safety program, accounts payable, and other administrative duties. Then the next year, we bought four liquid trailers.”

The business continued to grow so that by 2000 there was so much demand that they decided to lease 50 liquid foodgrade trailers from Matlack Leasing LLC in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

“That also proved to be a good decision for us,” she says. “We got excellent service and avoided having a huge capital expense for trailer purchases when we were just starting out. Now, we continue to lease some trailers on a short-term arrangement as we need them.”

### **Additional trailers**

By 2004, the operation was being coordinated from offices in Blair and required additional trailers, so they purchased 50 Walker Stainless Equipment Co tank trailers from Stuart Tank Sales Corp.

“Stuart Tank has been our tank trailer supplier since we began the business and remains so today,” says Jasa. “Their service has been excellent.”

The fleet includes 22 trailers for foodgrade oils, 24 for other liquid foodgrade products, and 11 pneumatic trailers.

The newest 5,000-gallon foodgrade tank trailers typically used to haul sweeteners are built by Walker and are equipped with Ultraflo valves, Olson vents, Betts domelids, and FloTech pumps.

The Walker tank trailers used to haul vegetable oils have 7,000-gallon capacities and are equipped with LC Thomsen foodgrade valves, Olson vents, Betts domelids, and FloTech pumps.

I&J Transport Inc has 12 hazmat trailers that transport sodium and potassium hydroxide and three Stainless Tank and Equipment (ST&E) tank trailers dedicated for hauling carbon slurry for one processor.

Trailers hauling hazardous materials also are built by Walker and have 5,500-gallon capacities. The heated trailers have Betts valves and domelids and Girard pressure relief vents. Drum provides hydraulically-powered pumps.

The newest tank trailer used to haul slurry is an ST&E 8,000-gallon DOT407 double conical with a wide-spread suspension. The vehicle has a Fort Vale pressure-relief vent.

The Heil and J&L pneumatic trailers have 1,600-cubic-foot capacities. They have Sure Seal butterfly valves and aerators and Knappco spring check valves.

Running gear on all the trailers typically includes Hendrickson Intraax suspensions, MeritorWABCO antilock braking systems, Conmet hubs, and Jost or Holland landing gear. Truck-Lite supplies lighting and wiring systems.

### **Owner-operators**

“Early on we made the decision to use owner-operators rather than hiring our company drivers and purchasing tractors,” she says. “Rick and I both have the same philosophy that we want to treat our drivers fairly and that has paid off with having good owner-operator retention.”

About 55 owner-operators handle the carrier's transportation. “We pay the drivers by the practical mile, not by the shortest route, and for any out-of-route mileage,” she adds.

A fuel surcharge is built into customer contracts and passed along to the drivers.

Drivers must be at least 25 years old with three years tanker experience, have no moving violations for the past three years, and have valid hazmat and cargo tank endorsements.

Those new to Jasa Transit/I&J Transport receive training in company policies, Department of Transportation regulations, defensive driving, and hazardous materials handling. Driver trainers conduct the orientation process, including overseeing loading and unloading at foodgrade processors.

Once drivers become part of the operation, their typical assignments require them to transport products coast-to-coast, but routes are more likely to be in the Midwest. “Our drivers are home most weekends,” she says.

Most of the drivers live in the Blair/Omaha area, but a few are as far away as Kansas City and Des Moines.

The drivers are dispatched from the Blair office with Jasa taking one of the shifts as necessary. “We typically operate 8 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday, but we are always on call,” he says.

### **Future projections**

As for the future, the couple is predicting continued growth in biodiesel across the United States, which bodes well for their services in hauling soy bean oil used in the product.

“We are also transporting lactic acid and are seeing more growth in that area as processors begin to convert their storage from totes to bulk storage tanks,” Jasa says.

Another prospect for the dry bulk side of the business, in addition to flour, is lysine that is used in animal feeds and diatomaceous earth used in a filtering process at manufacturing plants.

“We expect more growth, but we don't want to get too big,” says Ingram-Jasa. “Our goal is to give the best service in our market niche and to continue to provide personal attention.”

With the new tank wash in place and the transportation business growing, the couple looks forward to continuing their success begun almost a decade ago.

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