

Thursday

December 14, 1989

Roseburg, Oregon

28 pages, 4 sections

Vol. 122, No. 302

D.C. firm to recycle milk jugs

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Of The News-Review

Plastic milk jugs soon may be making their way from Douglas County dinner tables back to area households in the form of motor oil bottles and other plastic containers.

Sunrise Enterprises Inc., a Roseburg company that recycles paper, cardboard, tin, aluminum, glass, motor oil and other items, has agreed to start picking up plastic milk jugs at county landfills and transfer stations.

The purpose of the program is to keep milk jugs out of the county's two landfills. It's unclear how long it takes plastic to decompose in a landfill, but some research indicates that plastic may never disintegrate.

"That's why we're trying to keep those (milk jugs) out of the landfill," said Bill Skiba, Douglas County's recycling coordinator.

Residents interested in recycling their milk jugs are asked to rinse the jugs and flatten them before bringing them to a county landfill or transfer station. "They must be rinsed and squashed, and Sunrise will take it from there," Skiba said.

Jay O'Connor, Sunrise's executive director, said his company will use its current baler to bundle the squashed milk jugs. Sunrise will then send the baled jugs to Pearl Buck Recycling in Eugene, which will pay the company 10 cents a pound for the material, he said.

Pearl Buck will in turn send the milk jugs, along with other plastics, to PARTEK Corp. in Vancouver, Wash. PARTEK has developed technology that allows it to remove labels and adhesives from plastic containers during the recycling process.

PARTEK grinds and cleans the plastic, removing the labels in the process, and returns the plastic in pellet form to manufacturers who use it to produce containers for non-food items, such as motor oil and liquid detergent.

The company, which also operates a plastics recycling plant in Anderson, Ind., collects plastic that has been used by consumers as well as scrap plastic from industrial users. During the last 18 months, PARTEK has recycled more than 30 million pounds of plastic.

O'Connor said he doesn't know whether his company will make a profit, break even or lose money by recycling milk jugs. "Hopefully, we'll recover all of our costs," he said. "Until we try it, we don't know."

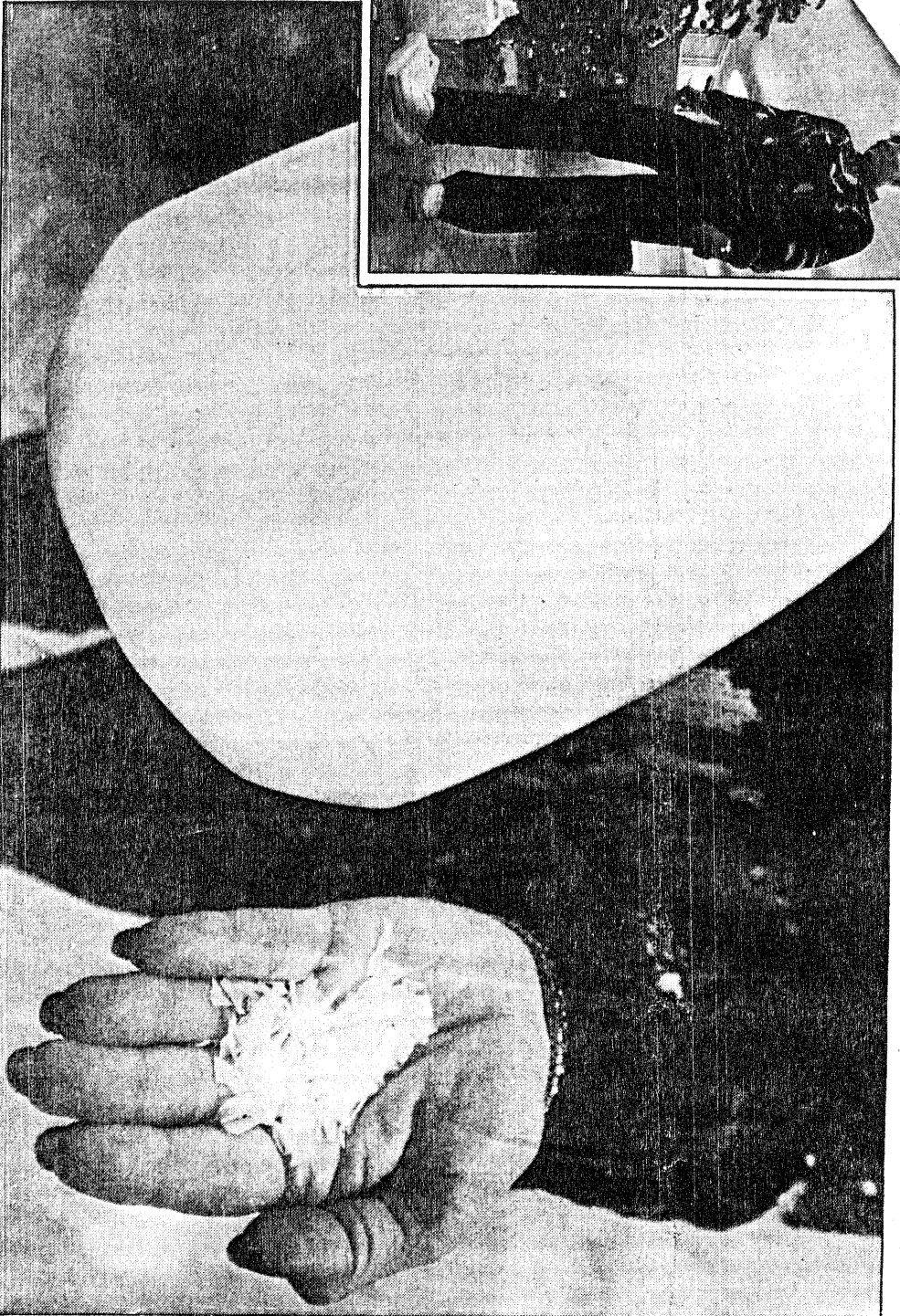
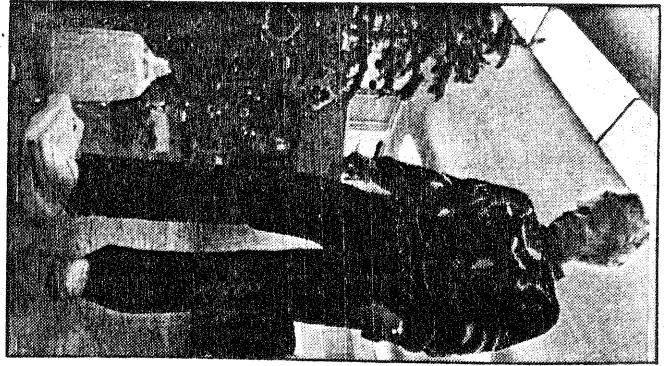
Skiba said he hopes to have containers for the milk jugs at county disposal sites in the near future. "Hopefully, within a month or so we may be able to start processing them," he said.

O'Connor said his company is ready to begin collecting the milk jugs immediately. "We're going to start when people start putting them there," he said.

Skiba said judging by comments he received while manning the recycling booth at the Douglas County Fair this summer, many county residents are eager to recycle plastics. "There's a lot of people who ask about that," he said. "And rightfully so. These plastics should be kept out (of the landfill)."

Bob Gaudet, a project manager at PARTEK, said his company is always looking for new suppliers who can furnish large quantities of recyclable plastics. "Our appetite is extremely large," he said. "We're very willing to purchase this material from practically anyone in the country."

Milk crush



News-Review photos by ANDREW KNUTSON

County Commissioner Joyce Morgan, photo inset, puts the crush on a plastic milk container as part of Douglas County's effort to keep non-degradable plastics out of the county's two landfills. Afterwards, main photo, she displays the shredded plastic that is part of the recycling process. Sunrise Enter-

prises Inc. will pick up the milk containers from county transfer stations and landfills and send them to Eugene for recycling. Bill Skiba, the county's recycling coordinator, asks residents to rinse the containers, remove their caps, crush them and take them to a county disposal site for recycling.