



sanitation news

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75th ANNIVERSARY Special Edition

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

I would first like to wish all the men and women of the Department of Sanitation a Happy 75th Anniversary. The DSNY's commitment to our city began in 1929 and has continued over the years making New York one of the cleanest, healthiest, and safest major cities in the country. Your extraordinary efforts in collecting thousands of tons of daily residential trash, cleaning our

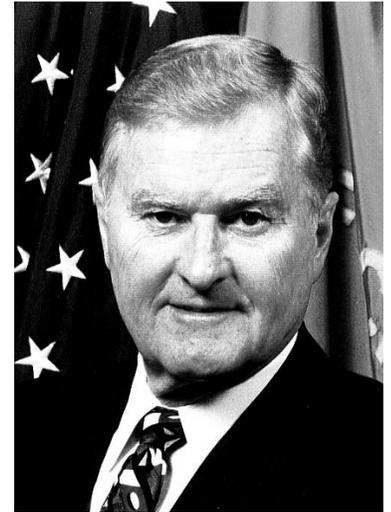


streets, and plowing snow from our 6,000 miles of roads clearly earns you the moniker of 'New York's Strongest.' I would like to thank the members of this dynamic agency, uniform and civilian alike, for your loyalty to the great city we serve. Again, Happy Anniversary Sanitation! We look forward to another 75 years.

Michael R. Bloomberg

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

It is with a great sense of pride that I am able to celebrate the Department of Sanitation's 75th Anniversary. Known as New York's "diamond in the rough," the Department celebrates its Diamond Anniversary knowing that New York City, the "Capital of the World," shines bright and remains clean and safe. Having been with this vital department since 1960 has allowed me to experience its growth and maturity and has allowed me the honor to oversee the various managerial initiatives that have made this Department the success it



is today. I am proud to be a part of a long tradition of excellence and dedication to service and I am certain that the Department will continue to thrive with the same enthusiasm and commitment that has sustained it for the past 75 years. Happy Anniversary to all, and a job well done!

John J. W. Shurtz



Across 75 Years, the DSNY Perseveres



By Robin Nagle, Ph.D.

Sanitation Worker, Appointment Date 8/16/04

New York City's Department of Sanitation was established late in 1929, while the first shockwaves of the Great Depression were rippling across the nation. The need for the DSNY was urgent; the city's solid waste concerns were only growing, and options for what was then called "final disposition" (today we call it "waste disposal") were increasingly limited.

The DSNY evolved out of the Department of Street Cleaning (DSC), which had been established by the Department of Health nearly 50 years earlier to tackle problems of refuse collection and public hygiene. The DSC made its first real mark in the 1890s, when Col. George Waring, who had earned his rank during the Civil War, organized the city's street sweepers along military lines. He created a chain of command, required workers to wear uniforms, and most importantly, made his "troops" accountable for their work.

By the late 1920s, however, the city needed more comprehensive ways to deal with the refuse generated by its nearly seven million residents, and so the DSNY was launched. In response to lawsuits from landowners along waterfront properties in New Jersey and Long Island, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered New York City to stop all ocean dumping by July 1, 1934. This was almost as dramatic as the closing of Fresh Kills landfill which occurred decades later. The DSNY had to scramble to find alternatives. By the time the last scow was dumped, the city was operating 22 incinerators and 89 landfills.

Landfilling in particular had an irrevocable impact on the shape of the City. Landfills were euphemistically called “land reclamation projects,” since marshes and swamps thought useful only for mosquito breeding were transformed into parks, airports, and highways. Recreational spaces still enjoyed today, like Orchard Beach in the Bronx, Flushing Meadows Park in Queens, Great Kills Park in Staten Island, Riverside Park in Manhattan , and the Gateway National Recreation Area in Brooklyn were created by DSNY landfills and then turned over to the Parks Department.

All this work, of course, was only possible through the labors of the thousands of men (and eventually women) who have always comprised the heart of the DSNY. The job has always been dangerous; early annual reports list workers killed on the job when they fell off scows and drowned, or were kicked in the head by horses, or were crushed beneath the wheels of newly motorized equipment. But the dangers of the job didn’t detract from its appeal; the 1939 civil service exam attracted 85,000 applicants for a \$1860.00 annual salary. Even from the beginning, the work involved snow. The winter of 1947-1948 was especially brutal, dumping more than 63 inches on the city. And all this labor happened without union representation until 1956, when Teamster’s Local 831 bested Local 111-A in an election that drew almost all the city’s 9000 sanitation men.

Today’s Department is responsible for keeping a city of eight million not just clean, but functioning smoothly. The cost of solid waste disposal has always been high, both in measures of dollars and of human energy expended, and the problems of 75 years ago remain, since New Yorkers, of course, still generate trash.

The challenges of today dwarf those of prior years, however, since Gotham is without its own disposal facilities for the first time in its history. But just as the DSNY has found solutions across the past three quarters of a century, so it will continue to work with the public and with the city to develop innovative answers to current solid waste dilemmas.



Dr. Nagle is working on a book about the DSNY, called “We All Wear Green.” Besides giving a history of the Department and its importance to the City, the book is rich with stories about day-to-day work on the streets and the complexity of the Department’s responsibilities. One day she hopes to be the DSNY’s anthropologist-in-residence.

75 YEARS IN TH



In 1929, New York Stock Market crashes.

In 1930, construction begins on the Empire State Building.

U.S. Supreme Court bans garbage dumping at sea in 1934; Apollo Theater opens.

City's first World's Fair opens in Queens in 1939. MGM releases *Gone With the Wind*.

Jackie Robinson breaks baseball color barrier and joins Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947.

In 1954, U.S. Supreme Court outlaws segregation in public schools. Brooklyn Dodgers win World Series against Yankees in 1955.



2nd World's Fair opens in 1964.

Neil Armstrong becomes the first human to walk on the moon in 1969.

In 1968, Martin Luther King assassinated while supporting striking Memphis, TN sanitation workers.; Robert Kennedy also assassinated.

One World Trade opens for business in 1970. Two World Trade opens in 1973.

In 1963, JFK assassinated in Dallas.

1929

1939

1949

1959

1969

DSNY founded on December 1, 1929. The DSNY has 11,483 employees.

DSNY's first benevolent society established in 1931. Holy Name Society signs up 6822 members.

Sanitation worker exam attracts 85,000 applicants in 1939. To narrow eligibles, New York University professor develops strenuous physical test... the toughest ever.

By 1946, the Department is running 13 landfills in four boroughs.

Disposal costs per ton in 1950: \$2.90 by incineration; \$0.80 at truck landfill; and \$1.78 by marine landfill.

In 1956, DSNY's 8,964 Sanitation Men vote for a union. The election draws 95 percent participation, and Local 831 wins.

In 1959, DSNY's *Sweep* magazine says "a man on his daily refuse collection rounds expends energy equivalent to that used by a person climbing the Empire State Building with a 35-lb pack on his back."

Starting salary in 1965 for a Sanitation Worker is \$5,544; for the Commissioner, \$25,000.

DSNY has 15,131 employees in 1970; has 4,130 pieces of equipment on its fleet.

In 1933, Local Law 5 eliminates Sanitation Commission and centralizes Department under one person reporting directly to the Mayor.

In 1948, Fresh Kills landfill opens.

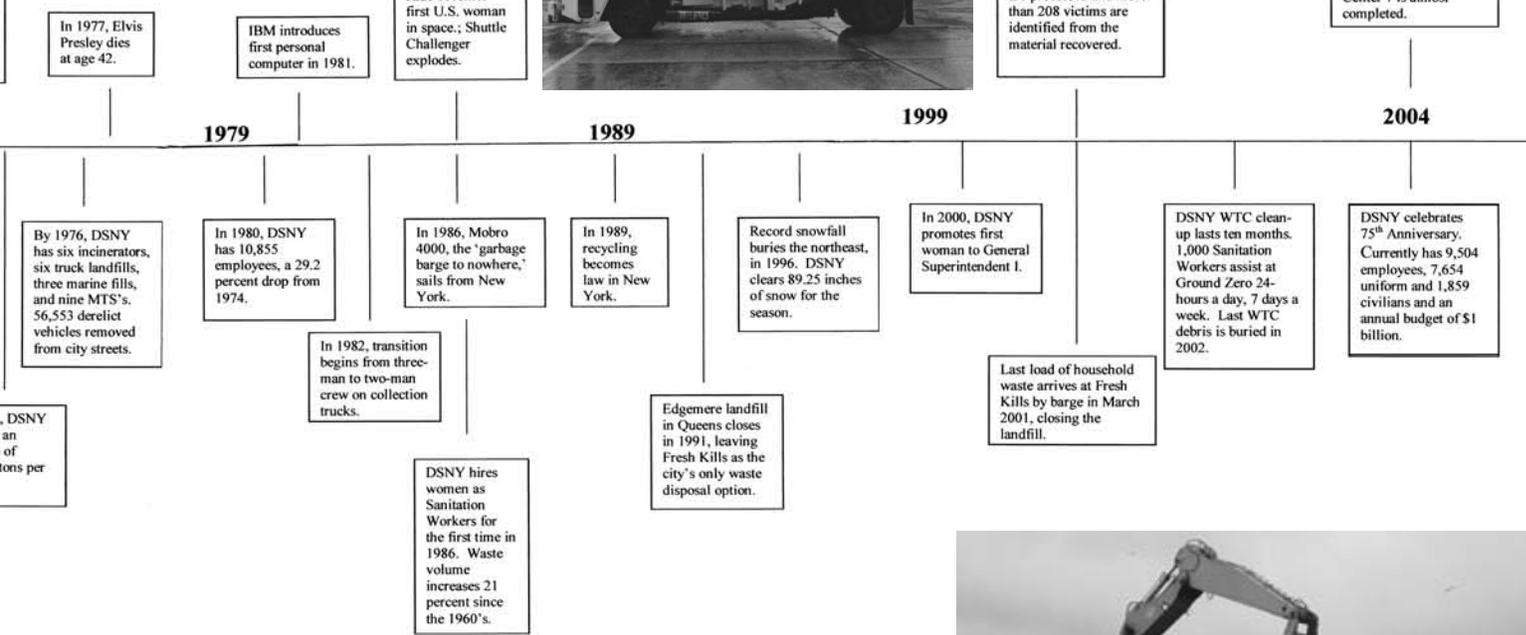
10,000 Sanitation Workers strike for one week in 1968 winning night work differential increases; city contributions to pension; double time for Sundays and chart days; and top pay after three years increases to \$8381.00.

In 1960, DSNY collects an average of 19,463 tons of refuse a day.

In 1972, collects average 28,291 tons a day.



E LIFE OF DSNY





1929 Sanitation Worker on Manual Litter Patrol



1940's Morning Roll Call



1930's Flusher



DSNY Collection Truck



Sanitation Worker on CFC (Chlorofluoro Carbon) Patrol

1929-2004 THEN AND NOW

1929

6,930,446

11,483

**Male: 58 years
Female: 61 years**

\$1,368

**\$1,860
(6 day work week)**

\$365

\$0.02

\$0.14

\$0.09

NYC
Population

DSNY
Workforce

Average
Life
expectancy

Average
Annual
Salary

Starting
Annual
Salary,
Sanitation
Worker

Car
(Chevrolet)

Postage
Stamp

Quart of
Milk

Loaf of
Bread

2004

8,085,742

9,504

**Male: 74 years
Female: 80 years**

\$36,764

**\$31,600
(5 day work week)**

\$23,495

\$0.37

\$1.35

\$1.19

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Vito A. Turso
Deputy Commissioner

Contributors:
Kathy Dawkins,
Director, Public Information

Keith W. Mellis,
Executive Officer, Public Information

Taryn Duckett,
Editor
Associate Public Information Specialist

Barbie Melendez,
College Aide, Public Information

Robin Nagle, Ph.D.
New York University

Photos by
Mike Castellano
DSNY Archives

Graphics Assistance by
Louis Seeley and Richard Ariya