

The
Dumpster Diver's
Guide to the Galaxy

What You Have to Say About Garbage Digging

Last updated September 10, 1998

I built this page as a place for all the wonderful garbage digging advice and garbage anecdotes that you the readers have sent me. Here goes:

From PsyCHO puNk, September 4, 1998:

I like garbage, i found some kool toys in this dumpster before and a record player and some kick ass electronic crap that has switches buttons lights n stuff.

From Joseph , August 31, 1998:

When I was a kid, instead of making friends and playing with other kids, my favorite thing to do was following the garbage truck.

I often would do this on the way to school. Our garbage day was Friday, and this was pushed back to Saturday when Monday was a Holiday Those were my favorite days of the year, because I could spend a whole morning watching the garbage truck, rather than just on a measly walk to school (that's assuming the garbage truck was running early!)

I loved to watch stuff get cruched. Yeah that's it! Even today, if I see a garbage truck about to pick up a load of highly crunchable junk (you know, sofas, chairs, TVs that sort of thing) I'll stop and wait!

I would study garbage truck packing mechanisms, seeing how they operate. I've noticed different designs (one panel and two panel mechanisms) and how the panels work. I've even noticed that the panels work differently on Japanese garbage trucks when I was in Japan! And when I was in France (this is now 15 years ago), I noticed on one truck, the packing mechanism was a grilled fork which was constantly in motion, unlike the usual case where the motion is started by a lever. I wonder when the standard rear-loading packing mechanism was invented and by whom. Before that, I imagine they simply loaded the garbage on a wagon or truck. I tried doing a search on the Internet for the history on garbage trucks but with no luck.

I used to save all kinds of junk (which my mother routinely threw out!) and years ago I did rescue items I thought were of value (I used to have a paper route when I was in high school, and excellent profession for trash hunting, because you do your work in the early morning, so you have first crack at everything before the garbage truck comes. One of my routes was in a mid-to-low income housing area, which tended to have tons of garbage! It was also a fun place to watch the garbage truck do its work!