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What does transportation mean to the floral industry? Without effective transportation, the industry cannot survive. It is the means by which all floral products move from growing field to wholesaler, to retailer, and then onward to the consumer.

This article will examine the various types of transportation available for floral products, and will then interview growers and wholesalers across the country to see what modes they prefer and why.

H.L. Stansell Inc., Palm Harbor, FL, is a trucking outfit covering 48 states and seven Canadian provinces, utilizing 80 tractor-trailer units, reports Tammy Locasio, spokesperson for the firm. They specialize in shipping fern, fresh-cut flowers, horticultural products and hard goods.

A new Miami facility is now under construction, and should be completed by June.

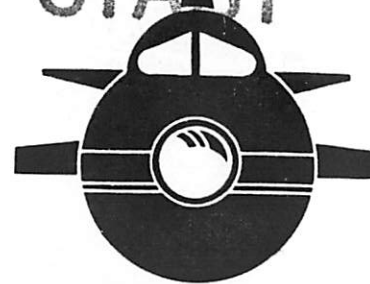
Presently, the trucks are routed through the Pierson terminal, but the Miami facility "will allow speedier delivery with this more direct route," notes Locasio.

Also, because of increased business, the Pierson terminal is being expanded by 40 percent, and construction should be completed sometime around Valentine's or Mother's Day.

H.L. Stansell Co. has recently expanded from one to two weekly service routes to Nebraska, Montana, Washington, British Columbia and South Dakota

Transportation: link to the floral industry

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Lester Coggins Trucking, Okahumpka, FL, also specializes in hauling floral and horticultural products throughout the United States, and utilizes over 200 tractor-refrigerated trailer units across the country, reports Bob Holmes, spokesman for the firm.

They use four Florida-based terminals, and make runs to various locations in the East, Midwest and Western States up to four times a week.

All trucks use a non-stop delivery system, incorporating two drivers per truck and a lockbox attached to the wholesaler's facility for after-hours delivery.



The benefit of having two drivers allows the truck to drive "straight through without unnecessary stops along the way," said Holmes. "After all, time is the most important factor when delivering perishable products."

Armellini Express Lines, Stuart, FL, is a large trucking firm servicing the majority of the United States and parts of Canada, according to Jules A. "Toots" Armellini, president of the firm and SAF Transportation Committee member. The firm, specializing in floral product transportation, was started by Armellini with only one truck in 1945 and has grown to approximately 145 tractors and 220 refrigerated trailers.

In February, ground will be broken for a new, refrigerated terminal in Miami, FL. Work should be completed by September 1, according to Armellini.

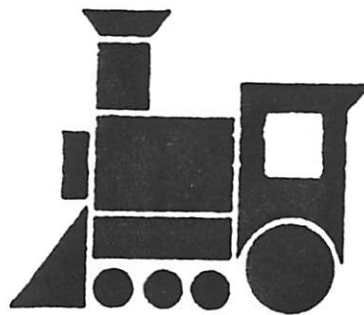
In the creative thinking department, Armellini has proposed the idea of standardization of flower stems to 100 wholesale florists across the country.

"If you think about how much of the stem is actually used by the retailer in most cases, a lot of wasted stem is being shipped, and this extra cost could be eliminated by cutting two to four inches from the stem, thus reducing shipping weight and volume," said Armellini. "This idea, in combination with box standards, could save

wholesalers quite a bit of freight cost."

Bill Maas, executive president and secretary of Florists' Transworld Delivery Association, is surveying retailers on their thoughts toward this idea. Armellini requests if you were sent a stem standardization letter, that you complete and return it as soon as possible.

One firm that has specialized in floral transportation for 29 years is



the Wilsey-Bennett Co., floral transportation division, San Carlos, CA.

Presently the firm provides transportation for approximately 300 truck-loads of California-grown floral products to all points in the

United States, according to Gordon Rieske, spokesman for the company.

Now, with five terminals including their new location in Bensonville, IL, just outside of O'Hare Airport, the company has approximately 37,000 square feet of refrigerated storage space, and the capability to pre-cool approximately 1,200 boxes of floral product an hour.

About two-thirds of the loads going out from their terminals are LTL Scheduled Service by truck, while the other third are made up of Origin Service. This includes receiving, local pick-up, terminal consolidation and pre-cooling for outside carriers.

The firm also provides the set-up of air transportation with air consolidation if requested.

Wilsey-Bennett recently inaugurated New York-Chicago service. The twice-weekly runs will service Newark and JFK Airports.

Viking Freight System, Santa Clara, CA, one of the largest trucking firms in the West, has its own perishable division. They specialize in shipping floral products out of California, consolidation for other trucking firms, and arrangement of air shipments, according to Rudy Ortiz, spokesman for the firm. The firm works with the Northern California Growers and Shippers Association, and can pick-up two to three times daily from grower/shipper members, notes Ortiz.

One firm that deals with the import of floral product is Marathon Freight Services. Valle Stream.



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NY. The firm is a customs house broker, which facilitates clearance for imported floral products through U.S. Customs and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, then arranges reforwarding of product via airline or truck, according to Loraine Hotaling, president of the company.

"The biggest problem this winter season," says Hotaling, "is the weather. When the temperature gets too low, many airlines simply will not ship perishable products because there is no climate control in cargo areas. Trucks proved to be quite reliable in these situations."

One mode of transportation for floral product used by growers in the Midwest is by Amtrak. Tom Quinn, spokesman for the Chicago sales office, notes the advantages of Amtrak.

"With Amtrak, we can ship anywhere in the United States, and are very affordable, costing approximately half of an air freight carrier. Also, train tends to be fast, considering delays and sitting times for airlines."

One air carrier that does a large volume of business in floral transportation is United Airlines.

According to Dawn Faulkner, sales development manager-cargo, the 1986 air cargo program will include an increase in lift capacity and the expansion of their positive booking cargo reservation system.

Conversion of the DC10 fleet from downstairs to upstairs galleys will increase cargo space from 14 to 22 LD-3 spaces.

United's positive-booking cargo reservation system will be expanded soon to include all flights, amounting to 1,550 flights worldwide, notes Faulkner.

The booking system used is called Air Freight Information System and allows freight to be booked by computer, "very much like our computerized passenger reservation system," said Faulkner. "Studies conducted have shown

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well over 90 percent of cargo handled by the AFIS was 'boarded as booked.'"

Also, in late January, United will begin flying its newly acquired Pacific routes. In addition to Hong Kong and Tokyo, United will begin flying to the People's Republic of China, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines. New domestic stops planned for this year include Wilmington and Asheville, NC, along with Savannah, GA.

"Our major concern as an air carrier for floral products is freshness," says Harm Lottering, director of national accounts for KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. "Technically, it is possible to receive flowers picked in Holland that day in the United States.

"Flowers picked in the morning go directly to auction. After they are purchased, the flowers are pre-cooled and put on the plane either that day, or the next morning," said Lottering.

Another air carrier involved in perishable transportation is Trans World Airlines. "Perishables

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amount to a heavy chunk of our business," says Janelle Cordes, district manager-cargo sales, San Francisco, CA. "We specialize in speedy wide-body flight service from San Francisco and Los Angeles to the East and Midwest. Flowers picked in the morning can be at their destination that evening, "making air transportation the fastest available," said Cordes.

"The way we look at it, floral product air cargo makes up a good part of our business, so we use the best possible handling procedures to cut the possibility of claims," said Herb Weidmann, account executive for Delta Airlines. "In fact, we have specific commodity rates for all types of floral products."

Delta also incorporates temperature-controlled warehouses in most major cities in the event of a delay.

In the area of bus transportation, several firms have incorporated floral products into their express service. Beverly Hargis, sales representative for Greyhound Bus Lines Package Express Service, feels there are many advantages to using bus express.

"First, we offer both pick-up and delivery in most major metropolitan areas. We also provide service to approximately 6,400 locations in the United States including many smaller towns, and we are about one-half to one-third less in price than air carriers."

Greyhound Package Express provides 24-hour service to destinations within a 500 mile radius, and same-day service to destinations within a 250-mile radius.

Trailways Bus Systems cites some of Greyhound's advantages with coverage to many points in the United States (except California), low rates and 24-hour service to destinations within 500 miles, according to Bob Robertson, head terminal agent of the Chicago outlet.

Courier services have started to transport floral products, but some are not quite sure how they stand in this department.

Federal Express has recently done a marketing study based on grower and wholesale needs, and more than likely will step-up this area, according to Pam Massa, spokesperson for the firm. Purola-

tor hasn't finished its study regarding floral transportation, and preferred not to comment.

Some floral producing companies use their own transportation systems to import product into the country.

Jim Hill, CFX, Miami, FL, and SAF Transportation Committee member bought his own Boeing 707 to bring in product from Peru and Colombia because of noise abatement regulations effective January 1, 1986.

"I was worried we wouldn't be able to get product in through the South American carriers, because many didn't have hush kits."

So far, at least two South American carriers are no longer flying into the United States because of the new regulations.

Having his own plane allows Hill to bring in product when he wants, "to give us more control over timing," he noted.

Another firm flying their own product into the country is Sunburst Farms Inc., Miami, FL. The company prouces 22 major floral products at farms in Colombia which are brought in by chartered plane, according to Susan Ashbridge,

spokesperson for the firm. After pre-cooling at the warehouse, product is shipped out via truck or air, depending on the customer's preference.

One company that sends its own trucks to Florida for product is Grist Greens, Schaumburg, IL.

Bob Grist, president, feels "this gives me an edge because I control the transportation of the greens as well as being able to personally select my product." Grist has been doing this for 12 years. The trucks also make hauls to Washington for holly and fir.

Pat Reese, Floral International Express, Hanover Park, IL, uses a different method in getting floral product to the retail florist. He runs a brokerage service whereby his firm utilizes couriers to get whole boxes of product to retail florists nationwide. His firm ships to 211 cities in 41 states, and utilizes various air and ground couriers to get the product through.

A new trend in floral transportation has been the consolidation of wholesalers in floral product-pick-ups.

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waukee, WI, a consolidation of Rohn and Malaney Wholesale Florists; Badger Wholesale Florists; The Bill Doran Co. and American Wholesale Co.; sends trucks to Chicago's O'Hare Airport to pick-up fresh-cut flowers or hard goods, as well as including pick-ups from Chicago area growers.

As of October 1, 1985, some of the Flower Forwarding Inc. wholesale members expanded their service to include city-wide deliveries to retailers within a 30-mile radius of Milwaukee. Two guaranteed deliveries are available daily, one by 12:30 p.m. and the other by 5 p.m.

This gives the retailer the advantage of two deliveries from wholesalers daily, plus the convenience of a consolidated shipping bill, noted a spokesman for the company.

In current transportation news, Steve Daigler, director of the Wholesaler Division, Society of American Florists, reports that the SAF/PMA Box Standards Committee met January 9 and agreed on standard box sizes for cut flowers and standard packing sizes for potted plants.

SAF will soon begin an education/promotion program through letters and press releases to encourage the set of standards, which are purely voluntary.

SAF also has in the works a manual of transportation with information on shipping routes, service and contacts of various companies, reports Daigler.

Another development in floral transportation has been proposed by Phil Tinsley, director of special projects for the Wholesale Florists and Florist Suppliers of America. He recently conducted a survey on the possibility of a "Freight-Saver"

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program, to use the association as a collective bargaining unit for the movement of hard goods.

"The idea was," said Tinsley, "to come up with enough data to see if members wanted to consolidate hard goods shipping. The results were very good, with over 22 percent of the membership responding favorably." He noted that the results will be published soon.

"My main job is to get the product to marketplace with the most competitive price," says Shiz Namba, transportation manager for the Northern California Flower Growers and Shippers Association.

NORCAL negotiates shipping rates with all major transportation firms and also sets up consolidation for members.

"Through consolidation, we can guarantee the carrier x amount of product to be shipped each week. This way, we get better shipping rates," said Namba.

Membership in the organization is approximately 150 grower/shippers with about 40 additional associate members, according to Namba, who has over 30 years wholesale florist experience.

After reviewing the various modes of transportation, grower/shippers were interviewed to gain some insight as to why one mode might be preferred over another in floral product transportation.

John Shelton, Denver Wholesale Florists, Denver, CO, ships "primarily by air because of our location in the country. We don't get adequate truck delivery here." The firm ships to over 40 states nationwide.

Ron Hausermann, Elmhurst Flower Growers, Addison, IL, uses Amtrak 50 percent, various airlines about 40 percent and the rest by bus.

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Hausermann feels the biggest problem in floral transportation today is mishandling. His firm does their own transportation to points as far as Detroit, MI, Louisville, KY, St. Louis, MO, and Fort Wayne, IN, for bulk orders.

"This way, we can save wholesalers 20-30 percent of the freight cost," says Hausermann.

Whiting Preston, Manatee Fruit Co., Palmetto, FL, says "refrigerated truck is probably the best for our products. In many cases, we ship our products in preservatives and in some cases we ship products in water. Most airlines have a problem with this," he said. "Also, products such as Glads are shipped upright, and most airlines can't accommodate."

Leo Roozen, Washington Bulb Co., Mt. Vernon, WA, and member of the SAF Transportation Committee says "we use whatever form of transportation is the best, depending on our customer's location." Roozen cites bus, air and truck as being their main transportation methods.

Roy Hausermann, Hausermann's Orchids, Villa Park, IL, uses air carriers about 50 percent and Amtrak 50 percent.

"It really depends on the carrier's frequency and service to a particular destination. We've used all of them at one time or another." Hausermann also cites mishandling as a major problem amongst carriers.

From the wholesaler's angle, Nate Cooper, Pennock Co., Philadelphia, PA, and chairman of the SAF Transportation Committee feels "air freight isn't always effective, because, in some cases, it can be more costly than the product itself."

Cooper will use air if a product is needed quickly, but feels that trucks are "the way to go because flowers arrive in good shape and the costs are reasonable compared to air."

Carl Baldasare Jr., Berthold-Grigsby, Cleveland, OH, notes "it really depends on the service to the location. Here in Cleveland, we use air service approximately 70-80 percent. Our branches tend to use truck because of their location."

Baldasare mentions "trucks offer a price advantage, but we prefer to pay the extra price to get fresher goods by air. It gives us a 'market advantage.'"

In the East, Greg Damron, Hanford's Wholesale Florist, Charlotte, NC, and SAF Transportation Committee member, feels "transportation depends on the growing location. We'll use air to meet market demands, but we mostly use refrigerated trucks as long as delivery time is reasonable, say two days."

It would seem there are advantages to each mode of floral product transportation, but it depends on the growing location, final destination, cost of the carrier and amount of time it takes the product to reach its customers.