

FROM THE MARCH 2000 ISSUE OF



**PROFESSIONAL CARWASHING
AND DETAILING**

Clearly a great idea

A new concept in carwash construction has one community talking.



The state-of-the-art glass Island Pro Wash recently opened in Emerald Isle, NC.

By James Gormley
Assistant Managing Editor

We all know that people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. If you ask Joe Nance, he'll tell you the same goes for people in glass carwashes.

Nance has caused quite a stir on the small island community of Emerald Isle, NC, with his unique all-glass automatic carwash, an innovative new idea in carwash design.

"It caused quite a commotion when it was going up," Nance says. "No one was really sure what we were building. Everyone assumed it was a greenhouse or something."

Nance, a carwash owner, operator and equipment supplier, worked with Autec Car Wash Systems and Lighthouse Carwash Systems to create the Island Pro Wash — a state-of-the-art

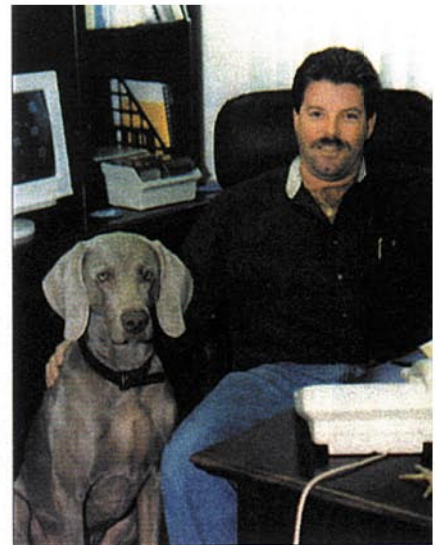


facility that stands apart from the average wash.

After an 11-month application process, the single-bay automatic went up in just six days. It is one of about two dozen such carwashes designed by Lighthouse in various stages of completion across the US.

A strong start

Nance says the response so far has been outstanding. "We opened on a Saturday with no advertising, no



Owner Joe Nance and "Tracker."

announcement or anything. To be honest, I wasn't even planning on opening that weekend. I was there to do some fine-tuning and other last minute stuff.

"But people were curious," he adds. "Word got out and by Sunday we had washed 167 cars. I thought that was pretty good."

Nance says he looks forward to the
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AT-A-GLANCE

Island Pro Wash
Emerald Isle, NC

Type: Autec Soft Cloth automatic rollover

Opened: January 1, 2000

Features: Undercarriage wash, foaming wash, foaming wax, spot-free rinse.

Bay size: 32 x 20 feet

Basic wash: Foaming wash and spot free rinse for \$4.

Most popular package: Undercarriage wash, foaming wash, foaming wax and spot-free rinse for \$6.

Average revenue per wash: \$4.80



A new image for carwashing

The Island Pro Wash glass wash was designed and patented by Lighthouse Car Wash Systems in Indianapolis, IN, and sold through the Autec distributor network. The construction takes very little time once the operator pours the concrete floor and installs the plumbing system.

"We're trying to establish a new image for the carwash business," says Mike Kinslow of Lighthouse Carwash Systems. "All this time we've essentially been asking people to wash their cars in a cave — a dark, dank cave. We wanted to change that."

"We thought the customers would appreciate a lighter, more airy feeling," adds his partner Norman Siegel. "We wanted to open it up as much as we could."

The building is cleaned about once a week with a special chemical that is sprayed on and then rinsed off. "It's a lot easier than you would think," says operator Joe Nance.

Residents in the upscale community have been supportive.

"We've had tremendous responses from everyone so far, from both the neighbors and town officials," Nance says. "We wanted to make sure it blended with the local landscape. They're very concerned about any new building that goes up on the island."

As part of his marketing strategy, Nance interfaced the carwash with a BP gas station and convenience store across the street to offer its customers \$1 off a wash with any purchase.

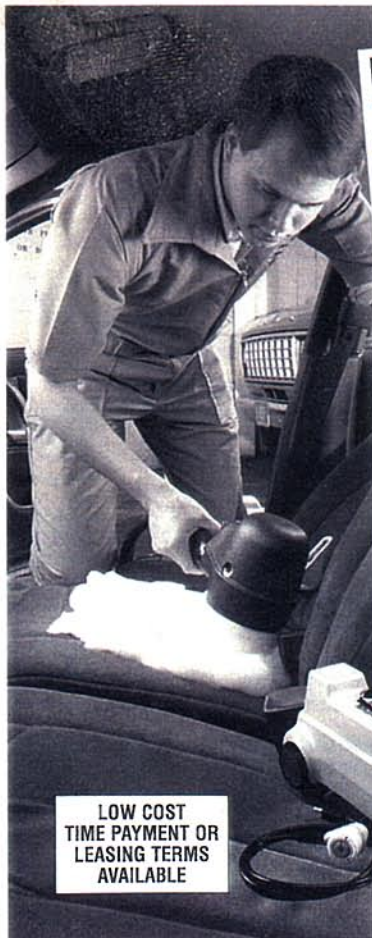
In addition, a real estate company has ordered 8,000 \$1 paper tokens with directions to the carwash to include with its summer rental packages.

summer months when the population of Emerald Isle swells from the usual 3,500, to an average 55,000 visitors. The only other carwash on the island is a four bay self-serve.

In all, Nance ventured approximately \$300,000 for the property, prefabricated building, and equipment, and expects a

good return on the investment. "We think it's going to be very successful, in part because it's so unique," he says.

The building, constructed of coated aluminum, insulated glass, polycarbonate glass and stainless steel hardware, was designed to be very clean and efficient. It had to be, the



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wash sits on just a third of an acre of land. There are very few exposed hoses and pipes inside. An entire wash cycle is performed in less than 35 feet of tunnel space.

Lush palms and decorative gardens complement the sleek aluminum and glass exterior. The glass panels facilitate solar heating in the winter and the ceiling opens to let the building cool in the summer.

Community-minded

Nance is already well known in the community for sponsoring several charity washes at his Swansboro location over the last two years.

"We do one about once a month for five or six months during the year," he says. "I don't make a dime on it but the goodwill return we get makes up for any lost revenue."

We think it's going to be very succesful, in part because it's so unique.

"It's great publicity for me," he adds. "The local paper will usually come and take a picture or write a story and the community gets to know who we are and what we do."

Nance says he got the idea two years ago after he noticed several fast-food chain restaurants hosting charity washes in their parking lots.

"We go through all the zoning regulations and spend \$20,000 on a reclaim system and then you see kids washing cars in a parking lot and all the water is running into the storm drains. It didn't seem right."

Frustrated, Nance decided to do something about it. He donated a wash bay at his Swansboro location to a local soccer team for an entire

Saturday so they could pay for a bus trip. Now, any local youth group that needs to raise cash for field trips, sports equipment or transportation expenses can look to Nance for help. His only stipulations are that the group must be a youth organization

and an adult must be present to supervise the activity.

"It creates new customers who might never have come by my place and the kids can make \$400 or \$500. It's a way we can give back to the community. It works out great for everyone," he says. □

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