

Rebuilder Battles 100-Inch Snowfall

By Traci Matt
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Rebuilder Jimmy Gugino says he knows what caused the paralyzing winter storms that have pounded New York state the past few months—it's his penance for not finishing college. Gugino and his wife Cora are owners of Gugino's Towing in North Collins, just south of Buffalo.

"We didn't get as much snow as the north country—Oswego—but ours came all at once after a very mild start to winter," said Gugino. "Along with the snow came very high winds and bitter cold. We received well over 100 inches. March 7 was sunny and 20 degrees and it felt like spring. Since then more snow and cold has returned."

Of course Gugino's tow and snow removal services were in high demand during the peak of the bad weather.



Gugino's Towing shop at their residence in North Collins, NY—simple, adequate and growing, in a rebuilding kind of way.

"We never lost power but it was very hectic. The phone rang constantly and with the blinding snow travel to our tow calls was very time consuming. It made for a very long week and at times like that our time in the shop suffers," he said.

Cora Gugino, who works as a mental health counselor and also takes care of the business bookkeeping, said they had a few sleepless nights due to all the calls.

"Some people do not know when to stay off the roads when the roads are bad and you can't see due to the white outs," she said.

Gugino's shop and yard are at his residence and he does "almost" all the work himself. All seven of the Gugino children—along with a son-in-law—have helped with the business and they still pitch in to run errands and take phone messages. Two are college graduates, three are full-time college students, one is an insurance agent, and one is still in high school.

Gugino, a union electrician, has been in the towing business since 1991. In 2004 he decided to diversify and consulted with well-respected rebuilder Herb Cook from Collins, New York. Rather than look at Gugino as competition, he considers him a student.

"His first suggestion was to subscribe to the *Electrical Rebuilder's Exchange*. He encouraged me and helped me locate the equipment and suppliers I needed and has been a constant source of advice and knowledge. His help is greatly appreciated," said Gugino.

Today he rebuilds primarily starters and alternators, along with some generators, for commercial and agricultural accounts. The towing service is a continual source of rebuilding business—one of their towing customers has 350 vehicles and another has 60 tractor trailers.

"We do some work for both of them, along with some walk in customers, so we have a comfortable flow of work," said Gugino, who added that he enjoys rebuilding and would like to expand that



With well over 100 inches of snow in February, the tractor only gives us an idea of what the Gugino's were up against—and this photo was taken after some of the snow had melted.



With the help of their seven children, Cora and Jimmy Gugino have operated their towing business for 16 years, and have been rebuilding for three.

part of his business.

“I feel in a rural area as ours there will always be a demand for rebuilding,” he said. “Everyone we have met that is associated with the rebuilding business has been very helpful and that makes life much easier.”