

Fan-Tastic Vent Breezes to Top

Supplier of Air Exchange Units Sees Surging Growth in RV Arena

Smoke from the fire that destroyed Fan-Tastic Vent Corp.'s plant in Capac, Mich., in January 1997 hadn't even cleared when owners Stephen A. Milks and David C. Struck located a new factory in Imlay City, Mich.

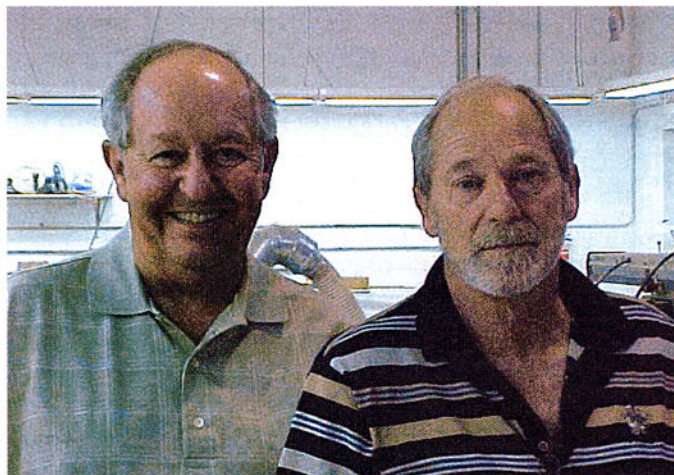
"It was very traumatic, but we built 500 fans 11 days after the fire in the new plant," said Vice President Dave Struck. "A guy watching the fire said his uncle owned a building in an industrial park nearby. We went immediately to look at it and signed the lease with a handshake."

The fire, in retrospect, created little more than a hiccup in Fan-Tastic's growth. The company founded by Struck and company President Milks in 1985 sold its 1 millionth air exchange system in 2001, and with production of 700 to 800 a day currently is approaching 1.5 million units.

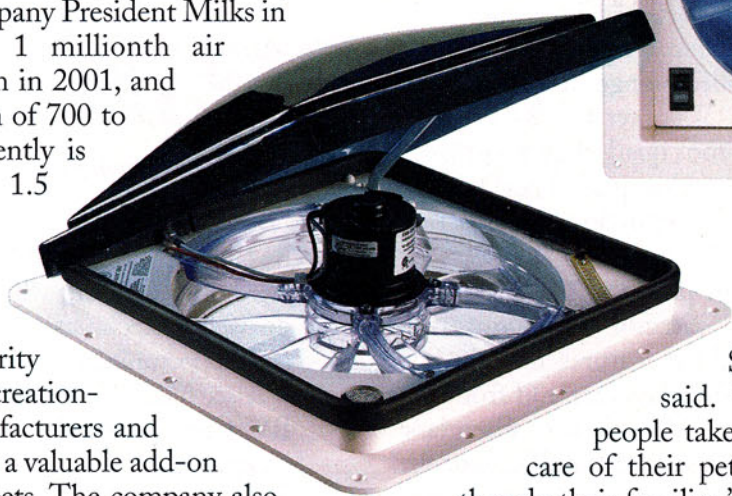
Fan-Tastic manufactures vent fan systems for a majority of America's recreational vehicle manufacturers and often is listed as a valuable add-on on RV spec sheets. The company also retails three aftermarket Fan-Tastic Vent models that range in price from \$129 to \$250.

The company is delving deeper into the aftermarket with a lightweight 14-inch Endless Breeze 12-volt portable fan that retails for \$69.95. The fan is being marketed in the marine, over-the-road trucking arena and other industries.

"Believe it or not, we are selling a lot (of portable fans) to the Amish for their buggies and for their homes, and we are finding a big market for pet owners,"



FAN-TASTIC: Stephen A. Milks, founder, president; David C. Struck, founder, vice president; Below, right, 12-volt units fit standard 14X14-inch openings.



Struck said. "Some people take better care of their pets than they do their families."

With 70% of Fan-Tastic's sales going to OEMs, Struck said the aftermarket sales have substantial room to grow. "Our thinking has always been that, based on whoever you want to believe, there are anywhere from 3.5 million to 6 million RVs out there with a 14-inch hole in them that's been around almost since RVs were invented," Struck said. "We feel there is a big, wide field of opportunity in the aftermarket that hasn't been touched, especially when it comes to towables."

Co-founder Milks designed the first

Fan-Tastic Vent while he and Struck worked years ago at Champion Home Builders, a manufactured home company. "There were products out there that did part of the job, but there were a lot of negatives in the configuration." The Fan-Tastic Vent's UV-resistance Luran base flexes to fit a coach's roof contour. And its permanent magnet motor, which has a failure rate of less than a 10th of 1%, never has to be lubricated.

"In the eyes of a product guy or an engineer, the Fan-Tastic Vent is a minor accessory," Struck said. "But to the user,

we are the most used accessory in the coach, except for the refrigerator."

The company, Struck said, takes an aggressive stance on consumer care, and "never will leave the customer holding the bag."

Properly configured, Fan-Tastic Vents will exchange

1,000 cubic feet of air a minute. "Your average travel trailer or smaller motorhome only has 1,200 to 1,500 cubic feet in it when you subtract cabinets, furniture and appliances," Struck said. *— Bob Ashley*

VITAL STATISTICS

COMPANY: Fan-Tastic Vent Corp.

LOCATION: Imlay City, Mich.

MAJOR PRODUCTS: Fan-Tastic Vent air exchange systems for OEMs and the aftermarket, and Endless Breeze 12-volt portable fans.

KEY PERSONNEL: Stephen A. Milks, founder and president; David C. Struck, founder and vice president; Tom Jensen, vice president personnel; Larry Milks, general manager; Penny Milks, treasurer/controller; Jeff Atwell, production coordinator; Bob Beratta, service coordinator.

PHYSICAL PLANT: 42,000-square-foot plant with 4,500 square feet of office space in Imlay City.

EMPLOYEES: 60