



Interiorscape Hall of Fame



Dennis Gabrick

2004 Allied Trade Professional



We have all heard the many stories about the President of a Fortune 500 company starting out in the mail room and moving on up to the CEO's office, however this entrepreneur began delivering newspapers, and caddying at the age of twelve, then worked his way through college, the University of Miami, as the youngest buyer for one of the largest department stores in Florida, and then moved on to Saks Fifth Ave. In the early 1980's he moved through many other executive sales orientated positions in the wall covering industry, eventually forming his own wall covering manufacturing enterprise. Soon thereafter he sold this company and moved to Carpinteria, California. It was here while working for a Swedish bank equipment firm in Santa Barbara that he became good friends with a Swedish chemist, Per Monie, who had devised a formula for preserving flowers. Intrigued with the idea of preserving flowers and plants this good friendship turned into a partnership in 1984 with the birth of Nature Preserved of California selling \$5.00 bouquets to supermarkets.

At first the company concentrated on the floral industry, preserving flowers and foliage. Then one day a client asked if they could preserve an entire tree. By 1985 the partners had preserved the entire top of a palm tree by soaking the palm fronds in Monie's solution for several days. They then attached the fronds to artificial trunks, and the trees looked amazingly real. Figuring they could sell these preserved trees to malls, restaurants, hotels and casinos as a substitute for living trees they established a price of \$1000 per tree and thus began their marketing program.

Developing the product was the easy part. Financing its production and marketing it proved to be almost impossible. Some saving and additional family financial backing of about \$150,000 kept the company going for about two years. Then in the late 1980's additional investors put up \$750,000 for a two thirds stake in the company. Our entrepreneur figured he would still run the show, however the investor group installed a new president and chief financial officer and he was demoted to vice president in charge of sales.

Nature Preserved's embalmed trees threatened to eliminate the revenue stream of commercial interior landscapers who had the best connections with the owners of malls, restaurants and office buildings, so it was decided to market the preserved trees as a complement to live plants where lightening was poor and floors could not support the weight of a large tree. This made the landscapers happy, however greatly reduced Nature Preserved's potential market. In 1990 Nature Preserved had sales of only \$700,000, and was losing money. Per Monie, tired of living hand-to-mouth quit and moved back to Sweden.

Our entrepreneur hung on and about one year later 183 of his preserved palms were installed in the atrium of Steve Wynn's new Mirage casino and hotel in Las Vegas. However because his controlling stockholders almost nixed the Mirage order believing it was too big for them, and there were continuing arguments about how much money could be taken out of the business, our entrepreneur finally said "enough is enough," quit, took five of Nature Preserved's employees with him and founded Preserved Treescapes International in 1991.

Preserved Treescapes International now has eight worldwide offices including Australia, England, Malaysia, and Caracas with sales of over ten million dollars up from \$300,000 in 1991. The initial Mirage installation has grown now to over 400 preserved palms, and major installations have taken place in the finest hotels, resorts and corporate headquarters around the world.

Preserved Treescapes International participates in over a dozen trade shows annually, however even though CalScape is by far the smallest show they participate in they still treat our trade association and our entire industry like we are their largest customer. We are proud and fortunate to induct into the Interiorscape Hall of Fame this Allied Trade Professional and the mover and shaker behind this company, once referred to as "The Pickled Palm Man"Dennis Gabrick.

Dennis is an allied industry leader and innovator.

