

CASHING IN ON COOL



Staff photo by Brad Meyer

Allcryo in Montgomery is a family business operated by, from left, Jaime, Brenda, Rodney and Jimmy Ballard.

Montgomery family business is a major supplier in international cryogenics

BY BRAD MEYER

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When it comes to rock-hard temperatures – say 360 degrees below zero – corporate bigwigs, international entrepreneurs and even the engineers at NASA turn to a small, family owned business in Montgomery for help.

Over the past 15 years, Allcryo in Montgomery has earned an international following and a highly favorable reputation as one of the few independent experts in the expanding cryogenics industry.

“Storing and handling liquid nitrogen, carbon dioxide, helium and other gases can be tricky business – and dangerous,” said Rodney Ballard, family patriarch and founder of the business. “It’s a valuable tool in a wide range of industries, but it has to be handled with care.”

Nitrogen, carbon dioxide and other industrial gases are used in food service, breweries, manufacturing and other specialized purposes. To store the gases in large volume, they are put under increased pressure and rendered as liquids – at very low temperatures, far below freezing.

Allcryo makes, repairs, restores and revitalizes the high-

AT A GLANCE

Allcryo, a family business based in Montgomery, is a big name in the international cryogenic industry. For more information, visit www.allcryo.com or call 936-441-8333.

ly specialized tanks to store and transport liquid gas products. The highly technical tank-within-a-tank system includes a vacuum area for insulation and specialized valves, fittings and connections.

“Dip anything in liquid nitrogen and it becomes super hard and super fragile – you could hammer a nail with a banana, if it doesn’t shatter like glass first,” Ballard said. “Coming in contact with your skin can cause severe burns.”

Allcryo is one of only a handful of companies that specialize in working with liquid gases on a massive scale. When officials at NASA, with which Allcryo has worked previously, wanted to sell a massive 29,000-gallon tank due to budget cuts, they contacted Ballard. He bought the 160,000-pound tank and had it trucked from Cape Canaveral to his shop in Montgomery for restoration.

“This is the tank that was part of the assembly that helped treat and preserve



Courtesy photo

A 29,000-gallon tank weighing more than 160,000 pounds is shown being removed from a NASA complex before being trucked to Allcryo in Montgomery for restoration.

rock samples brought back from the moon,” Ballard said. “That’s pretty amazing.”

The tank will be disassembled and restored to original condition, Jaime Ballard said. Then it will be shipped to SpaceX in West Texas, a private space launching enter-

prise, which has contracted to purchase the used NASA equipment. The company successfully launched its first rocket earlier this week, and the tank will become part of the future launch complex

medicine, dermatology,

tional organization consisting of several thousand mar-

<http://www.DesignByNewton.com>.

ALLCRYO

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equipment.

In addition to industrial applications, Allcryo sells to a range of agricultural companies, including medical marijuana facilities in Colorado.

"Hydroponic and commercial farming operations have discovered pumping in CO2 makes the crops grow bigger and faster," Rodney said. "But they need a way to store large quantities – that's where we come in."

Beyond industrial uses, frozen gases have aesthetic appeal as well – including the ability to create a convincing

ground fog for theatrical and entertainment purposes. A few years ago, the company provided technical support to create fog for the opening of a Willis WildKat football game. Last year, the company was contracted to help construct a massive ground fog effect at a major destination resort complex in Macau, China.

"They were having problems achieving the effect they wanted," Ballard said. "So they asked around and ended up calling us."

The inquiry turned into a job lasting more than three months in China, involving most of his crew and family members at one time or another.

"It was a unique opportunity," Ballard said. "I wanted everyone to get a chance to see China and experience the culture."

While he found the experience interesting, Ballard said the novelty of living and working in China wore thin fairly quickly. He was particularly disappointed in the Chinese diet – especially the sweets.

"Let's just say their idea of candy and sweets is a whole lot different than mine," he quipped. "It makes you appreciate the good, ol' U.S.A."

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