

Tales from Tim – Staying in Shape

One summer when I was a kid, I decided to make money by collecting and selling aluminum cans. Another veteran can collector taught me a trick on how to stand on a can, send a pulse through my leg, and viola the can would collapse. By crushing them I could get more cans in my bag.

Now the only time I get to do this can act is as a party trick. And that's a good thing because we don't want flattened cans in your recycling cart. Why? It has to do with a part of the recycling process that happens after our materials get picked up.

At the sorting facility the first task is to separate the papers from the bottles and cans. Material runs over a machine with quickly spinning star shaped disks called a star screen that lifts flat paper and cardboard while the bottles and cans fall in between and continue for additional sorting.



The key word here is flat. The machine works best when cardboard boxes are flat, and bottles and cans are not. So, when you prepare your recycling flatten boxes before putting them in the cart and don't flatten your bottles or cans. A flattened can may end up with the material that goes to a paper mill where it will be separated and thrown in the trash.

And keep out plastic bags, clothes, hoses, and cords. We call them tanglers because they wrap around the star screen. Workers shut down the equipment at least twice a day and cut those items off by hand which slows down the sorting process.

Until next time remember we come in all sizes and that's what makes us special, my friends.