



Garfield Blackwood

Press Cleaner and
Weekend Supervisor

The Miami Herald

Each Monday, Garfield Blackwood suits up for work, looking like something out of a Michael Crichton medical thriller. In a disposable white jumpsuit

that soon will be flecked with red, yellow and blue paint, his face protected by a helmet and visor, Blackwood gets ready to clean *The Miami Herald's* presses. He'll use the latest in newspaper technology: a dry-ice machine that uses pellets like large grains of rice to blast away ink and other residues.

The \$21,000 Cold Jet machine is about the size of a portable dishwasher and uses 400 pounds of ice, delivered weekly. The presses are cleaned on Mondays because it's the day when the fewest papers are printed. Until *The Herald* invested in the Cold Jet two years ago, Blackwood said he cleaned the presses the way everyone else does — "You reach where you can reach."

Wearing earplugs against the noise and cloth gloves against the cold, Blackwood shovels the carbon dioxide pellets into the cleaning machine. A constant roar, uncomfortable even for the workers used to the din of the presses, accompanies the cleaning process. Thick layers of ink vanish within seconds as Blackwood waves a wand attached to a hose, exactly like the attachment on a vacuum cleaner. The press parts are cleaned down to bare metal.

Where does the ink go? "I've wondered that myself," Blackwood said. According to Cold Jet's Web site, dry particles break up and can be swept away. Wet particles are

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pushed away to other areas, much as they would be by a moving stream of water. For that reason, operators are instructed to work methodically from top to bottom, so residue isn't redeposited on the moving parts of the press.

Blackwood, a boyish-looking 35-year-old native of Jamaica, has worked at *The Herald* for 13 years, always in the pressroom. He applied because he got tired of the hours-long commute to his former job at a resort in the Florida Keys, and he remembered a high-school classmate talking about

his mother's job in *The Herald's* composing room. The newspaper seemed an interesting place to work, he thought.

Pagination eventually made the composing room obsolete, but as long as newspapers are printed, presses will need to be cleaned and repaired. In addition to his duties as lead press cleaner, Blackwood is in charge of cleaning the pressroom and reel room and helping to maintain the presses during the week. He also supervises other employees.

Building Services Manager Lynne

Donnelly says Blackwood's versatility is notable. "Not only does he fulfill the duties of a press cleaner, but Garfield also serves as the weekend supervisor. He is mechanically inclined and is able to do some repairs on our equipment, which helps keep the machines running and repair bills in check."

At home, however, Blackwood has other high-maintenance items to take care of. His two baby daughters are barely 18 months apart. "They keep me so busy I don't get to anything else," he said.