

— SOUTH FLORIDA'S ORIGINAL LEGACY

Wayne Huizenga

*One garbage truck. Three Fortune 500 companies.
A city built on the New River.*

1962 — FORT LAUDERDALE

Waste Management

Built from a single used garbage truck

1987 — FORT LAUDERDALE

Blockbuster Entertainment

Grew to 3,000+ stores nationwide

1996 — FORT LAUDERDALE

AutoNation

Reinvented how America buys cars

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

THE BACKBONE OF SOUTH FLORIDA

**Before Miami Had Griffin. Before
West Palm Had Ross. Fort Lauderdale
Had Huizenga.**

Let's talk about legacy.

Not the kind you buy with a headline-grabbing office tower. Not the kind that shows up because a tax bill got too big to ignore up north. I'm talking about the kind you *build* — brick by brick, deal by deal, decade by decade — the kind that doesn't need a press release because the results are still standing fifty years later.

Right now, South Florida is having a moment. Ken Griffin has planted Citadel's flag in Miami. Stephen Ross has poured his energy — and his money — into reshaping West Palm Beach. And that's a great story. Big names. Big capital. Big headlines.

But here's what almost nobody is saying out loud: **Fort Lauderdale was never waiting for its billionaire moment. It already had one.**

His name was Wayne Huizenga.

From One Garbage Truck to Three Fortune 500 Companies

Picture this. A young guy, barely 25 years old, buys a single used garbage truck. He drives it himself — before dawn to midday — then spends his afternoons knocking on doors in Broward County trying to sign up customers. No inheritance. No hedge fund. No headline. Just hustle.

That truck became Waste Management.

Then he did something almost nobody in American business history has ever done. He didn't stop at one Fortune 500 company. He built a second — Blockbuster Entertainment — turning video rental into a nationwide phenomenon. Then a third — AutoNation — reinventing how an entire country bought cars.

Three. Fortune. 500. Companies. One man. One city. Fort Lauderdale.

He remains the only entrepreneur in history to have done that.

He Didn't Just Build Companies — He Built a City's Identity

While he was stacking Fortune 500 companies, Huizenga was also doing something that no billionaire playbook requires: he was falling in love with sports ownership in a way that put South Florida on the national map. He became the only person ever to simultaneously own three major professional sports franchises — the Miami Dolphins, the Florida Marlins, and the Florida Panthers. And in 1997, his Marlins won the World Series.

Think about the audacity of that. Think about the vision required to look at Fort Lauderdale — not Miami, not New York, not Chicago — and decide: *this is where I build my empire.*

He headquartered Blockbuster and AutoNation right there in Fort Lauderdale, at a time when most of the country couldn't have found the city on a map. He didn't chase the spotlight that already existed somewhere else. He created the spotlight, and it followed him home.

Generational Wealth Isn't an Accident. It's an Intention.

Here's the part that matters most for where we are today.

Huizenga didn't just create wealth for himself. He created a flywheel — jobs, executives, capital, philanthropy, and infrastructure — that is still spinning through South Florida decades later. Nova Southeastern University's business school carries his name. Parks, streets, and community centers across Broward County carry his legacy. Generations of entrepreneurs and executives who cut their teeth inside his companies went on to build their own ventures, right here, because he proved it was possible.

That's what real legacy looks like. It's not a splashy arrival. It's the quiet, compounding force of someone who believed in a place before it was fashionable to believe in it — and who built something durable enough that his name still opens doors nearly a decade after his passing.

So Yes — Welcome the New Names. But Remember Who Was Already Here.

Ken Griffin and Stephen Ross are extraordinary additions to South Florida's story, and their capital and ambition are genuinely reshaping Miami and West Palm Beach. That's exciting, and it deserves recognition.

But let's be clear about something: Fort Lauderdale isn't the up-and-comer in this story. **Fort Lauderdale is the forefather.**

Long before the private jets started landing with new arrivals from New York and Chicago, Fort Lauderdale was already the anchor — the place where ultra-high-net-worth vision, entrepreneurial audacity, and generational wealth creation were proven out, in real time, by a man who started with one truck and never stopped building.

The new names are writing exciting new chapters. But this city wrote the first one.

That's not nostalgia. That's the backbone South Florida was built on — and it's still standing in Fort Lauderdale today.

What do you think — does Fort Lauderdale get the credit it deserves as South Florida's original wealth-building capital? Sound off in the comments.