

Fire Department

Village of Niles

"Where People Count"

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April 21, 1997

1997 NAEVT Awards Program Committee
29 Stillman Road
P.O. Box 97
Lynnfield, MA 01940-0097

To Whom It May Concern:

I want to nominate Tim Wirfs, of Wirfs Industries, 4021 W. Main St. McHenry IL, 60050 for the 1997 Technician of the Year Award, for the following reasons.

My first contact with Tim was in 1987 when we purchased the first of three (3) pumpers and one (1) ladder truck from Pierce Mfg. in Appleton, WI. Like all new fire apparatus, it wasn't perfect. Pierce requested that the unit be taken to Wirfs Welding, as it was known then, in McHenry. As you can see by my letterhead, I am a Chief with the Niles Fire Department, some fifty (50) or more miles southeast of Tim. When we would have to leave the engine there, we had to send two (2) men and another vehicle to bring the men back and repeat the process when the engine was to be picked up. This did not make my boss happy. It added about 250 extra miles to our vehicles and six (6) hours of overtime for two (2) firefighters. This was compounded when in 1992 we bought a ladder truck that has a tiller. Now the overtime went up by 50%. I'm telling you all this so you will know that there are many mechanics between Niles and McHenry, but we chose to continue to do business with Tim's company. Don't tell Tim, but if he was twice as far, we would still call upon his company to maintain our vehicles.

When a vehicle is returned from the "shops" the most critical group of people on earth, firefighters, scrutinize the work. How long did it take? Did they fix what was broke and how much work is involved in cleaning up the vehicle after the mechanics? With Tim this is not an issue the vehicle comes back fixed in a timely manner and clean.

During the time that the unit is in for repair Tim will always take the time to communicate the progress and any problems that may arise. He not only has to report to myself, who requested that the work be done but to our head mechanic who was responsible for paying the bills when the work is completed. Sometimes he has to make a double phone call and explain things twice. He never complained about having to make the extra phone calls.

Tim is excellent at repairing electrical problems such as bad grounds, electrical shorts and diagnosing electrical problems of all kinds. He is also an excellent welder and fabricator of aluminum and sheet metal. On several occasions we presented him with some problems and he fabricated some brackets or made some aluminum compartments for us.

Our ladder truck is a safety nightmare. It has more relays and safety switches than one could imagine. At any given time, one or more of them is malfunctioning. Even as I write this letter we have on order a magnetic sensing switch for the outrigger. This is the second time this switch is being replaced. My firefighters broke the last switch putting it in. Tim is going to make the trip out to Niles to install it when it comes in. Most of the maintenance, "50 and 100 hours", are done by Tim and his company. Of course our aerial ladder is tested every year by UL Labs of Northbrook. If any deficiencies are found the vehicle is sent to Tim for correction.

We think so much of Tim's work that six (6) months ago we had him refurbish that original 1987 Pumper to near perfect condition. Many departments would look at this rig and think it was brand new.

Tim has a wonderful attitude and he is always a pleasure to work with and I hope you will give him every consideration for this prestigious award he so deserves.

Sincerely,



Ron Derbes,
District Chief
Niles Fire Department

RD:mr