

AMSA Convention

Honoring the Best

AMSA's Super Van Operators, Fleet Safety Contest Winners Receive Annual Awards

The American Moving and Storage Association took pride in presenting the annual Super Van Operator and Fleet Safety Contest Awards for 2005 at the AMSA Annual Convention and Trade Show, held at April 7-10 at the Sawgrass Marriott Resort & Beach Club in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

AMSA's 2005 Super Van Operator contest was deemed especially successful because the yearly competition attracted 60% more drivers entering it than was the case in 2004.

"Winning any one of the Super Van Operator awards elevates a driver's accomplishments and abilities among his or her peers, and highlights the industry's safety accomplishments and the satisfaction that customers have with the nation's movers," said AMSA President Joe Harrison.

"A winning driver also helps the driver's agent, van line or carrier by positioning the company as thoughtful, safety-conscious, responsible and deserving of a shipper's business. Congratulations to all the winners."

Harrison also expressed AMSA's gratitude to Kentucky Trailer for sponsoring the awards, Trans Advantage, which provides leather jackets, and Movers Specialty Service, which supplied commemorative rings to each of the driver winners. Rentacrate also gave each of the van operators one of its specially designed crates.

A Lifetime of Achievement

The Lifetime Achievement Super Van Operator Award went to **Joseph A. Dean, Jr.**, who along with his wife **Susan** drives for Hilldrup Moving & Storage, based in Fredericksburg, Va., a United Van Lines agent.

He began driving professionally in 1964 and has been with Hilldrup for 33 years. During his career he has accumulated 2.5 million miles without a single accident, violation or out-of-service order.

Harold Wood, Hilldrup's vice president of risk management, said Dean also has "an excellent rating in claims, safety and customer service and continually promotes customer relations between Hilldrup and those we serve."

In addition to being named Hilldrup's Outstanding Van Operator of the Year in 2002, Dean has garnered United Van Lines' Van Operator Month honors numerous times over the course of his career and has won United's Safe Driving and Excellent Performance Award nine times.

Hilldrup also reported that every customer service survey that was returned between December 2000 and May 2001 had rated Dean as a perfect 10, and his current customer service rating is an amazing 9.9.

Joe and Susan Dean have established an enviable record of service over the course of their career in the moving industry. Calling Hollywood, Md., home, Dean is a Trucker Buddy for the Brownie Troop led by his daughter Debra Dean Lloyd. He also can be seen frequently helping his elderly neighbors with yard work, shoveling snow and other acts of kindness.

The Deans have drawn praise from so many of their customers over the years it has been hard to keep count.

But the Deans won special praise from one of their customers who was a single mother with two teenagers who was moving across the country. It was winter, and on the second day of the customer's trip to the family's new home, he met Joe and Susan at a truckstop along the way.

"Visibility was poor and the roads were slippery due to the snow and wind," the customer later wrote. "Joe realized that I had little experience driving in these conditions and had never driven across country before. Thankfully, he decided to keep an eye on us. I was unaware the state was closing the roads ahead that night because of the conditions. Joe sent a police officer to stop us and let us know the roads were being closed ahead."

Dean did the same thing the next day, and continued to watch over his customer throughout the rest of their journey. "The entire trip he kept a lookout for us. He provided us with information on places to stop to pick up food for the dog, truckstops, motels and road conditions."

When they finally arrived at their new home, the customer's family was helped to get unpacked and organized by Susan Dean. "I believe Joe and his wife provided services that were far and above what normally would be expected. They made the move easy and the help they provided on the trip across country I will always be grateful for."

The customer added, "Joe will always be considered a friend and be welcome in our home anytime he is in the area."

Delivering the Goods

The AMSA Household Goods Super Van Operator of the Year **Carl R. Smith** of National Van Lines, Broadview, Ill., is also highly regarded by the customers that he has served during his 30 years driving professionally.

He has never had a chargeable accident in his career and has accumulated numerous quarterly and monthly awards for safety and service from National Van Lines. He also was the recipient of an AMSA Super Van Operator honor in 2000.

National Van Lines Chief Executive Officer Maureen Beal said her company is proud to have Carl Smith as its representative. "He is a genuinely considerate and caring individual. His customer satisfaction rating, as well as his on-time pickup and delivery statistics, are at the highest level, while having one of the lowest claims ratios in the fleet."

Beal added, "We know that we and our customers are in good hands when Carl is on the job!"

"I believe in taking care of people in need," Smith observed. "Whenever I am somewhere (truckstops, etc.), and I have the opportunity to buy meals for the hungry, I do it. I like working with people one on one."

He added, "I have been a household mover most of my life. Every year brings challenges and goals. I am the old school, hard-nosed person who keeps on going just like the little Energizer bunny. Aches and pains – I keep going. When dispatch calls asking a favor, I do it. When a problem comes up, I deal with it."

Smith says he does whatever it takes to get the job done and to make sure everyone involved is happy with the result. "That's the bottom line – for all to be happy. And when we have a sweet, little old lady ask us for a hug, I know I did good."

He and his wife Bonnie, son Matthew and daughter Caitlin call Centreville, Md., home, where the Smiths are involved in his local chapter of the Special Olympics. He also volunteers at the middle school that his children attend, and he and his wife have volunteered through their local church to help needy children all over the country.

They also raised money for a local church and school as well as for Hurricane Katrina relief and Carl Smith has helped clean up and repair facilities at a local forest preserve, building and repairing picnic tables and bridges along with cleaning up the nature trail.

For seven years he has been involved with the "Adopt-a-Bear" program which started as a program to provide Teddy bears to needy children and now provides toys, meals and clothing for more than 2,300 families. He started by adopting five children under the program and now has 19 families, and will provide transportation for the entire program.

"When my trailer at Christmas time is full of toys for needy children, I know it has been a good year -- knowing that over 2,000 kids will have something to open on Christmas Day."

Records of Accomplishment

Named as AMSA's Special Commodities Super Van Operator of the Year was **Thomas B. McNiff** of Bekins Van Lines, Hillside, Ill., who has been driving trucks since 1967 and has served with Bekins for 29 years. He has had no accidents of any kind during his entire professional driving career.

He has received the Bekins Driver of the Month Award five times, the President's Award for Customer Service Excellence twice, and was honored with the company's Safe Driver Award for achieving 23 years of an outstanding safety record.

McNiff, who lives in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., specializes in hauling and delivering medical equipment throughout the United States, including kidney dialysis machines, although he has worked in all of the divisions at Bekins -- Household Goods, Metro, Tradeshow and TimeLok.

"He has a great working knowledge of the entire system," said Steve Yacko, Bekins director of fleet development. "He makes a great first impression. We often send Tom to new customers and agents because he is great at customer service and instructing others on proper procedures. A master at freight handling, he is very reliable, punctual and has a great work ethic."

McNiff is well thought of within his group of peers, by customers and corporate personnel, Yacko pointed out. "Tom is able to adapt easily to change in a dispatch environment and is great at communicating with our crossdock, distribution agents and fellow drivers."

Yacko continued, "He is a team player and always goes above the call of duty to help get things accomplished, and helps out when needed, knowing that what he helps with will benefit the entire system. He has stepped in to help cover other driver's runs, when emergencies arise, and overall is well deserving of any award he receives."

Christopher S. Draughon of National Van Lines, Broadview, Ill., is AMSA's Super Van Operator "Rookie of the Year." His company hailed him for being customer focused, having an extremely low claims ratio and being a team player.

"Being a professional also means doing the right thing," Draughon explained. "I am honest in my dealings, admitting of my mistakes and proud of the service I provide."

Although he only started driving professionally in 2001, he is highly regarded by his company and those who work with him, having received the coveted honor of being named a National Van Lines "5 Star Driver," which signifies the highest level of customer satisfaction while operating for the company.

Draughon, his wife Jennifer and 10-year-old daughter Olivia call St. Augustine, Fla., home, where he has given back to his community through his involvement in his local church and the Habitat for Humanity organization. He also provided assistance with food donations following Hurricane Katrina and came to the

aid of a fellow National Van Lines driver whose tractor had been stolen to help him complete his delivery schedule.

“Customers are what keep us employed,” Draughon noted. “It is imperative I do right by them. Whether they are shipping just a few belongings or an entire truckload, each of them is treated with the highest level of respect and service.”

He noted that he always tries to present a professional image. “Professionalism goes beyond showing up on time. It starts at the moment I first communicate with the customer, and is carried forward with every action thereafter. From my appearance to the way I treat their belongings, I strive to emulate the brochure they were given.”

Honoring the Safest Fleets

AMSA President Joe Harrison took special note of the contributions made by the safest fleets and the honors they received this year. “AMSA congratulates all of the winners for a job well done. All the carriers that entered the contest have made significant investments in safety for the benefit of their customers, their employees and other highway users.”

The annual AMSA Fleet Safety contest is composed of three major categories of awards:

The Fleet Safety Award is given to the carrier in each of four mileage classes that demonstrates the best weighted combination of the lowest Department of Transportation recordable accident rate per million miles of vehicle operation, and lowest vehicle and driver out-of-service rate.

The Fleet Safety Improvement Award is a single award is given to the carrier that demonstrates the best three-year trend of improvement in its DOT recordable accident rate (from 2003 to 2005).

The Safety Initiative Award is a single award is given to a carrier recognizing its leadership and creativity in devising a single component of its safety program that has improved its overall safety risk management position.

The AMSA Fleet Safety Award Winners for 2005 include the Safety Initiative Award winner, Bekins Van Lines of Hillside, Ill.; and the Fleet Safety Improvement Award winner, Wheaton Van Lines of Indianapolis.

The Mileage Fleet Safety Awards are divided into one award for each of four mileage categories. Quartile groupings are adjustable from year to year based on the mileage of carriers entering the contest. This is done so that carriers will be competing with like-sized carriers, which generally have correspondingly-sized safety departments and safety-related resources.

The 2005 Mileage Fleet Safety Awards went to:

- Quartile One (more than 80 million miles) – Allied Van Lines, Westmont, Ill.
- Quartile Two (more than 20 million to 80 million miles) – Wheaton Van Lines, Indianapolis.
- Quartile Three (more than 5 million to 20 million miles) – New World Van Lines, Chicago.
- Quartile Four (under 5 million miles) – Interstate Worldwide Relocation, Springfield, Va.

Honoring a Distinguished Career

Each year, the Moving & Storage Institute selects an individual to honor for that person's outstanding service to the industry over the course of their career.

The AMSA Distinguished Service Award this year was presented to Doug Hill, who retired shortly after the convention from his long-held post as president of the California Moving and Storage Association.

He began his career in 1966 as a branch manager in sales with Bekins Moving and Storage in Seattle. Between 1971 and 1981, he worked for Smyth Van Lines, Bekins Van Lines and Lyon Moving & Storage Company, during which time he advanced from a packer to a loader, then to a sales representative and finally to vice president.

Since 1985 he has been the president of the California Moving and Storage Association, where he proved to be an effective and eloquent advocate for the industry, representing its interests in the state of California by appearing before many different state and federal regulatory agencies.

As CMSA president, he published a monthly industry publication, presented many educational seminars for members and managed a scholarship program that to date has awarded in excess of \$500,000 to college students. Also under his leadership, the California Moving and Storage Association has become a major sponsor of the Special Olympics.

As you have surmised, this year's Distinguished Service Award is being presented to Doug Hill.

Three weeks after the AMSA Convention, Hill officially retired as the CMSA president and planned to move with his wife Becky to Boquete, Panama, which is near the Costa Rican border. From their home base they will explore the world together, traveling and polishing their Spanish.