

Recognizing the Industry's Top Trainers

Finalists named for 2009 award

Good trainers are more than instructors. Among the dozens of nominations *Crane Hot Line* received for the 2009 Top Trainer award, these individuals were described as valuable assets to their organizations for their commitment to students, their real-world experience, and their ability to communicate technical subjects effectively. They were also called passionate, inspirational, dedicated, and caring.

The number of highly qualified nominations received this year made the selection

difficult for the *Crane Hot Line* staff. Nominees were evaluated for their use of innovative or hands-on instruction; whether they encouraged peer or corporate accountability on the job; if their training demonstrated evidence of success; and for their overall positive impact on the industry.

While the majority of nominees teach general crane and rigging courses, there were several that are specialists in tower cranes, rigging gear, signaling, or indicating devices, for example. Trainers are recog-

nized in two categories. Corporate trainers are those who work for crane rental companies, manufacturers, or contractors. Professional trainers are employed by full-time training organizations.

This year, a tie in the Corporate category required recognition of two people—Mike Riggs of I&I Sling/Slingmax and Mike Patten of Southwest Industrial Rigging. Earning top honors in the Professional category is Ronald Gray, a familiar name; he was recognized as an “Honorable Mention” in 2008. On behalf of our sponsors, these three Top Trainers will each receive a \$1,250 scholarship, which can be used by the winner to further their own knowledge or may be awarded in their name to a student of their choice. For a list of Top Trainer sponsors, see page 20.

TOP TRAINER – CORPORATE

Mike Riggs, manager of Knoxville, Tenn., branch I&I Sling Inc./Slingmax Rigging Solutions, Aston, Pa.

Nominated by: Scott Woodward, manager of Canton, Mass., branch

Mike Riggs is one of those generous individuals who freely shares his expertise to the benefit of others outside his company. Employed by I&I Sling/Slingmax since 1996, Riggs was instrumental in establishing the company’s “Prevention of Rigger Mortis” training program and most of the materials it uses today. He is also a skilled instructor, teaching courses for his employer as well as speaking at industry association meetings.

“Mike’s overall approach to training seems to be a simple one where he wants to instruct and educate first and foremost,” says Scott Woodward, who nominated Riggs. “He does not use the opportunity to sell the users rigging, but instead informs them of the how, what, where, and why of rigging. Often the training is a

Judge’s Comments:
Mike’s down-to-earth style of instruction allows him to talk with people on every level, which is critical when training a diverse range of people.

free service given to users to help better the industry as a whole,” explains Woodward.

The Prevention of Rigger Mortis course was once an 80-minute introductory video designed for riggers, safety personnel, engineers, and their supervisors. Now



teaching style, which are periodically emailed to Slingmax customers. The videos visually demonstrate key safety tips and reminders.

While the work Riggs has done for his employer is not to be discounted, his reach extends far beyond the walls of the training center in Knoxville, Tenn. He is currently president of the Association of Crane and Rigging Professionals, has written numerous articles for trade publications, including *Crane Hot Line*, and he recently published *The Complete Rigger’s Reference Handbook*.

In the acknowledgements of this book, Riggs’s own words provide insight into the man as a trainer. He says: “I would be negligent if I did not acknowledge the quality Ironworkers of Local 14 where I first began this journey, and the crane operator’s of Local 280, who willingly helped educate me about what is happening above the hook.” Likewise, he thanks Dennis St. Germain, CEO of I&I Sling, “whose brilliant mind and upbeat attitude has taught me to think practically, while still remaining outside the box, when resolving rigging problems that tend to hinder the everyday rigger.”