

# IT AIN'T A PERSONALITY CONTEST

by Steve Grimm

I'm happy to say that it finally stopped snowing, although by the time you read this it will most likely be snowing again. Despite my son's comments, I did manage to rake most of the yard this spring, and it did look better. Now my efforts are centered on the garden. The other day I went out to harvest what looked like a good crop of weeds, when I noticed that someone had planted tomatoes in my weeds! The nerve of some people.

We've been asked from time to time, "How do I get nominated for wastewater operator of the year?" I think it's time I shed some light on this subject. First let me make two things perfectly clear: I am not a crook! But seriously folks:

1. When I say "We", I am referring to Wastewater Trainer/Technician Mike Dill, Solid Waste Specialist Bob Messinger, and myself. We are the nominating committee. We decide, based on our own set of criteria, who is worthy of this honor.
2. It ain't a popularity contest.

Each month at our staff meeting, the Field Staff nominate an operator and system, both water and wastewater, that we feel is worthy of consideration for this honor. Just before our Technical Conference, the water guys and wastewater guys decide who will receive the respective award. I cannot speak for the water guys criteria. I'm a lumpy water guy, as Mike likes to say (I like my description better, but I can't print it here). We have our own criteria (I found my new favorite word) for deciding. We do not necessarily start each month looking for a candidate, it just happens. I'm going to tell you some of the things that make it happen.

Making permit doesn't automatically get you nominated. Let's face it, making permit usually isn't all that hard. It's more how you make permit that matters to us. Do you utilize process control? Use the microscope? Plot trends and use that information to identify and correct problems before they become problems? Or do you simply "cook the books"? How dare I suggest that! No one out there would do that! Well, it happens, sometimes unintentionally. But it does happen and we can tell.

How's your attitude? Do you like your job? Not the politics associated with the job, the job itself. Do you feel a sense of pride knowing you are doing the best you can to protect our environment? Do you exude that pride? Is YOUR plant clean, organized, and well kept? Someone notices. We notice.

Do you take an active role in the management of the plant, or do you let someone else decide what's best? Today, more than ever, operators need to be involved in the budget process. Only you really know what the plant needs. When considering upgrades, even minor ones, do you get involved? Why not? Oh, "**THEY**" didn't ask you? Then you need to ask them. Again and again, as long as it takes until "**THEY**" realize that you **NEED** to be involved.

So you see, there is more to it than just being a great guy. Ours is not a random decision. I would like to think that between Mike, Bob and myself, we have the experience and the knowledge to make good, ethical and informed nominations. This article doesn't even begin to explain all that goes into our decision making process. It does, however, give some insight into what we look for. There are many operators worthy of consideration for this award. The hardest part is choosing one.

I'm going back out to my garden to do some more weeding. Ya know something? A garden is just like a sewer plant. You don't get many visitors.