2006 Award Recipient

Robert Taylor

Bob Taylor was instrumental in helping generations of WPI students learn engineering. Revered by alumni, Bob is most well known for his guidance of student projects and student organizations but his contributions to the WPI community are far more extensive.

The facts are clear; Bob joined WPI as a mechanic but quickly took charge of the engine laboratory and seized an opportunity to support the five WPI entries in the 1970 Clean Air Car Race. In recent times, he is known for his suburb leadership of the Formula SAE race car projects and for his guidance of the Wireless Association. An amateur radio operator himself, NA1Q, he took responsibility for our campus amateur radio station W1YK. He was inducted into The SKULL in the class of 1988, was a Civil Defense Coordinator, an FCC Examiner, a member of the Emergency Management Committee, The Blue Knights of Worcester, the American Radio Relay League, and the Hubbardston Board of Health. His passions were motorcycling, snowmobiling and drag racing and his love was for his family.

Bob had tremendous ability to "put things together" as was noted by an interviewer on his initial visit to WPI as a young man just graduated from Boys Trade School. These abilities were especially well demonstrated by the 1970 Propane Gasser, a Clean Air Car, on which he was the chief mechanic and which won first place in its category. He not only oversaw construction but also served as chief mechanic during the race often making overnight repairs. All told, Bob's efforts resulted in three first places for WPI entries in that race from Cambridge to Pasadena. Combining a natural mechanical ability with uncanny resourcefulness and ingenuity and natural teaching talent, Bob's contributions continued uninterrupted during his years at WPI. He nurtured many Formula SAE teams with carefully chosen phrases such as "how can we do that" or "where can we get that." Bob was relentless in gaining resources for "the students." Not one bit shy, he was always quick to tell companies, alumni, and the WPI administration, just how they could help the race car projects.

Bob's teaching was not limited to undergraduate students. He taught graduate students as well helping with their experiments gently showing them how to become effective in getting things done. He worked with faculty involved in setting up course laboratories, in conducting sponsored research programs, and in conducting studies in support of expert witnessing. Always thoughtful, Bob chose his opportunities carefully and taught us all something about civility and the importance of human accomplishment.

Finally, Bob was a good friend. WPI is a better place because of him.