Acadian Ambulance rated ‘best in U.S.’

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James O. Page

The publisher and editor of the most prestigious magazine in the pre-hospital emergency medical care industry says Acadian Ambulance & Air Med Services, Inc. “may well be the best ambulance service in the nation.” James O. Page makes the statement in the October issue of The Journal of Emergency Medical Services (JEMS).

“...to fully appreciate our excitement over Mr. Page’s statement,” said Acadian Ambulance President Roland Dugas, “it is necessary to understand the tremendous respect Jim Page commands in the EMS field. He is recognized as a leading expert in emergency services. In addition to publishing and editing JEMS, he has developed and directed an EMS program serving 100 counties in North Carolina, and has managed a nationwide program of funding and technical assistance for communities seeking to improve EMS. He is a faculty member of the University of Maryland has published more books and 200 magazine articles in this field. Besides his work in EMS, he has a distinguished career in fire-fighting, having served as a battalion chief with the Los Angeles County Fire Department, fire chief of Monterey Park, California and Manager of Technical Services for the U.S. Fire Administration.

“...to be cited for excellence by a man of this caliber is something that would excite any EMS provider. For him to observe in his magazine that our company may be the best provider in the nation is an astonishing tribute to everyone in our organization. We are deeply honored, and very grateful to the communities we serve and to all our employees. If we are the best in the nation, it is because of them.

Page writes in the article that he is asked at least once a week ‘which is the best ambulance service in the country.’

He says he has never ventured an opinion before, because, everyone – politicians, economists, physicians, statisticians, paramedics, consultants, journalists and patients – “tend to measure ambulance service with different yardsticks.”

But, he says, “gut feelings, passionate reactions and decades of experience lead me to the conclusion that Acadian Ambulance Service may well be the best ambulance service in the United States.”

Page, who has been a strong advocate of public operation of emergency services, also notes that, as a private company, “Acadian achieved the distinction without local or state government bureaucracies telling them how to do it.” He notes in the article that Acadian Ambulance Service “is a rare mix of aggressive private enterprise and corporate social responsibility.”

Observing that Acadian has grown in two decades to a company with 147,000 members, 990 employees, 140 ambulances, and five aircraft in a service area encompassing 15,000 square miles, he says that “in the process, the company has introduced advanced life support and medical transportation in 23 parishes, including some very rural areas where poverty prevails.”

“Growth is essential to most enterprises,” Page continues, “but maintaining a culture of caring and excellence while growing rapidly is a distinguished achievement. While visiting Acadiana, I witnessed firsthand the products of a team of enthusiastic people, including a new program called Carpe Diem (Acadian’s nationally recognized concept for care of the elderly). It’s a training program that is intended to make sure that the company’s sifly uniforms and gleaming ambulances are matched with sensitivity for the special needs of non-emergency and geriatric patients.” (The magazine carries a special article on the Carpe Diem program.)

Page says he seldom uses his editorial column to spotlight a single EMS organization, but “Acadian presents many examples of how ambulance services - public and private - should look, act and operate.” He cites such examples as Acadian’s cooperative relationship with governmental agencies, its heavy re-investment of profits in improving its services, its superb training facility, and its employment of a full-time physician at the vice president level “to deal with medical issues and safeguard patient care quality.” He also commended Acadian for adoption of an ESOP Program, which gives ownership in the company to employees.

Acadian Ambulance Secretary-Treasurer Richard Zuschlag said he and the other owners, Dugas and Vice President Richard Sur,