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Wagman exec becomes honorary Mole

By Brent Burkey

Joint venture work has earned York County-based G.A. & F.C. Wagman Inc. a few awards in the past few months, though a recent accolade for its chief executive definitely has the oddest name.

Chairman and CEO Rich Wagman has become an honorary Mole through receiving the national heavy construction organization's nonmember award bestowed once annually.

"It sounds a lot better if you put it in context," said Wagman, who was honored at a more-than-1,900person gala Jan. 25 in New York City. The



Richard Wagman, chairman and CEO of York County -based G.A. & F.C. Wagman Inc., left, receives The Moles nonmember award Jan. 25 in New York from Robert Buckley, a Pennsylvania native and 2007 member award recipient. The prestigious heavy construction group bestows awards on a member and nonmember each year. Photo/Submitted

event's principal speaker was New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo; last year's principal speaker was New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The Moles was founded in 1937 by a group of men who built underground subways and tunnels in the New York City area, said Gerard J. Carty, executive director, 40-year member, previous member award winner and past president.

People in the industry know the name, but many others incredulously ask what The Moles is before they find out about its tunnel-digging origins, Carty said.

The Moles has grown over the years and is considered the most prestigious organization in the industry principally for people in the heavy construction field building highways, tunnels, piers, roads and bridges, he said.

Joint ventures are the lifeblood of the heavy construction industry, so The Moles serves as a fraternal organization to help its members meet, greet and form relationships with each other, Carty said.

Entering into a large joint venture is like marrying a person, he said. So it's important the suitors know each other, and many relationships get started with The Moles, Carty said.

Membership is pegged at around 538 members at a time with a few dozen more in the honorary category, including Wagman, he said. He and the others nonetheless enjoy full membership privileges, Carty said.

A person becomes a full member through a process that includes being nominated by a current member and receiving letters of recommendation from members, he said.

Selection is limited to the number of open positions, which would be vacated through a person dying, becoming an emeritus member or leaving the organization, Carty said.

The gatherings are what Wagman said he is looking forward to the most with his new status. It could be quite good for business, he said.

"The networking opportunities are outstanding," Wagman said.

Principal speakers at the group's galas have included Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon, and Herbert Hoover — a mining engineer by trade — won the nonmember award after he served as the nation's top executive, Carty said.

Each year, the group brings two honorary members into its fold: the principal speaker and the nonmember award recipient, he said.

A committee of about 80 members nominates people in the industry it feels are deserving of the nonmember award, Carty said. An alternating process of ballots sent to the full membership and subsequent meetings by the committee picks a winner, he said.

Wagman received the most recent nonmember award after he said he was backed by Gene Kelley of California-based Granite Construction Inc. G.A. & F.C. Wagman worked with the firm in a joint venture that also included Maryland-based Corman Construction Inc.

The resulting Intercounty Connector Contract A Project to build the western 7.2 miles of ICC/MD 200 in Maryland won the Northeast Region Best Project of 2011 award from trade publication Engineering News-Record.

Another G.A. & F.C. Wagman joint venture with Corman Construction and Maryland-based McLean Contracting Co. last year won accolades from the National Partnership for Highway Quality for reconstruction of the interstates 95 and 695 interchange.

G.A. & F.C. Wagman is a heavy civil contractor specializing in transportation infrastructure and is part of the family-owned Wagman Cos. Inc., which was founded in 1902.