

Cornerstone Award Winners Reflect Diverse Styles of Industry Leadership

BX of Central Ohio Celebrates 125th Anniversary



EXCHANGE

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JOHN W. GALBREATH HONORED AS BUILDERS EXCHANGE "MAN OF THE YEAR"



When builder-developer John W. Galbreath received the award in 1983, he received congratulatory letters from community and industry leaders, as well as from national figures including Gerald R. Ford, Jim McKay of ABC Sports, Norman Vincent Peale and Howard S. Turner, retired chairman of Turner Construction Co.

When the 63rd recipient of the annual BX Cornerstone Award is announced this spring, the winner will join a diverse list of past leaders. This unique group includes company founders, public officials, civic leaders and entrepreneurs in many fields of commercial construction: developers, architects and engineers, general and specialty contractors, material suppliers, bankers and lawyers.

Cornerstone Award winners reflect the wide range of backgrounds and personalities that make up the community of construction. But they have shared a common commitment – to improve the industry, the Builders Exchange and in the process, Central Ohio.

Originally called the "Man of the Year" award, the recognition was created by the Exchange board of directors in 1954. Its purpose was to thank an individual for "distinguished service rendered to the community and/or building industry," according to Marion Ross (Garwick & Ross, Inc.), the board member proposing the concept.

The recipient is selected by the board, from a list of candidates submitted by the BX membership, and nowadays evaluated by a Cornerstone Committee. Naming the first winner was a no-brainer, it seemed. Ralph H. Anderson, the president of Anderson Concrete Corp., had been instrumental in locating the property for the new Exchange headquarters at 1175 Dublin Road.

As a BX board member in 1946, Anderson began talks with his colleagues at American Aggregates Corp. who owned the land, part of the old Walcutt farm, just west of the Grandview Inn. He chaired the committee that moved the process from land purchase to building construction, and was board president in 1950 – the year that Exchange members moved into their long-awaited, permanent home.

Anderson was surprised with the Man of the Year Award at the January 1955 BX annual meeting in the Southern Hotel ballroom. He was presented with a thermos water bottle, goblets and tray, according to minutes of the event. The next year, winner J. Parker Garwick received a more official-looking memento: "a beautiful Atmos clock and shelf on which a suitable plaque was attached."



MAN OF THE YEAR (1955)

Left to right—John A. Kight, Ralph H. Anderson (Man of the Year) and Chester E. Edgar outgoing president.



Normally gregarious and outgoing, 1956 winner Mike Hausman (Hausman Steel Co.) was too overwhelmed to speak at his presentation, so he invited his wife to step into the “Man of Year” frame and do it for him.

Ball that year at the Athletic Club of Columbus. T.R. Walker, president of the Columbus Heating & Ventilating Co., was named Man of the Year, followed by “several hours of delightful dancing to Chuck Selby’s Band,” the Exchange newsletter reported.

The most enjoyable part of the tradition was its element of anticipation. The winner’s family members were hidden away until the Man of the Year was grandly revealed, when they suddenly joined him on stage to bask in the moment.

That is, until the year the winner was a no-show. In March 1978, Terry O’Shaughnessy was the brand-new BX executive director hearing a report on the Man of the Year dinner which had been held the month prior. Before O’Shaughnessy’s arrival - when the Exchange had no staff leader – a few details of planning

Award created memorable BX moments

The Man of the Year Award quickly became an established BX tradition. Planners built up the suspense of the mystery presentation in the 1950s and 60s. They erected a life-sized, wood “picture frame” for the stage, embellished with “Man of Year” on it, which the winner would step into when his name was announced.

Recipient Mike Hausman (Hausman Steel Co.) was so overcome by his selection that he asked his wife to respond for him. “Mama Hausman just stepped right up and gave a full acceptance speech,” said the late Tom C. Fitzpatrick (Elford, Inc.) many years later, recalling the 1957 banquet when he was first elected to the BX board.

Ten years later, 1967 winner Art Hess (Garwick & Ross, Inc.) wrote, “Only a few understand the thrill that goes with the surprise that occurs when two men grab your elbows and say, ‘you’re it!’ The knees shake, the feet won’t stay on the floor and I suppose some foolish things are said, but it is an experience I shall cherish always.”

In 1971, event planners decided to take the award presentation to a new level. “To dignify, glamorize and in general make our annual affair more interesting to our members and their ladies,” the Exchange held a President’s



Tom C. Fitzpatrick (Elford, Inc.), second from left, was named 1964 “Man of the Year.” He received the award from former BX board member Al Binder (City National Bank & Trust Co.) at the 1965 annual meeting, attended by his wife, and children (from left), Maureen, Mike and Tom.



Kurt Schmitt (Lincoln Construction, Inc.), left, was the final Cornerstone Award winner to be recognized at a formal dinner-dance in 1997. Among those attending the program to honor him was U.S. Representative Deborah Pryce, right, with whom Schmitt had worked on legislative issues affecting the industry.

apparently had been missed. Chief among them was notifying the winner's family, to ensure that he (and they) would attend the event highlighting him.

The tribute went on without its honoree, because architect Bob Myers (Holroyd & Myers) was on his family's annual winter ski trip. He was congratulated by a crowd of industry leaders, on a loudspeaker hooked up to a phone at the BX President's Ball in Columbus, celebrating at his awards banquet without him.

O'Shaughnessy, who died in 1994, immediately made his first executive decision. "This will never be a surprise again," he told new board member Tom J. Fitzpatrick (Elford, Inc.).

The award's dinner-dance format lasted until 1997, when the BX board decided to present the highly visible leadership tribute at the Exchange annual meeting. By then, it had a new name: The BX Cornerstone Award.

"Cornerstone" was more appropriate, more descriptive

As early as the 1970s, many BX members questioned the appropriateness of having a blatantly gender-specific name for its most prestigious award. But like all long-time traditions, the "Man of the Year" was a cherished part of the Builders Exchange heritage. So discussions continued, year after year, as BX boards looked for a creative and acceptable way to make a change.



Winner Lewis Smoot, Sr. (The Smoot Corp.), fourth from left, attended his awards banquet in 1988 with family members (from left): nephew, Mark Cain; wife, Genevieve; son, Lewis, Jr.; father (and 1979 "Man of the Year"), Sherman; mother, Elizabeth; son, Richard; sister, Nina Smoot Cain and son, Stephen.

That opportunity came as the Exchange approached its 100th anniversary in 1992. In late 1991, BX directors decided they would not select one individual to recognize during the centennial. Instead, they would commemorate the history of the Man of the Year Award by giving it a modern name – and by honoring all past recipients as “Cornerstone Award” winners for their contributions.

That year’s event was an unforgettable evening, connecting past, present and future industry leaders, attendees said. And it was a win-win solution. Instead of feeling left behind because there was a new award, every previous winner – or someone from their family or company – was invited to the dinner, where each of them received a new, personally inscribed Cornerstone Award.

It was 25 years after the Man of the Year was renamed the Cornerstone Award, when the first woman winner was selected. Cathy Blackford, who worked for the Builders Exchange from 1980 to 2016, the last 21 years as executive director. Receiving the recognition was especially meaningful, she said, because during her career she had the chance to meet and/or work with 49 of the past recipients.



During the BX 100th anniversary in 1992, the name was changed and all “Man of the Year” winners were honored as Cornerstone Award recipients from their respective years. Kneeling from left, John K. Brown, 1990; Robert H. Myers, 1977; Robert L. Nichols, 1988 and Lewis R. Smoot, Sr., 1987; and (standing from left) Ralph F. Setterlin, Jr., 1984; J.T. Edwards, Jr., 1974; Richard H. Bohl, Jr., 1981; Thomas C. Fitzpatrick, 1964; Richard L. Tully, 1985; Arthur W. Hess, 1967; W. Ray Mack, 1975; Paul C. Winters, 1976; Robert W. Setterlin, Jr., 1972; John W. Gardner, 1980; Richard F. Ziska, 1983 and Ralph W. Anderson, 1986.



The first woman to receive the Cornerstone Award was Cathy Blackford, who served as executive director of the Builders Exchange from 1995 to 2016.

“As I look at this diverse group of individuals, I can’t help but think of the projects and programs we worked on together – to meet the needs of our industry at different times,” she said at the 2016 annual meeting.

Each of the Cornerstone Award winners made an incredible impact on the Builders Exchange, Blackford said, adding, “Some of their accomplishments were well-known initiatives but just as often, their leadership was exercised behind the scenes.

“The reason the Builders Exchange has thrived for 125 years is that its members have wisely used our association to collaborate and build solutions to challenges faced by our construction community. I can’t wait to see what our future leaders do next.”