

HOLING THROUGH

NEWS BULLETIN OF **THE MOLES** • 11 W. 42ND STREET, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

An Organization of Tunnel and Heavy Construction Men

MARCH, 1946

Moles' Construction Awards Presented to O. W. Swenson and Miles I. Killmer

Ceremony Feb. 6 Attended by 700 Top Rank Construction Men—Thomas A. Scott Presides—Ted Prentis and Howard King Introduce Winners

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT in construction was rewarded at a ceremony in the grand ballroom of the Roosevelt Hotel, New York, Feb. 6, when The Moles' Awards for 1946, in the form of bronze plaques and engrossed scrolls, were presented to Oscar W. Swenson (non-member), 81-year-old pioneer builder of transcontinental railroads, and to Miles

highest honor a construction man can receive, a Moles' Award enjoys a distinction in the construction industry comparable to that of a Pulitzer Prize in the fields of literature, the drama and journalism.

Calling the meeting to order at the conclusion of a reception and dinner, Arthur A. Johnson, president of The Moles,

Warwick Nominated for Moles' President

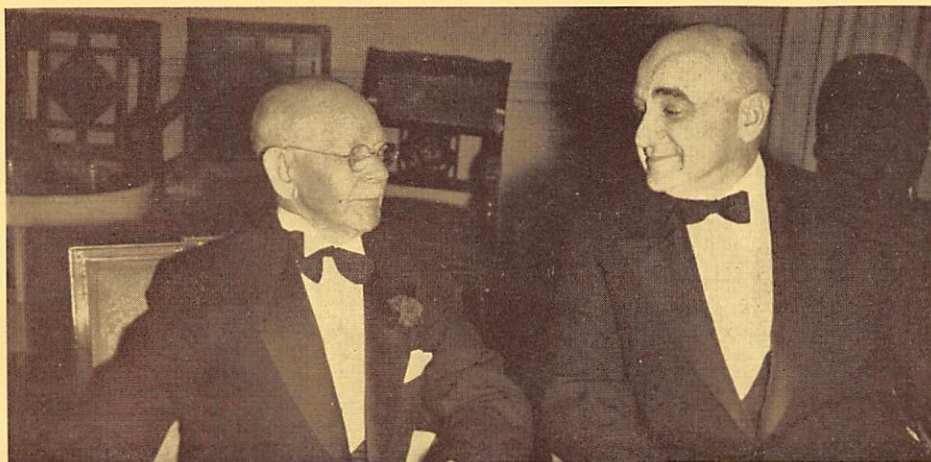
Spencer, Steers, Mahoney and Hanly Named for Other Offices

ALFRED N. WARWICK, of Eugene F. Warwick, Inc., has been nominated for president of The Moles for the year 1946-47. Now first vice-president of the organization, Al has been jointly responsible, with Treasurer Ralph Atwater, for most of the dinners, frolics and outings during the past two years. Election and installation of the new officers will take place at the annual business meeting in May.

Other names submitted by the Nominating Committee are: Charles B. Spencer (Spencer, White & Prentis), first vice-president; J. Rich Steers, Jr. (J. Rich Steers, Inc.), second vice-president; E. J. Mahoney (Mahoney-Clarke Co.), sergeant-at-arms; William W. Hanly, Jr. (Koppers Co.), secretary; and Ralph W. Atwater (Shultz Dredging Co.), treasurer.

Trustees nominated are: Ray N.

(Continued on page 3)



WINNERS OF MOLES' AWARDS for 1946 are OSCAR W. SWENSON (non-member), president of Foley Bros., Inc., and MILES I. KILLMER, vice-president of Mason & Hanger Co. They are here shown at reception in Roosevelt Hotel, New York, preceding award ceremony.

I. Killmer (member), a veteran in the field of compressed air tunneling. The dinner meeting was attended by 700 top-ranking construction men and engineers, including prominent figures from Army and Navy ranks as well as distinguished heads of government, state and city departments and leaders in private engineering practice.

The occasion marked the sixth consecutive year in which The Moles' Awards, one to a non-member and one to a member of the organization, have been conferred. Now generally regarded as the

said in part:

"This is not an ordinary gathering—it has great significance because this group includes the very cream of the American engineering profession and construction industry. The accomplishments of our profession and industry, frequently bordering on the fantastic during the recent war years, have become a byword not only throughout the length and breadth of our country but also in every nook and corner in the entire world. Is there any reason to suppose that these same engineers,

(Continued on page 2)

Hamilton O. Penn Dies at AED Convention

THE SUDDEN DEATH of Hamilton O. Penn, 49, president of the H. O. Penn Machinery Co., Inc., of New York, and Mole trustee, was a shock to the entire construction industry. He died Jan. 31 at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, where he was attending the annual convention of the Associated Equipment Distributors, of which he was retiring president. As Program Committee chairman of The Moles, he had been in charge of arrangements for the Award Dinner.

Born in Hartland, Wis., and graduated from the Milwaukee State Normal School, "Ham" Penn was a construction super-

(Continued on page 3)

Honor Guests at Award Dinner

HONOR GUESTS at the Feb. 6 Award Dinner included high-ranking Army and Navy officers and leading civilian engineers and construction men. Lending a military air to the dais were: Vice Admiral Ben Moreell, chief, Material Division, Navy Department, a Moles Award winner in 1943; Major General Leslie R. Groves, assistant Chief of Engineers and construction director on the atomic bomb project; Rear Admiral Frederic R. Harris, retired Bureau of Yards and Docks chief; and, representing the Corps of Engineers, Col. Clarence Renshaw, New York District Engineer; Col. C. L. Hall, Division Engineer, North Atlantic Division; and Col. Clarence E. Boesch, chief, Engineering Division, North Atlantic Division.

Representatives of New York City departments included: Deputy Mayor George E. Spargo, general manager, New York Tunnel Authority and Triborough Bridge Authority; John Splain, Commissioner of Public Works; Charles R. Hafenden, Commissioner of Marine and Aviation; Irving V. A. Huie, president, Board of Water Supply; Ralph Smillie, chief engineer, New York Tunnel Authority; Roger W. Armstrong, chief engineer, Board of Water Supply; and John C. Evans, chief engineer, Port of New York Authority.



DRESS REHEARSAL for honor guests is staged in reception room just before dinner. Correct order of seating at V-shaped table on dais in grand ballroom was assured by stringing wires carrying placards bearing names of individuals and having each man stand underneath his name and file into banquet hall in proper order.

Honor guests also included: Charles H. Sells, superintendent, New York State Department of Public Works; Max H. Foley, president, New York Building Congress; Charles E. Adams, chief engineer,

Long Island Railroad; Frank T. Crowe, constructor of Boulder and Shasta Dam, 1945 Award winner; and Edward T. Foley, Carl L. Swenson, and Grover H. Wilsey, all of Foley Bros.

Award Dinner

(Continued from page 1)

the same contractors and the same labor which produced such miracles for war cannot solve with equal success the construction problems for peace?"

Award Chairman Scott Presides

President Johnson then turned the gavel over to Capt. Thomas A. Scott, of Merritt-Chapman & Scott Corp., chairman of The Moles' Award Committee, who presided during the remainder of the ceremonies. He presented Edmund A. Prentis, Award winner in 1942 who introduced Oscar W. Swenson, president of Foley Bros., Inc., and winner of this year's non-member Award.

Prentis Introduces O. W. Swenson

The text of Edmund A. Prentis' address introducing Mr. Swenson follows:

"It is indeed a rare and unprecedented privilege for me, on your behalf, to present The Moles Award to a gentleman who has been making distinguished contributions to the construction industry for the extraordinary period of nearly 70 years. Just think of it! When he saw General Custer and the famous 7th Cavalry depart for the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, he was already at the threshold of his career. By the time he was 21, he was an important assistant to America's most famous empire builder, the late James J. Hill.

"Fifty-eight years ago, as an experienced superintendent, he entered the employ of Foley Brothers who have constructed more than enough railroads to encircle the world. Forty years ago his company had the staggering number of more than 40,000 men building some 3,000 miles of railroad, a contract figure that, even in these days of billions would take our breath away.

"Later, his company used the pioneer tunnel method for the first time in the New World on the Connaught Tunnel of the Canadian Pacific Railroad with record-shattering results. This method is now standard practice on important railroad work all over the world. Now Mr. Foley is president of his company, and only a few years ago he set the price of \$36,000,000 for the huge Shasta Dam which was the winning bid, and this mighty dam now stands at the service of mankind. His has been a long and useful career studded with distinguished achievements.

"This is Oscar Swenson, the constructor, one of the conquerors of the West. Now I want to say a few words about

Rudy J. Hoff Is Dead

RUDY J. HOFF, 51, vice-president and general manager of Johnson, Drake & Piper, Inc., died suddenly on Dec. 19 in the Long Island College Hospital, Brooklyn.



A native of Red Wing, Minn., he worked with his father, a pioneer Western contractor, until 1920 when he became associated with his present firm. During the past 25 years he supervised many important highway projects in Minnesota, Iowa, Florida, Pennsylvania and New York. His most important work includes the construction of Long Island's Sunrise Highway, Jones Beach Ocean Boulevard and other parkway projects.

During the war Mr. Hoff was in charge of the airbase runway construction in the Aleutian Islands and also of planning and procurement of construction machinery for his company's army contracts in Africa and the Middle East.

He became a member of The Moles last year. Surviving is his widow, Mrs. Elsie V. Hoff, and a brother, Joseph F. Hoff. He was buried at Red Wing, Minn., Dec. 27.

Oscar Swenson, the man, because he has long been an intimate friend of mine. A modest and unassuming gentleman, generous and kind, he is widely and affectionately known in his intimate circle as 'Dad'.

"In his eighty-second year he still plays 18 holes of golf and occasionally 36. He can outsmoke, outdrink, outwalk and outplay me—as he has just been doing in Florida for the past several weeks. But then I am at a disadvantage with him for I never tramped 500,000 miles, as he has, along railroads, through swamps and through the wilderness, even in winter-time, to Hudson's Bay, and thence westward to the far off Rockies. This training that he received in his railroad work has left him in perfect physical trim.

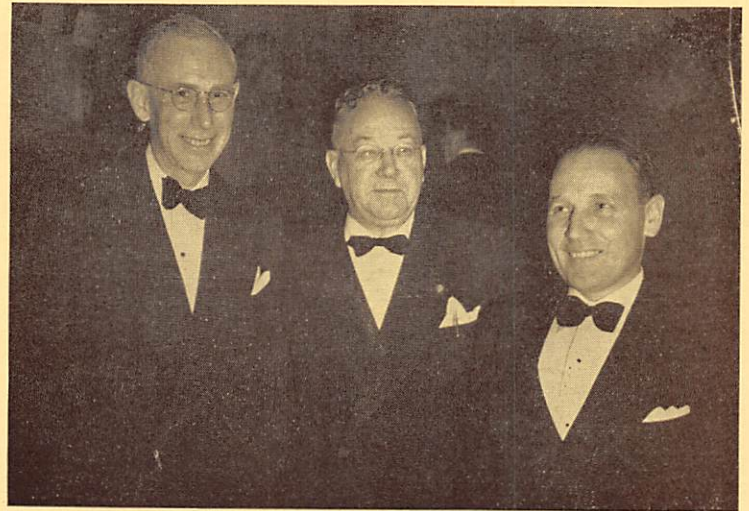
"Oscar William Swenson, on behalf of

(Continued on page 3)

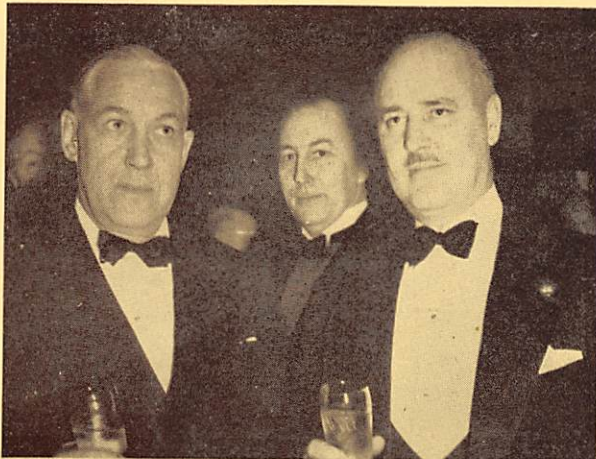
Shots of Moles' Award Dinner Feb. 6



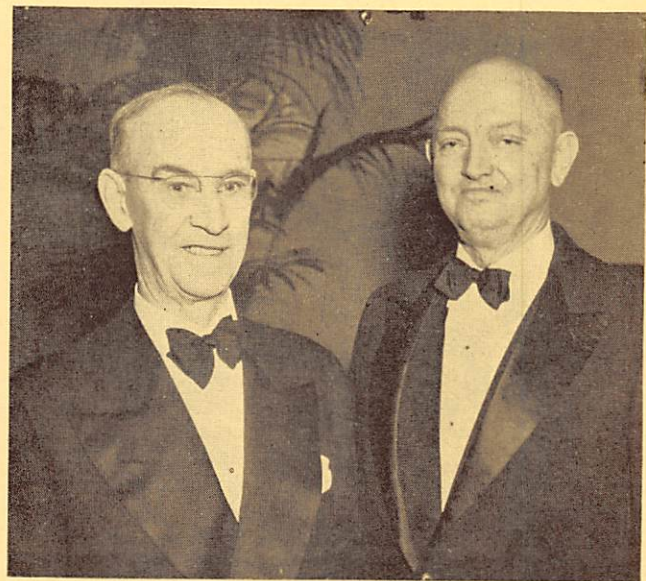
HOWARD L. KING (in center of group) was selected to introduce MILES I. KILLMER, member Award winner, who is approaching microphone to deliver acceptance speech. At extreme right is RALPH W. ATWATER, Moles treasurer.



TRIO OF VETERAN MOLES includes, left to right: TREASURER RALPH ATWATER, Past-President and founder member ALEX STAGG, and VICE-PRESIDENT AL. WARWICK, 1946 presidential nominee.



FOLEY ORGANIZATION was represented by E. W. FOLEY, who travelled from California to attend Award Dinner, and CARL L. SWENSON, son of non-member Award winner, O. W. SWENSON.



A PAIR OF CONSTRUCTION ACES are these two former Award winners, BILL McMENIMEN, of Raymond Concrete Pile Co., and FRANK CROWE, of Pacific Constructors, Inc., builder of Boulder and Shasta Dams.



ARMY AND NAVY FRATERNIZE as VICE ADMIRAL BEN MOREELL (left), now in charge of Navy Department procurement, chats with MAJOR GENERAL LESLIE R. GROVES, who told about the atomic bomb project which he directed.



U. S. ARMY ENGINEERS are represented by, left to right: COL. CLARENCE RENSHAW, North Atlantic Division Engineer; C. E. BOESCH, head engineer, North Atlantic Division; and COL. C. L. HALL, New York District Engineer.

Award Dinner

(Continued from page 3)

fried Line" of wilderness, rock and muskeg. Today, while you grapple with the physical problems more quickly, you are saddled with man-made burdens and responsibilities the old timers never dreamed of. In addition to being a constructor, you must be a banker, lawyer, tax expert, be conversant with thousands of union and government regulations, and be able to furnish at a moment's notice, 20 copies of anything.

"In looking back over the years, I recall the informality of awarding contracts. It was not unusual for us to receive verbal instructions to proceed with a contract—sometimes 500 miles of railroad through heavy country—and occasionally we completed 50 percent of the assignment before the formal documents were signed. In one case, we actually finished the construction of a railroad before we even saw the contract. Today, high-powered lawyers scan the provisions of documents that sometimes assume the proportions of a book, in order to determine one's potential liability."

Howard King Presents Killmer

Owing to the illness of Arthur J. Sackett, who had been scheduled to introduce Miles I. Killmer, vice-president and general manager of Mason & Hanger Co., Inc. and winner of The Moles' Member Award, Howard L. King, of the Mason & Hanger organization, was called upon as a pinch hitter. Mr. King's remarks follow:

"Miles I. Killmer is one of the earlier members of The Moles and his service and guidance helped to make this association. The association does not have a revered and ancient past to reflect upon. It was only a few years ago that the founders held their first meetings and set up an office in Alex Stagg's place in New Jersey. But since that time the annual Award has become, among construction men, such a mark of distinction as the Pulitzer Prize is among journalists, playwrights and novelists.

"The member Award has never gone to a better man than the one who is to receive it this year. Killmer has spent all of his working years on heavy construction projects and most of them on tunnel and caisson jobs. His first position when he came to New York from his native state of Pennsylvania was on the Pennsylvania Railroad tubes under the East River. It is noteworthy that many of the men prominent today in engineering construction in the east served their apprenticeship on that early difficult and hazardous undertaking.

"Killmer later worked on the Montague St. tunnels, served in the AEF in the first World War, was resident engineer on the Jersey side of the Holland Tunnel and was general manager on the Fulton St.

Message from London

A RADIOGRAM signed by Sir Albert Braithwaite was received by The Moles from London Feb. 7. It said: "The directors and staff of Sir Lindsay Parkinson & Co., Ltd., contractors, London, desire to send our hearty congratulations to Mr. Oscar Swenson on the honor that the contractors of America have conferred on him. His great construction record is in itself an incentive and an encouragement to those who follow. We hope he may have many happy years to enjoy this well-deserved honor."

and Rutgers St. East River tunnels.

"A list of contracts on which Killmer has played a minor or a major part, sometimes with the public owning authority, sometimes with the Mason & Hanger Co., would include a large part of the tunnel work that has been done around New York since 1906. It would include the Merriman Dam contract up to the time that the war stopped it and three large powder plants during World War II. He was in charge for the Mason & Hanger Co. when that company built the south tube and later the north tube of the Lincoln Tunnel. This work was comparable with the Holland Tunnel built in 1921 to 1927 but because of better planning and new methods, shield progress on the Lincoln Tunnel averaged 40 ft. per day as against 22 ft. per day on the earlier job.

"It gives me a special pleasure to make this presentation because I have been intimately associated with Killmer in construction since 1915—with certain intermissions. I read something in a letter that John Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1812, which, I believe, describes the way construction men feel toward Miles Killmer, men who are in The Moles and others, men who handle the blueprints and also those who work with their hands: "He who loves the workman and his work and does what he can to preserve and improve it shall be accepted of him.

"Miles I. Killmer, The Moles present their Award."

Killmer Tells of Tunneling

In accepting the member Award, Miles I. Killmer, described himself as "just a lowly sandhog who feels uncomfortable in being called upon to speak after the addresses of the intelligentia". Killmer expressed particular satisfaction in receiving the member Award because it represents a tribute to a construction man by his fellow-workers—men with whom he has worked and against whom, in the business of contracting, he has competed. While contractors bidding on the same job are keen competitors—keen enough, said Killmer, to suggest the possibility of cutting each other's throats—they can quickly forget their rivalries and can be

Moles' Dinner Covered by Press and Radio

PUBLICITY on The Moles' Award Dinner appeared in the New York Times, Herald-Tribune and Sun on the day following the ceremony. News and pictures of the Award winners were also published by a number of engineering and construction magazines. Mention of the dinner was also included in a news broadcast over Radio Station WJZ.

For the flashlight photographs of the Award Dinner, *Holing Through* is indebted to two Mole members, Harold W. Richardson, of *Construction Methods*, member of the Publicity Committee, and Hal W. Hunt, of *Engineering News-Record*, member of the Membership Committee.

counted upon to help one of their number if he gets into trouble.

Subaqueous tunneling, in which Killmer has spent the greater part of his life, develops a vocabulary among its practitioners, said the Award winner, that doesn't meet the oratorical requirements of a formal dinner. Killmer concluded by a tribute to the teamwork on the job which is responsible for American construction achievement.

General Groves Tells of Atom Bomb

After the Awards had been presented and accepted, Chairman Scott called upon one of the honor guests, Major Gen. Leslie R. Groves, U.S. Army, who told briefly of the atomic bomb project of which he was in charge for the War Department. Sometimes referred to as a "two-billion dollar calculated risk", the project was brought to successful completion in 3 years and represented one of the world's greatest scientific and engineering achievements. At the peak of activity, Gen. Groves revealed, the personnel employed on the project totaled 120,000.

Gen. Groves summed up succinctly the results of the work on the atomic bomb: "The war was going on, we dropped a couple of bombs and the war was over! We accomplished our mission."

Admiral Moreell Speaks

The meeting was concluded with an informal talk by Vice Admiral Ben Moreell, winner of the 1943 Moles Award for a non-member. Admiral Moreell spoke in a light vein of his new duties as a "procurer"—officially coordinator of procurement for the Navy Department, a job to which he was transferred from his former post as Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, where he directed the vast program of construction of bases in Pacific war theaters and supervised the far flung activities of the Seabees.