Pinnacle Award

Frank Wojehowski, president of Gypsum Specialty Contractors in St. Louis, Mo., won this year’s Pinnacle Award, AWCI’s most prestigious honor.

By the time he was 13 years old, he was the bookkeeper for the family’s trucking company, Sullivan Drage.

Then came World War II.

Seventy-five percent of the St. Louis manufacturing industry converted to defense production.

And 17-year-old Francis R. Wojehowski joined the Army and became a member of the 11th Airborne Division, 188th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Manned primarily with former glider troops, the 11th Airborne was nicknamed “The Angels.”

The pressure of war dictated accelerated training; many troops were simply sent up in an aircraft with little formal training on the ground. Wojehowski was one of them.

By 1944, he was a medic, and shipped out with the 11th to the South Pacific. First stop: New Guinea, for intensive training in jungle warfare.

Then in November, Frank’s unit boarded transports and landed at Leyte Beach, Philippines, to relieve the weary 24th and 37th Infantry Divisions.

The 11th fought the Japanese clear across the country, often in hand-to-hand combat and made a daring raid behind enemy lines to liberate 2,200 Allied POWs from the Los Banos Internment Camp.

Plans to invade the Japanese home Islands were cancelled when the Japanese surrendered in August 1945. Instead, the 11th was moved to Okinawa to escort General Douglas MacArthur into Japan and spearhead the occupation.

Shortly thereafter, Frank Wojehowski returned to St. Louis, for still another type of action.

He met Mary Lee on a blind date arranged by the girlfriend of a service buddy, and on June 5, 1948, Frank began a partnership that lasted more than 50 years.

Mary’s family introduced Frank to the plaster business, and the rest is history.

He started in the business as an apprentice plasterer, working his way through the trade. He then went to work for USG in the sales end of it. He then formed Gypsum Specialty about 30 years ago.

In addition to being a prominent member of AWCI, Wojehowski also has done volunteer work for the Asso-
ciated General Contractors of St. Louis. He served more than 12 years as a trustee on the AGC’s advancement funds, and he also served as a member of the Joint Apprenticeship Committee for the carpenters for a number of years representing the interiors contractors. Friends say he was most influential during negotiations and working with the different labor unions.

And, about 10 years ago, when AWCI was in search of signing the international unions that are an integral part of the wall and ceiling industry (the Carpenters, Painters, Plasterers and Laborers), Wojehowski was instrumental in getting those four diverse elements of the labor component to come to the table and agree to these international agreements that would benefit the AWCI members. And those four agreements are still in place to this day.
Excellence in Construction Safety Award

AWCI Industry Awards Committee Chairman Mark Nabity (left) presented the 2002 Excellence in Construction Safety Award to Matt Townsend (center) and Matt Taylor of OCP Contractors.

OCP Contractors of Holland, Ohio, AWCI members since 1971, received AWCI's Excellence in Construction Safety Award.

OCP spent more than $100,000 annually on the company's safety program, and estimates the company saves more than $220,000 annually as a result.

Of the 36 supervisors, foremen and managers employed by the company, all of them have completed 10 or 30 hours of OSHA's construction outreach program within the last three years, and all have attended a competent person training program.

OCP had 26 reportable accidents in the first year of its safety program, but that number dropped to 15 in 2001. The company's Experience Modification Rate was 0.57 in 2001. Also in 2001, the company had zero disabling injuries in 528,634 man-hours.

OCP's Three Tips for Managing a Successful Safety Program

1. A safety program must have company-wide support. Financial support and a "safety first" attitude are essential for a safety program to be successful. Sharing statistics and overall costs to the company will help promote the idea of "safety first."

2. Manage worker's compensation claims with top priority. Reviewing claims with outside consultants on a quarterly basis can avoid repeating mistakes and provide new insights on how to fix current problems. Having a system set up with selected doctors to handle injuries avoids confusion and eliminates false claims early. Mandatory drug screening after accidents also can help filter out claims. Rehabilitation after a positive drug test helps create a productive employee rather than simply passing him on to another company where he might continue unsafe behavior and possibly injure someone else in the field.

3. Require safety training for new hires and continued training on a regular basis. Employees come from a variety of backgrounds and have different levels of experience. It is important for them to know basic safety issues and a company's safety rules before starting employment. Continual safety meetings provide the opportunity to share new tips and ideas as well as address any issues or concerns that employees may have.
Excellence in Construction Quality

AWCI’s Excellence in Construction Quality Award has two categories, each of equal importance. The new categories are for AWCI member contractors whose contract for the project is less than $1 million, and the other is for the AWCI member contractors whose contract is more than $1 million.

Category: Less Than $1 Million

The winning project in the category where the contractor’s contract is less than $1 million is the Costanza Residence in Colorado.

This 42,331-square-foot home with 5,200 square feet of exterior ceilings is anything but average. This home tastefully combines round domes, oval domes, coved ceilings, coffered ceilings, beamed ceilings, light troughs, races, barrel ceilings and drywall frizes. The only flat ceilings are in the closets. The ceilings in the living areas were highly detailed. The long hallways featured barrel ceilings, and matching deep radius arches had to be meticulously crafted using high flex board. The numerous domes were wood framed and presented many challenges of their own.

The AWCI member contractor on this job was South Valley Drywall Inc. of Littleton, Colo.

Member manufacturers whose products were used on this project are National Gypsum Company (Charlotte, N.C.), Pabco Gypsum (Newark, Calif.) and USG (Chicago). The job’s supplier was Pacific Supply (Oakland, Calif.).

Category: More Than $1 Million

The winning project in the category where the contractor's contract was more than $1 million is...
contraction is less than $1 million is the Polaris Fashion Place Mall in Columbus, Ohio.

The Polaris Fashion Place mall is a new upscale 1.5-million square-foot regional mall.

The AWCI contractor performed all the light gauge metal framing, sheathing, insulation, interior drywall walls and ceilings, scaffolding, acoustic and clean-room ceilings, specialty Trimroc trim and toilet partitions.

The bidding/estimating phase brought the challenge of incomplete project documents, over-designed architectural features, inherent structural design problems and a project that was over budget. Through the AWCI contractor’s Value Engineering, all these obstacles were overcome.

The schedule phase of the project provided the unique challenge of building the only mall in the country to ever open with seven anchor stores in 388 calendar days from the completion of the foundations. Difficulties incurred such as trade stacking, activity condensing and the evolving design of the project were all successfully managed to complete the AWCI contractor’s portion of the project a full six weeks ahead of schedule.

The construction phase provided the most difficult challenges. Numerous intersecting radii creating the lease line bulkheads as well as the tenant lease line created the challenge of blending different radii to produce clean transitions. The numerous drywall layers creating "coffers" were simplified by the use of the AWCI contractor’s pre-formed routed drywall system (beadless drywall).

During the course of the project, the AWCI contractor's contract was increased by 30 percent through construction changes without any time extensions.

The award-winning AWCI member contractor who worked on this winning project is South Texas & Lone Star Drywall, Inc. of Columbus, Ohio.

The manufacturers involved are Canamould Extrusions Inc. (Birdsboro, Pa.), Dietrich Metal Framing (Pittsburgh), Georgia-Pacific Gypsum Corporation (Atlanta), Knauf Fiber Glass (Shelbyville, Ind.), Lafarge North America (Herndon, Va.), National Gypsum Company (Charlotte, N.C.), Plastglas (Omaha, Neb.), Specified Technologies (Somerville, N.J.) and USG (Chicago).

The AWCI member suppliers are L&W Supply Corporation (Chicago), Reitter Stucco, Inc. (Columbus, Ohio), Rew Materials (Ft. Myers, Fla.) and South Texas & Lone Star Drywall, Inc.
Honorable Mention

Sometimes a project comes so close to the winners in quality that the AWCI Industry Awards Committee feels it necessary to award an honorable mention. This year, that project is the Caesars Palace Façade Renovation. The job was so intricate and challenging that the members of the committee felt it deserved recognition.

After 35 years, Caesars Palace was showing its age. Its exterior "revolution" included re-facing three separate occupied hotel towers in order to produce the new signature Caesars design. The old façades were removed and replaced with 224 panels (manufactured by the AWCI contractor), 25 18-foot tall fluted columns with 8-foot gold-leaf Corinthian capitals and more than four miles of cast GFRC balustrade handrails. As the resort's crowning touch, the AWCI contractor manufactured and installed decorative pediments—the largest of which stands 39 feet tall by 82 feet wide, and bears a gold-leaf insignia of Caesar's head and wreath.

The project was completed in seven months, mostly under intense desert heat.

Challenges included issues related to onsite manufacturing, maintaining safety at heights up to 23 stories, project access and the weight of the materials being installed.

Even the time of year was a challenge. Because the hotel remained occupied during the complete renovation, crews could not begin work until 9 a.m. (the typical desert start time is 5 a.m.). As a result, crews worked in temperatures of up to 110 degrees.

The AWCI contractor member who finished the job was KHS&S Contractors of Reno, Nev.

The AWCI member manufacturer on the job was Dryvit Systems, Inc. (West Warwick, R.I.), and the supplier of the products was Calply, Inc. (Downey, Calif.).
Other Winners

Best Booth Awards

The Best Island Booth category was a new addition to the 2002 Best Booth awards for exhibitors. In this second annual awards presentation, two winners from last year started a winning streak by taking home the prize again this year.

The best 10' by 10' booth was awarded to MarinoWare Industries, Newark, N.J.

For the second year in a row, the team from Renegade Tool won the award for best multiple booth.

Dryvit Systems, Inc., of West Warwick, R.I., won in the new Best Island Booth category.

The winning streaks were started by Renegade Tool of Parsons, Kan., which won for best multiple booth, and by Cargotec, Inc., Swanton, Ohio, which won for best truck booth.

Also for the second year in a row, the team from Cargotec, Inc. won the award for best truck booth.
Foundation Golf Tournament Winners

This year's Foundation Golf Tournament took place March 14 at the Canyon Springs Golf Club, in San Antonio, Texas, during the AWCI annual convention.

With a score of 60 on the 72-par course, the winning foursome was Ed Charles of the Northwest Wall & Ceiling Contractors' Association, Inc., Doug Bair, Jim Taylor and Lesley McKissick, all of Pacific Construction Systems in Bellevue, Wash.

Jim Giesler of C.F. Supply, Inc. of Abilene, Texas, had the longest drive, and Rick Krupa of REW Materials of Riviera Beach, Fla., had the straightest drive. Closest to the pin was Jim Stelten of Fire Trak Corp. of Kimball, Minn.

Foundation Auto Raffle Winner

Michael Wilkin won the new Ford Mustang convertible in the auto raffle, and his wife, Sue, took the wheel.

Michael and Sue Wilkin of Wilkin Insulation Company, Mount Prospect, Ill., won the brand new Ford Mustang convertible in the Foundation Auto Raffle. Wilkin bought only one ticket (but obviously, it takes only one to win!) and was the fifth person to try the key in the ignition. The raffle raised more than $40,000 for the Foundation's education programs.

Foundation Scholarship Winner

The winner of this year's $10,000 scholarship is Paul Kurth of La Habra, Calif., a freshman at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Calif. He is the son of Craig Kurth of Church and Larsen, Inc., Irwindale, Calif. Kurth is studying architecture and will graduate in 2006.