



GEORGE A. FOX

1920–2001

Elected in 1988

“For contributions to the advancement of engineered heavy construction, and for services to higher education.”

BY RICHARD T. ANDERSON
SUBMITTED BY THE HOME SECRETARY

GEORGE A. FOX was an outstanding leader of the New York City construction industry and was respected and renowned throughout the United States. A former chairman and chief executive officer of Grow Tunneling Corporation, he headed many professional and civic organizations in New York before his death on May 17, 2001.

George Fox’s career began in 1940 upon his graduation from Cooper Union, from which he received B.C.E. and C.E. degrees. He was awarded an M.C.E. from Brooklyn Polytechnic in 1942. He also held a citation from Cooper Union for outstanding professional achievement, the equivalent of an honoree doctorate. He was a member of Tau Beta Pi, the National Honorary Engineering Society, and was a member and former trustee of the Moles, as well as a fellow and life member of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and a former member of the British Tunneling Society.

George Fox was proud of his membership in the National Academy of Engineering, among the highest professional distinctions given an engineer, which he was awarded for contributions to the advancement of engineered heavy construction. He also received the 1979 Moles Award for outstanding achievement in construction, the most prestigious national award in the U.S. construction industry. In 1980 he

received the Civil Engineer of the Year Award of the ASCE metropolitan section.

He was the first recipient of the Roebling Award of the ASCE, in recognition of outstanding contributions to construction in America.

For more than 50 years, George was active with the Grow Company in extensive tunneling work in New York, New Jersey, and elsewhere, specializing in heavy construction, shafts, and tunnels, notably those done using compressed air. He was progressively involved in the engineering, planning, design, cost estimating, and management aspects of construction of major public works projects involving billions of dollars and enormous public benefit.

Nonetheless, George was never satisfied with professional accomplishments and recognition alone. In 1980–1981 he was president of the General Contractors Association of New York City, and for many years he was chairman of the Tunnel Committee. He was deeply involved in industry-wide labor negotiations and in employer-employee relations, especially in connection with the Tunnel Workers Union, Local 147 Welfare Fund, and was chairman of the trustees of the Local 147 Retirement Fund for many years.

George became chairman of the New York Building Congress from 1982 to 1986 and was the driving force behind professionalizing the organization and hiring full-time executive staff. Most significantly, he guided efforts to expand the Building Congress's reach beyond networking into public policy advocacy and research. Furthermore, George chaired the organization's Council of Presidents for a number of years thereafter. He cared deeply about the industry as a whole and was a forceful advocate for industry-wide positions and activities. His efforts transformed the Building Congress into one of New York City's most influential membership organizations.

Earlier in his career, George was chairman of the Contract Administration Committee of the ASCE Construction Division and was a member of the Publications Committee. He served for two years on the Contracting Practices Subcommittee of

the National Academy of Engineering, which produced in 1974 the widely accepted report entitled *Better Contracting for Underground Construction*.

George Fox performed tunneling consulting work for engineers and contractors, both in the United States and abroad. He served on research review panels at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other institutions. He appeared before various ASCE groups and wrote articles for *Engineering News Record*, *Construction Methods*, and the *ASCE Journal*.

George Fox was the uncommon engineer whose interests extended well beyond construction. He was a humanist who combined his love of the arts and commitment to social justice in diverse community involvements. He served as chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. He also served on the Board of the New York City Partnership and was former chairman of the WNYC Foundation, which supported and administered the municipally owned and operated public radio and TV station. He was a member of the Board of Directors of Symphony Space and was chairman of its finance committee. He also served on the board of the Boys Choir of Harlem.

During his more than 50-year career, George Fox played lead roles in the planning, design, and management of 70 major public works projects valued in excess of \$61 billion. While millions of New York City residents have benefited from his projects, few ever saw Mr. Fox's work, which mainly consisted of elaborate underground tunneling. His crowning achievement was his engineering and construction work for New York City's third water tunnel—the largest capital construction project in the city's history and the largest tunneling project in North America. Widely hailed as a modern engineering marvel when the first stage was opened in 1998, construction of the 60-mile water tunnel some 600 feet below New York City began in 1970. Completion is expected in 2020.

In 1996, George told *The New York Times*, "The education of the public on all the needs of the City is deficient," referring to the enormous infrastructure requirements of New York. He

went on to say, “We have to feel we are on the edge of the cliff before we wake up to it,” reflecting on the need for a huge public works project like the third water tunnel.

George earned considerable praise as an educator and a civic leader. In addition to chairing the board of Cooper Union, he taught a course for engineering seniors that focused on the realities of being a civil engineer. In 1996, Cooper Union honored him with its first “Builder of the City Award” for lifetime contributions to the construction of New York City’s infrastructure.

For his public service, the Building Congress established, in 2005, the George A. Fox Public Service Award, which is bestowed annually on building industry professionals who perform exemplary charitable work. Recipients have included Frank J. Sciame of F. J. Sciame Construction Company; Robert E. Selsam of Boston Properties; Susan L. Hayes of Cauldwell Wingate Company, LLC; and Peter L. DiCapua of ATCO Properties.

George Fox was a man of enormous vision and integrity. He inspired all with his exceptional ability to bring together a diverse and often fragmented industry using his keen intellect and engaging persuasiveness. His personal warmth and humor played no small part in all his accomplishments. His legacy is an unsurpassed commitment to the construction field and to the City of New York.

George left his mark on New York everywhere—from the vast subterranean tunnel structure beneath the city to the education of our youth—and demonstrated the highest standards of public service. All who knew him remember a unique New Yorker who gave much more than he received.

He is survived by his wife, Cecily; two sons, Andy and Roger; two daughters, Alice and Laurie; and three grandchildren.

