

# Family still runs household mover

BY DOUG FUNKER  
STAFF WRITER

Paul A. Corrigan, president of Corrigan Moving Systems and a Franklin resident, understates the complexity of the family business with the simple description, "We're really packaging engineers."

The company, headquartered in Farmington Hills, was started by Paul's father, Frank, in 1929. Paul's sons David, a Saline resident, and Michael, Farmington Hills, play key roles in the company's success as vice presidents.

David and Paul both have served as president of the Michigan Movers and Warehousemen's Association. Both shared the association's mover of the year designation in 1994 for service to the industry.

Following are edited excerpts from a recent interview with the Corrigan.

**How wide-ranging is your business?**

Paul: Forty-some million (annually).

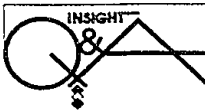
**David: Total revenue.**

Michael: Household goods is our mainstay.

Paul: Probably 80 percent.

David: Of that 80 percent, 70 percent is national accounts; a GM or Chrysler will move someone and the company will pay.

The other 30 percent, people pay for themselves or the company



will pay on a one-time basis.

Our niche is long-distance moving of household goods. Executives refer to us. We keep moving the same people again and again all over the country.

**What about assets?**

David: We own all the trailers and a vast majority of tractors.

Paul: At every location (10), we have a warehouse. I would say \$20 million to \$25 million in assets.

David: People who work for us give us great ideas. We latch on to them.

Paul: We probably have about 400 employees.

David: In summer, when business rises, we hire a lot of college students to help out.

Michael: Both on trucks and in the office.

**How competitive is your business with other movers and do-it-yourself rental companies?**

Michael: It's extremely competitive. With so many people (movers) in the market, they keep raising discounts so we make less money.



SHARON LEHMAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Paul: When you lose one big one, there are three smaller ones starting up. Competition is what keeps margins low. Our goal is to make 5 percent before taxes.

David: There's not room for error. If you don't put money back into it or make bad decisions, you don't rebound.

**How do you stand out?**

Paul: Operations. Good drivers. Good quality people, personable people to deal with customers.

David: I guess it's always little things that make a difference.

Fine furniture, for example, is covered with pads. Pads get dirty.

We bought a laundry facility to wash and clean our pads. It's in

our Dearborn facility. We didn't want to put a pad around fine furniture that had been wrapped around a lawnmower.

**What is your biggest challenge today?**

Michael: Keeping good road drivers here has been a recent problem. They work on a percentage basis and when we get squeezed, they get squeezed. You don't lose drivers to the competition. They get delivery jobs with other kinds of companies, get out of the business.

Paul: Two things I'm afraid of — fire in a warehouse and losing a national account. We lose national accounts today because

people out-discount us.

**How did Corrigan Moving Systems get started?**

Paul: My father was a lumberjack and when he heard about Ford paying \$5 a day, he took his wife to Dearborn (from Quebec) to work in the factory.

Working 40 hours a week wasn't enough for him. He got a truck and started delivering ice to houses. He got another truck and finally had to quit Ford because he was too busy delivering ice.

The Depression was then. People said, "Frank, I can't pay my rent. I have to move." He said, "This weekend I'll move you." He hired neighbors to help with mov-

ing. People paid with change. I had a little red wagon and took it to the bank full of change. It wasn't until after World War II that we started working for big corporations. I went to Ford and they called us up the next day. That's where the business has grown — long-distance moving for corporations. GM is our biggest client now.

David: All the big companies in the area — Kmart, Chrysler.

How did you finance your expansion?

Paul: At first, we just used cash, then we found out Manufacturers Bank would loan us money.

## BUSINESS DATEBOOK

**Datebook features upcoming events around the suburban business community. To list an event, write: Datebook, Building & Business, Observer & Economic Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48150. Our fax number is (313) 591-7279.**

### TUESDAY, APRIL 18

#### ENTREPRENEURS MEET

The Business Enterprise Development Center Entrepreneur's Club presents a program "The Language of Business-O's and Don't's of Becoming Successful" 8:30 a.m. in Long Lake Crossing Building, 1301 W. Long Lake Road, Suite 150, Troy. The club is open to people who currently own a business or are considering buying or starting a business. No charge for members, \$5 for non-members. To register, call (313) 952-5800.

#### APPRAISERS CONVENTION

American Society of Appraisers Detroit Chapter hosts Sheldon Ross discussing 20th century fine arts market, fakes and forgeries, as well as a history of this gallery 7 p.m. at the Troy Marriott, 200 W. Big Beaver, Troy. Cost, which includes dinner, is \$20 with reservations, \$23 for the door. To register, call Michael Kunschak at (313) 616-9166.

#### RECOVER PROFITS

The Retail Franchise Executives Group hosts a dinner program "Recover Lost Profits the High Tech Way" 6:30 p.m. at Laffay's Steak House, 24201 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. Speaker: Frank K. McHenry, senior vice president, audit administration, the Profit Recovery Group. Cost is \$25 for members, \$30 for non-members. Reservations due by April 11 to Jackie Goforth at (313) 396-0968.

#### NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY

Nicole Hill of Nicole's Revival Designer Resale Shop and Mary Ann Stinchfield, a freelance writer, host a free networking opportunity 7 p.m. at Nicole's Revival, 958 Newburgh, Westland. Participants should bring business cards and prepare a two-minute presentation on their businesses. For information, call Hill at (313) 729-1234.

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19

#### HIRING EMPLOYERS

Strive-West, a network of the national Association for Female Executives, presents a dinner program "Hiring Employees" 6 p.m. at the Roman Forum restaurant, 41001 Ford Road, Canton. Sweden Penn Boyd, president of Workforce Inc. First-time guests and members free, repeat guests \$10. Dinner cost is off menu. For information, call (313) 253-6800.

#### SCHEDULING SUCCESS

The Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan hosts a seminar "Scheduling for Success" 9 a.m. to noon at its offices, 30375 Northwestern Suite 100, Farmington Hills. Cost is \$20 for members, \$25 for non-members. To register, call (313) 737-4477.

#### MOTIVATION TECHNIQUES

Institute of Real Estate Management Michigan Chap-

ter No. 5 hosts Gary Mosler, University of Michigan football coach speaking on motivational techniques 8 a.m. at Weber's Inn, 3050 Jackson Road, Ann Arbor. Cost is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. To register, call Janet at (313) 747-2235.

#### DATA COLLECTION

The Data Processing Management Association Detroit Chapter hosts a program "An Evaluation of Current Trends in Client Server Data Collection" 8:30 p.m. at Ann's Restaurant, 714 S. Washington, Royal Oak. Cost is \$5 for members, \$8 for non-members. Dinner optional and individually priced. For reservations, call (313) 330-0684.

### THURSDAY, APRIL 20

#### COST MANAGEMENT

The Institute of Management Accountants Oakland County Chapter presents a dinner program "Strategic Cost Management Techniques" 6 p.m. at the Kingsley Inn, Woodward at Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Hills. Cost is \$20 for advanced registrations, \$22 at the door. Call David Asak at (313) 627-6760.

#### CURRENCY MANAGEMENT

The National Association of Purchasing Management Metro Detroit hosts a dinner program "Foreign Currency Management: How to Do It More Effectively" 6:30 p.m. at the Howl Sheraton Oaks. Cost is \$20. Reservations due by April 14 to (313) 773-3737.

### MONDAY, APRIL 24

#### SELF ESTEEM

PowerSource Institute presents a seminar "Corporate Self Esteem" to improve productivity and communication 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Southfield Holiday Inn, 26555 Telegraph. Cost is \$145. To register, call (313) 255-7177.

### TUESDAY, APRIL 25

#### TRADE ADVISING

Madonna University hosts a three-part trade adviser program 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. this date and May 2 and 9 on campus in Livonia. Cost is \$75 for one session, \$127.50 for two and \$191.25 for all three. For more specific information or to register, call (313) 591-5172.

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26

#### WORKPLACE MANAGEMENT

The law firm of MacDonald and Goren presents a seminar "Protecting Against Workplace Harassment: Claims" 9 a.m. to noon at the Northfield Hilton, 6500 Crooks, Troy. Cost is \$25 for the first participant from a company, \$15 per additional. To register, call (313) 645-5940.

### THURSDAY, APRIL 27

#### SECRETARIAL SKILLS

Oakland University's Division of Continuing Education hosts a videoconference, discussion, trade fair and luncheon on professional secretarial skills 8:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. on campus in Rochester. Cost is \$75. Registration required by April 21 to (313) 370-3120.

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