

# Eugene Mayer: sportsTURF'S

## 2000 Manager of the Year

by Michael San Filippo

**A**ny turf manager who knows Eugene Mayer will tell you that he's a man you want on your side, and not just because he's an auxiliary police officer.

Those who have worked alongside Mayer and have gotten to know him over the years agree that he is a special man in the sports turf industry, one who cares about the ground he works on, the athletes who play on it and the men and women who work alongside him. For his knowledge and compassion for the industry, Eugene Mayer has been selected by his peers as the *sportsTURF* Manager of the Year for 2000.

"There's no one else like him," says L. Murray Cook, president of Ballpark Services, LLC. "He has the ability to work with anyone and everyone. He's always available and willing to help and offer his assistance."

Cook, who worked alongside Mayer in improving the turf for the spring training facilities of the Braves and Expos in West Palm Beach, Fla., says he always got what he needed from Mayer. "They broke the mold with him," says Cook.

### Professional career

Mayer began his turf career with Scotts in 1961, after graduating from Ohio State University with a B.S. in agronomy and agricultural education. Working in research and development,

Mayer was involved in the patenting of 15 Kentucky bluegrass varieties and one St. Augustine grass variety.

His experience with various forms of turf was not limited to research labs or test plots. His knowledge of Scotts products allowed him to get down on the playing surfaces and work with groundskeepers during the 1968 Major League Baseball All-Star game at RFK Stadium, the 1975 World Series in Boston's Fenway Park and the 1993 Super Bowl at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif.

In 1988 he moved to the Professional Business Group as the technical trainer and support manager, where he was actively involved in training all professional sales people for the ProTurf Division of Scotts. His work took him to seminars throughout the United States, Mexico, Australia, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore.

Mayer has also overseen the development and maintenance of playing fields for such major sporting facilities as the Rose Bowl for the 1994 World Cup, Ohio Stadium at OSU and several Major League Baseball fields. He has consulted for the Milwaukee Brewers, Boston Red Sox and Kansas City Royals, among others.

In 1993, Mayer became a member of the STMA Board, serving as commercial vice president from 1993-95. He served as secretary for his final two years, 1996-97. In 1997 he was a featured speaker at the association's annual conference.

*Eugene Mayer, left, presents the Harry C. Gill Award for 1998 to John Souter at the 1999 STMA Awards Banquet. Mayer received the award in 1997.*





## Life after retirement

Mayer retired from Scotts in December of 1998, although he continues to work for the company as a consultant. Retirement for Mayer would constitute work for the rest of



Left to Right: Ruth Ann Mayer, George Toma and Eugene Mayer stand near home plate at the Kansas City Royals' spring training facility in Haines City, Fla.

us: in the past two years he has helped develop the turf for the new \$25 million stadium for Major League Soccer's Columbus Crew and worked with groundskeepers on the field for the Columbus Clippers, a minor league baseball team.

Jeff Limburg, head groundskeeper for the Clippers, worked with Mayer in converting the stadium from artificial to natural grass. "He's a very knowledgeable man, like a reference book," says Limburg. "I learned a lot from Eugene."

Darian Daily, head groundskeeper for the Crew, knew little about turf in the Midwest, coming from Tennessee. Mayer, says Daily, taught him everything he knows about bluegrass and sand-based fields.

"I pick his brain constantly," says Daily, who meets with Mayer once or twice a week to make sure everything is in order at the stadium. "He's so helpful, he never makes me feel like I asked a stupid question. He always takes the time to help me out."

George Toma, artificial/natural grass field consultant, has seen Mayer share his knowledge this way for over 30 years.

"I call him the quarterback," says Toma, "because he passes his knowledge on to so many young people, and the receivers of his advice and lessons have a leg up in getting started in the industry."

In addition to his consulting work, Mayer farms 300 acres and cares for 30 head of cattle with his father, Walter, and son, Tony, at the family farm where he was born and raised.

And for the past 38 years, Mayer has served as an auxiliary officer with full arrest authority for the Marysville Police Department, helping out during special community events such as parades and football games and in times of need.

## Recognition for a job well done

Mayer has often been recognized along the way for his contributions to his profession and his community. Most recently he received the 1998 Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Professional of the Year Award. The award is the foundation's highest honor, rewarding those who encourage the continued study and research in turfgrass sciences and effectively communicate research information throughout the industry.

At the 1998 STMA Conference in Orlando, Fla., the STMA recognized Mayer's contributions to the association and the industry as a whole with the Harry C. Gill Memorial Award for 1997. One of the four Founders Awards, the Gill Award honors STMA's groundskeeper of the year, recognizing long-term commitment to the association's goals and standards.

For his community work Mayer received an honorary American Farmer Degree at the 1981 National Future Farmers of America (FFA) convention for his outstanding service to youth, agriculture, education and the FFA. He was honored in 1984 with a Community Service Award from the Central District of Athletic Directors Association for his work at the Marysville, Ohio, football field.

In December 1996, in an article from the Journal-Tribune in Marysville, Ohio, Mayer described why he dedicates his life to helping others. "I think we all have a purpose on this earth," he said. "My philosophy is that you have to work together to help one another. The more we can help people, the better."



See page 44 for past winners and comments.

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