

B. Hayman Co., Inc.

Frontiersmen in turf

by Bruce F. Shank, executive editor



McMicken at headquarters in Santa Fe Springs, CA.

Pioneers have been running the B. Hayman Company since 1876. More than once the company's management has left comfortable businesses for more promising ones.

A true rags-to-riches Americana story unfolds as current chairman Ray McMicken describes the background of this major West Coast Jacobsen distributorship.

Sailing to a new frontier

Fourteen-year-old Benjamin Hayman, a blacksmith apprentice in Plymouth, England, left the Old World for the New Frontier in 1862.

Stories about the California Gold Rush and the cities it created encouraged him to sign on as shipsmith on a windjammer sailing to San Francisco. After establishing himself as a smithy in San Francisco, he moved 400 miles south to the growing Los Angeles area and became a wagon maker. Wagons and buggies became the stock and trade of the B. Hayman Carriage Repository in Los Angeles, CA, in 1888.



McMicken's energy is evidenced as he voices his opinions on mechanics training for more complex turf machinery.

Part of the farm revolution

As the Los Angeles area began to develop into the nation's largest agricultural supplier (in dollar volume), Hayman began concentrating on agricultural implements. His son Will and partner Thomas Osborn continued to

expand the farm equipment business after Benjamin's death in 1923.

After World War II, Signal Corps officer and instructor Ray McMicken found it difficult to find a radio engineer's job in Los Angeles. McMicken had married Eleanor Osborn six months before Pearl Harbor. Her father Thomas Osborn and partner Will Hayman recognized McMicken's drive. They invited him to work in the parts department until he could find a radio engineer's job.

McMicken quickly gave up thoughts of becoming a radio engineer and started learning the equipment distribution business, working his way into sales and then management.

Early recognition of turf

As a member of the Los Angeles agricultural committee in the early 50's, McMicken saw the value of land in Los Angeles County rise from \$100/acre to more than \$20,000/acre. He watched with interest the first golf courses springing up in the county and the swelling population which required more schools, parks and cemeteries. Although the agricultural potential of LA County had not peaked, McMicken told his in-laws it was time to change the business again.

"We have been in turf since its major inception in Southern California," McMicken boasts. B. Hayman was also quick to establish a branch in the Hawaiian Islands in 1960, as they started to boom.

The conversion was modest at first as B. Hayman took on the Worthington and Jacobsen mower lines. In 1968, B. Hayman left agriculture altogether, expanding with National, Olathe, Turfco, Sodmaster, Smithco, Par-Aide, Standard and Heckendorn. B. Hayman tied its future to turf.

"When we started selling turf equipment, a greens mower sold for \$385 and a turf tractor for under \$10,000," McMicken recalls. "Today a greens mower is more than \$2,000 and turf tractors go for \$25,000 to \$50,000. But, the machines are much more complex. Unfortunately, very few in the industry have prepared them-

"I often ask greens committee chairmen if they would let their golf course mechanic work on their \$35,000 Mercedes," McMicken jokes. "When they say 'Of course not', I explain the equipment the golf course mechanic maintains is often as expensive and as complex as their Mercedes." It's B. Hayman policy to always ask the superintendent if it's okay to talk to the greens chairman.

"Universities aren't set up to train our mechanics, neither are community colleges," says McMicken. B. Hayman is a major contributor and scholarship giver to Cal Poly, Pomona, and the University of California. "We think a good answer is a series of late afternoon classes, three times a week for a month. We will put on four of these clinics for our customers mechanics this year."

The company was one of the first to place its parts inventory on computer. The computer keeps track and automatically reorders more than 16,000

items valued at \$500,000. The system balances inventory with demand and speeds up shipping. The parts manager can check supplies while on the phone with a customer. Parts ordered by 2 p.m. will be delivered to the cus-

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—McMicken

tomers by noon the next day. Jacobsen recently instituted a factory computerized parts system linking distributors directly to its parts shipping and manufacturing operations.

B. Hayman depends heavily on

mobile service trucks and training mechanics to do their own repairs. "With an area as huge as Los Angeles, it's not sensible to bring in a piece of equipment to the distributor," McMicken advises.

Listening to customers

Golf courses are B. Hayman's primary customers, followed by municipalities, schools, and landscape maintenance contractors. The maintenance contractors in his area would like a manufacturer to make a professional grade reel mower with 30- to 40-inch swath. "You have to realize it's almost impossible for a large national manufacturer to make products for a limited region," McMicken defends. "The big three started as manufacturers of golf course equipment, but they who are beginning to recognize other potential markets for equipment."

The golf course superintendents in his area would like to see a workable certification program to protect the reputation of skilled superintendents and to recognize the growing complexity and training needed to be a superintendent today. "USGA, PGA, and NGF should get behind GCSAA's certification program to make it a job requirement," McMicken urges.

The next frontier

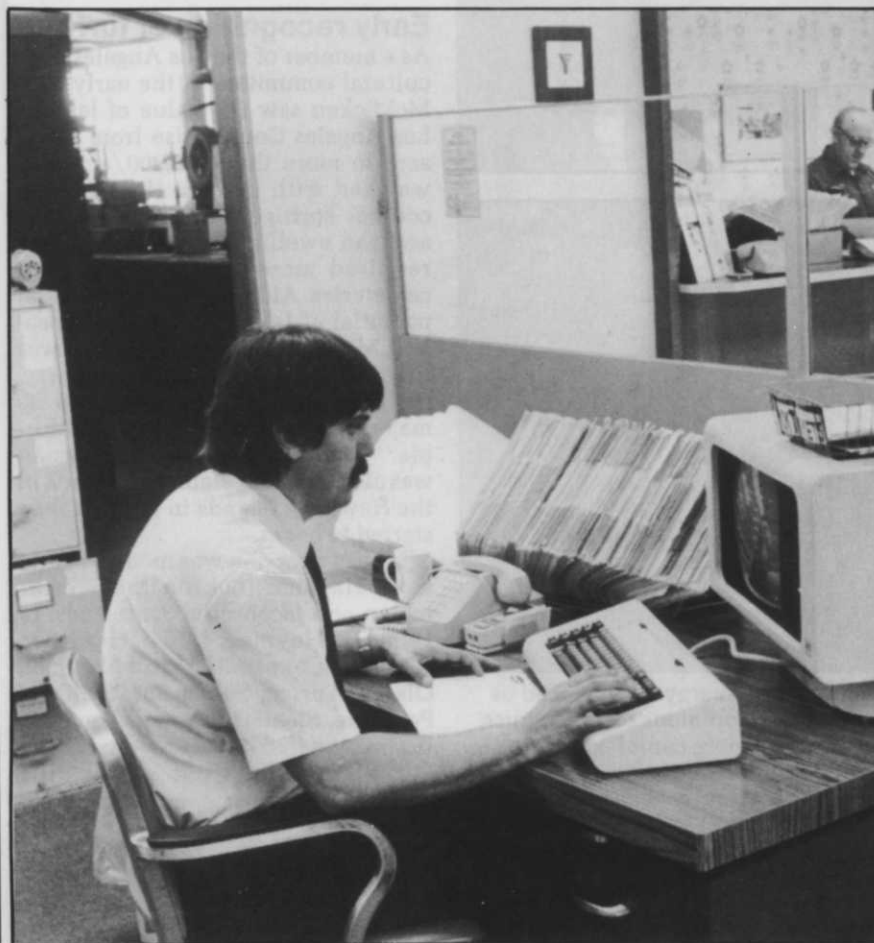
McMicken admits it hasn't always been easy. "Every Jacobsen distributor has gone through at least one hellish period in the last 15 years. Let's just say we were relieved in 1978 when Textron purchased Jacobsen and allowed Jacobsen management to rethink distributor relations. Today, the greatest asset any equipment manufacturer has is a strong, dedicated distributor organization."

"To understand Jacobsen," McMicken explains, "you really have to understand Royal Little, the founder of Textron." His successes with Homelite, E-Z-Go, Bell Helicopters, and Jacobsen are based upon giving division managers authority to run their own show, compete against other division managers, and be well compensated by performance bonuses." *Fortune* magazine has published an in-depth profile of Little.

McMicken, after being president for 19 years, passed the title in June to Robert Henshaw, vice president and former Jacobsen manager. McMicken will serve as board chairman.

Henshaw sees the next frontier for B. Hayman to be landscape and people mover equipment.

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Parts orders are processed instantly by the customer service representative into the computer system which tracks more than \$500,000 in parts.