

## One locker remains empty

“D

*o we have eight guys?”*

That’s a question Bob asked Tuesday and Thursday noons as the guys stashed their white shirts and ties in the lockers here at work and donned gym shorts and tee shirts for an hour of pickup basketball. You need eight

guys to play four-on-four basketball at the Chapel gymnasium down the street. This wasn’t above-the-rim, slam-dunk hoops, but it had its spirited moments and Bob Earley supplied a few of them.

Some of the guys wondered among themselves if Earley wasn’t jeopardizing his career. He was, after all, vice president of a publishing company with sales exceeding \$200 million at the time. Playing hoops with the troops over lunch isn’t exactly boardroom stuff. But he was what he was. Basketball, touch football, business — they were all games that he participated in with great passion.

He was, in fact, a person of many passions. His family. Jazz. Sports. The Green Industry. But, of course, he loved and nurtured his family most.

On Dec. 6, 1999, after an illness of several weeks, Robert “Bob” Earley died. He was 49. Many of us learned of his illness at the Green Industry Expo in Baltimore in mid-November. The news shocked long-time industry friends at the show. We all knew him as a robust man and a man of great energy.

Here at Advanstar Communications, news of his death struck particularly hard. Earley was a Cleveland. He started as an editor here at our company shortly after graduating from Northwestern University and was a driving force, along with a handful of far-sighted lawn care entrepreneurs, in establishing the Professional Lawn Care Association of America. Ironically, news of his illness reached PLCAA the very night it was celebrating its 20th anniversary.

As editor of *Lawn Care Industry* magazine, he was PLCAA’s biggest supporter. He reported on lawn care’s significance and growth in those early years. He was the heart and soul of LCI which was later incorporated into *Landscape Management*.



Robert “Bob” Earley as editor of *Lawn Care Industry*

Earley gradually assumed bigger tasks and more responsibility, eventually managing many magazines. But he always remained “Bob” to everyone at Advanstar, even after he moved west.

The past several years he guided the fortunes of competing Green Industry magazines but there was never a suggestion of bitterness or ill will. He stayed in close contact with friends here, competitors or not.

The Green Industry lost a friend and accomplished journalist and publisher. His family lost a wonderful husband and father. The guys here at Advanstar lost a great eighth man.

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