



One Meating Place Elizabethtown, PA 17022
Phone: (717) 367-1168 Fax: (717) 367-9096
Email: aamp@aamp.com Website: www.aamp.com

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2009 AAMP OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

The Outstanding Service Award is an honor to be bestowed on affiliated associations, officers, secretaries or leaders by AAMP and recognizes noteworthy state, regional, or provincial associations or remarkable leaders.

The 2009 AAMP Outstanding Service Award acknowledges an individual that has contributed to the meat industry in a variety of ways for many years. This year's recipient is Merlyn Eickman.

Merlyn has been involved in the meat industry since he was old enough to take the train from Seward, Illinois, to Rockford, Illinois, to work in a packing house. He later purchased the Pecatonía Locker and moved it to Seward, Illinois, where the plant, Eickman's Processing Co., still remains a thriving meat processing plant at the present time.

In 1966, he was elected the President of the Illinois Association of Meat Processors (IAMP). In 1997, Merlyn began the role as Treasurer of IAMP when the former Treasurer passed away. Merlyn was thrown into sorting the financial documents, managing accounts, and establishing the Association's new financial system. When IAMP fell upon rough times financially, Merlyn was the one who "passed the hat" to make sure the bills were paid and that IAMP would be able to build to a strong organization one day. Still today, it is not uncommon to discuss the days of "passing the hat" as a reminder to make good, sound, financial business decisions regarding IAMP's financial position.

Not only does Merlyn serve as the IAMP Treasurer, but he also serves as a source of sound advice for new board members and even new staff members. He attends all board meetings and IAMP activities, always willing to provide a helping hand. Merlyn continues to serve as a product show judge at the IAMP convention, as well as the Wisconsin, Minnesota and AAMP conventions whenever possible. Merlyn was invaluable when IAMP went through their Executive Secretary transition in 2004-2005. Furthermore, he is always there to assist whenever needed, especially at the IAMP registration desk each year during the convention.

Currently, Merlyn still attends many state conventions as well as the AAMP convention yearly. He has always been very active in AAMP through the years and provided leadership as AAMP's President during the 1980-1981 term. He was also awarded AAMP's most prestigious award, the Achievement Award, in 1989, and was inducted into the Cured Meats Hall of Fame in 1993.

Merlyn still comes to work in the afternoons at the family-owned plant as needed. In Merlyn's spare time, if that really exists, he serves on the Illinois Board of Livestock Commissioners, is the President of Pecatonía Fire Board of Trustees, is a Charter Member of the Pecatonía Rotary, and serves as President of the 12 Mile Grove Cemetery Association.

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Merlyn has passed his knowledge of the meat industry on to his son, grandson, and anyone else whose would care to listen and learn. Additionally he has also passed his keen business sense and sound decision-making on to generations of IAMP board members. Merlyn's dedication, enthusiasm, thoughtfulness and contributions to the meat industry helps IAMP be a strong and viable association today.

For his dedication and contributions over the years to the meat industry, IAMP, and AAMP, we are privileged today to present the 2009 AAMP Outstanding Service Award to Merlyn Eickman of Seward, Illinois.