



Robert H. Bailey receives the Robert C. Austin Award for Distinguished Service to the Community and George Mays the J.W. Massengill Award for Distinguished Service to Agriculture at the 27th annual Farm-City Banquet. From left are retired UT Extension Director Steve Hale, Bailey, Mays, Young Farmers & Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture Award-winners Jimmy and Lydia McAlister, and Agribusiness Committee Chariman Ronnie Sartain.

Distinguished Service Awarded At Farm-City Banquet *Brad Hicks, Staff Writer*

The careers of both men honored at Thursday evening's Farm-City Banquet may have taken them out of the area, but neither forgot his Greene County roots.

Robert H. Bailey received the Robert C. Austin Award for Distinguished Service to the Community, and George Mays was the recipient of the J.W. Massengill Award for Distinguished Service to Agriculture at the 27th annual banquet held at the Clyde Austin 4-H Center.

ROBERT H. BAILEY

Bailey is a native of the Baileyton area. He graduated from Tusculum College in 1946, the same institution that would honor him with an honorary doctorate in 1984.

After completing law school, Bailey worked as an attorney in Kingsport. Following his retirement, Bailey opened a law office in the Baileyton area to do community work.

Among his extensive community service activities, Bailey serves in the Baileyton Ruritan Club. He has served as the Ruritan zone governor, the organization's national president, and is a Ruritan Forever. He also served on the board of directors for the Sneedville-based WSJK TV from 1983-2002.

Bailey is the former president of the Greene County Heritage Trust and remains active in the Early American Christmas Dinner.

Bailey was also instrumental in the formation of the Baileyton Community Scholarship, which is awarded to students of North Greene High School. He has also helped with the Baileyton Community Chest and helped bring a medical clinic to the town.

He is a former member of the Tusculum College Board of Trustees and is a Life Trustee of the College. Bailey is a member of the First Church of God in Greeneville, where he serves on the church's board of trustees, its board of elders and is a Sunday school teacher. He was also instrumental in the creation of the Locust Springs Christian Retreat Center, which is located on more than 160 acres of his Baileyton farm.

"I'm very honored to be considered for it," Bailey said of the award following Thursday's banquet. "I knew Robert Austin as I was a teenager, so I was even more pleased to receive an award that comes from him and his background."

GEORGE MAYS

Like Bailey, Mays is a Greene County native. He graduated from Greeneville High School and holds a degree in agriculture from the University of Tennessee.

Mays started his career outside of the county, first working as an assistant Extension agent in Morgan County doing 4-H work. After this, he continued his career at the University of Tennessee. There, he worked in the Meat Sciences department and then the university's communications department, where he worked until his retirement a few years ago.

At the University of Tennessee, Mays was involved in promoting the school's Institute of Agriculture UT Extension through print and video media.

After his retirement, Mays returned to Greene County where, as retired UT Extension Director Steve Hale put it, he has "been involved in just about everything agricultural that the agribusiness committee does."

Aside from maintaining an interest in his family's farm, Mays served on the Steering Committee for the Southeastern Forage and Grassland Expo of 1987 and oversaw publicity coverage of that expo. Mays was a committee member for the 2004 expo.

Mays is a member of the Agribusiness Council of the Greene County Partnership. He is involved in the Kids Day at the Farm event, June Dairy Day and Beef Day, and he is active with the Institute of Agriculture Retirees.

Following the banquet, Mays said the award came as a surprise to him, adding that while he has worked in a variety of fields, he has always enjoyed his work in agriculture.

"It was a real pleasure to receive it," Mays said of the award. "I have known the people that have received the award, and I had no idea, I guess, that it was coming or anything like that. It's a real pleasure to join that elite group. I try to help as much as I can with the agricultural things here in the county."

DOUG ELLIOTT

The banquet's keynote speaker, Doug Elliott, is a man who wears many hats.

Elliott, who is from western North Carolina, is a naturalist, storyteller and back-country guide. And, as those who were in attendance Thursday found out, he plays a mean harmonica.

He has performed and presented programs nationally and internationally. Elliott has authored several books and a number of magazine articles, has recorded numerous albums of stories and songs, and has appeared on PBS-TV.

Elliott encouraged Thursday's audience to join him in renditions of Tennessee Ernie Ford's "Blackberry Boogie," a ditty about catfish and other critters, and a tune called "Strawberry Pickin'."

Along with the songs, Elliott also shared stories that many attendees could likely relate to, such as how clever crows find sweet kernels of young corn plants and the Native American origin story of strawberries.