

MAREK MAYER



Marek Mayer founded the Andrew Lees Trust in 1995 together with Mary Taylor (a colleague of Andrew from Friends of the Earth), Christine Orengo (Andrew's partner), the Lees family and Friends of the Earth who administered it for the first year.

Marek helped to shape the Trust's vision and was also an important benefactor of the Trust's activities. He encouraged the staff at ENDS to adopt ALT as their preferred charity. In 2007 the Trust honoured his outstanding contribution by dedicating its tree nursery in southern Madagascar to his memory.

Listed in the top 100 green campaigners of all time by the UK's Environment Agency, Marek edited the Environmental Data Services (ENDS) report for over twenty years and was widely regarded as Britain's best informed environmental journalist.

MAREK MAYER 1952 – 2005

by Nigel Haigh, Thursday July 28, 2005

Outstanding environmental journalist

[The Guardian](#)

Marek Mayer, who has died of kidney cancer aged 52, was widely regarded as Britain's best informed environmental journalist. The monthly journal *Ends Report*, which he edited for more than 20 years, has been influential far beyond the business community for which it was originally designed: by the time the Society of Chemical Industry awarded him its environmental medal for 1999, it could point to "outstanding and sustained contributions to the analysis and dissemination of environmental policy and legislation".

Mayer was one of several writers to join *Ends* (Environmental Data Services Ltd) in 1979, shortly after the report started publication. The founders, Max Nicholson and David Layton, had seen the need for business and industry to have access to reliable information on environmental developments. The early 1970s had seen the environment become a major subject for governmental attention, and some parts of the business community were beginning to respond, so potentially there was a market.

However, the birth of *Ends* coincided with a deteriorating economic climate, and subscriptions remained stubbornly below expectations. In 1981, rather than closing down the journal, the owners accepted a proposal by Mayer and his fellow writer Georgina McAughtry. The two became business partners and took a small shareholding; Mayer became editor; the staff was reduced; and McAughtry modernised the production process. This necessitated Mayer learning to type, with the result that for many years he conducted most of the research and wrote most of the copy himself, working long hours into the night. For some years the venture remained precarious, so the two partners resolved that if subscriptions fell below 400, they would close the journal down. One month the figure touched 398, but they gambled on another month, and from then on,

subscriptions only ever went up. In 1987 they were able to take on another writer, and by 1992 there was a staff of eight. In 1996, by which time Mayer and McAughtry had bought out the other shareholders, the staff numbered 16, and in 2004, when the journal was sold to Haymarket Press, there were 35 of them. Having been born poor, Mayer ended prosperous, though the successful businessman is not how anyone will ever think of him. Nor was he a natural manager, and the growth of the company had its own problems.

Mayer was born in London, the son of Polish combatants in the Warsaw Rising of 1944, who had arrived from Italy in 1946. The closeknit family included, on his father's side, a great grandmother, grandmother and his grandfather, General Stanislaw Mayer. A veteran of the first world war, in the second he was a German prisoner of war before eventually joining the Allied Second Corps in Italy, where he became chief of staff of Polish artillery. Marek was intensely proud of his origins, and although he came to know how Britain worked supremely well, he always felt himself to be something of an outsider, and always Polish. As a child living next to the railway lines at Clapham, he became fascinated by trains, and this led him as a teenager to travel alone all over England, and to come to love its countryside. He remained shy and very private: long solitary walks were throughout his life a principal form of relaxation. It was thus natural that after school he chose environmental studies as his subject at Wye College, based in Kent, but part of the University of London. Obsessed with literature as well, he followed this with an MSc at Manchester, involving a thesis on HG Wells. Mayer never wrote about a subject until he felt he understood it completely, so he not only read all the relevant documents but would talk on the telephone, often at great length, to all affected parties. His contact list was enormous, and his contacts talked. By his accuracy and fairness, he won the trust of industrialists, regulators, government officials and environmental groups, though there were plenty of conflicts. But it was the quality of the analysis that particularly marked his journalism. The result was that Ends became essential reading for anyone professionally involved in the environment, both in Britain and, because of its coverage of the EU, outside it too. Many an environmental story in a national newspaper began in Ends. More surprisingly, many an academic article or book includes citations to Ends; it has enriched environmental discourse in a way the founders could not have imagined.

Mayer lived with the novelist Sue Gee in north London for 27 years, and they married in November 2003. In 1999, they bought a cottage in the Welsh borders, where Mayer developed a passion for vegetable gardening. He walked and ran in the hills until prevented by the onset of his illness - a subject on which he became an expert. He is survived by his wife and son Jamie.

Marek Jerzy Tadeusz Mayer, environmental journalist, born August 5 1952; died July 23, 2005

Copyright Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005