

Otto Jangl

The Lion Of The Green Space Industry 1924–2008

Introduction.

Otto was a [pioneer](#) and a [hero](#) of the Canadian turfgrass maintenance industry. For [over five decades](#), from 1956 to 2008, Otto dedicated a lifetime of service to the growth of the industry and contributed much to the turfgrass world.



The early years.

On December 19th, 1924, Otto was born in what is now known as the [« Czech Republic »](#). He was raised on a farm, which is where he first learned about growing plants. Otto entered the Charles University in Prague, and graduated in 1947 with a Masters Degree in Agronomy. The following year, in 1948, Otto was forced to escape to Germany because of civil unrest and political persecution. He eventually immigrated to Canada in 1950, and began work as a farmer just south of Montreal.

Starting business in Quebec.

By 1953, Otto rented his own farm, and soon became heavily involved in the production and cleaning of agricultural seeds. By 1956, Otto continued his work in the seed business at [« J. A. Pilar Seed Export & Import »](#) of Montreal, where he was responsible for grass and forage seeds. Several years later, he created the distribution for the now defunct [« Jack Vincelli Inc. »](#).

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The Great Business Triumph.

When Otto began his involvement in the « [Golf Course Industry](#) », there were only one-hundred golf clubs in the Province of Quebec, and barely six-hundred-and-fifty across Canada. The « [Canadian Golf Superintendents Association](#) » (C.G.S.A.) had not yet been created.

In 1966, Otto founded « [O.J. Company](#) », a family business that was very small at first, but eventually grew to become the major distributor of products for the « [Green Space Industry](#) » in Quebec and Eastern Ontario. And throughout its four-decade history, Otto's company outlived all of its competitors.



The name « [O.J.](#) » was chosen by Otto because he shared the same initials with a very famous and highly-respected U.S. consultant by the name of [O.J. Noer](#) (his full name was [Oyvind Juul Noer](#)) of the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission, the manufacturer of Milorganite. Noer even wrote a prominent column entitled « [As O.J. Sees It](#) ». Otto believed that the use of the initials would give his emerging business even more recognition. Coincidentally, Noer passed away in the same year that Otto founded his company.

Otto worked tirelessly at developing a progressive and successful distribution business. It was built with [personal charm](#), [warm handshakes](#), and [honest practices](#). He traveled more miles, visited more golf courses, and helped solve turf problems for superintendents than may ever be accomplished again. As the years progressed, he continued to offer an increasing number of product lines, including equipment, seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, and others.

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The evolution of Otto's company.

« O.J. Company » evolved into one of the **first** truly modern « **full-line** » of turf maintenance products. One major step in this direction occurred in 1982, when Otto was chosen as a Jacobsen dealer. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Otto guided his company through major expansions as the number of golf courses, lawn care companies, and sports fields, increased dramatically. By 1997, he had expanded the business



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with new, larger, and improved warehouses and office locations. Today, « O.J. Company » employs over thirty people, all professionals specializing in servicing the turf maintenance industry.

Otto's relationship with customers.

A great number of people who interacted with Otto at a business level would be inclined to say the following. —

<< Otto Jangl had a great bearing at the building and maintaining of the golf courses, as he supplied them with the best advice, great service, and good supplies. He was a great man, and he was very appreciated by all of us. >>

(ADAPTED FROM ARNOLD McLEAN SENIOR,
OWNER OF CLUB DE GOLF LORRAINE.)

Otto was viewed by many customers not just as a supplier. Not just as an advisor. But rather as a friend and a confidant who happened to be a supplier and a consultant.

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What Otto said about running a successful business.

<< Customers will be more encouraged to trust you and to buy from you if you look and act like a winner. >>

<< If you don't have the product ready to be shipped from your store, you will not be able to sell it. >>

<< If the customer needs it right now, we have to get it to him right now. >>

<< Nothing can be accomplished in bothering a customer repeatedly in order for him to buy from you. >>

<< Our customers must get a box of apples from us every fall, and a bottle of wine every Christmas. >>

<< You have to give the best service, and offer the best products, but you still need to provide the lowest price. >>

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The agronomist.

Otto had always been proud to be a long-term member of the Quebec's « [Ordre des agronomes](#) » (« [Order of Agronomists](#) »). Very shortly after founding « [O.J. Company](#) », Otto successfully completed the required exams at the « [Université de Laval](#) », and became officially recognized as an agronomist in 1967. In 1995, the university named him a life-time member in recognition of his professional career.

Despite his high level of education, Otto had the unique ability to present complicated, technical issues in a manner that was easily understood and used by the turf managers who sought his advice.

The family legacy.

Otto's son Phil, his daughter Gabrielle, and his wife Ludmila, now carry on his great legacy by maintaining the reins on « [O.J. Company](#) ». On January 1st, 2008, Phil Jangl assumed his new position as President of the great family business. Otto was also blessed with three grand-children — Ella, Madeline, and Mia. Otto's guiding hand will remain on all of their shoulders forever.



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What people have said about Otto.

<< Otto was a great entrepreneur and a great innovator that will remain a model for us all. >>

<< Otto was always ready for a good conversation, and he never failed to be pleasant, earnest, and stimulating. >>

<< Otto was nothing less than a perfect gentleman who truly cared about people. >>

<< Otto was the best friend and a great supporter of the golf course superintendent. >>

<< Otto was totally available to the industry, at all hours, day, or night. >>

<< The large picture of two hands shaking in Otto's office was the epitome of how Otto valued relationships. >>

<< You could always count on Otto to always be available to provide help, and to give good and sound advice. >>

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One final comment. The principal author of this tribute was honoured to be associated with Otto and his business as his colleague and his Vice-President for thirteen years. And early in the author's career, Otto was the greatest mentor a young man could ever hope to have.



What will be missed the most about Otto.

For those who were lucky enough to have known him, Otto was known for many wonderful qualities, including [honesty](#) and [decency](#). He always treated people with the greatest of respect. Otto had seemingly [infinite wisdom](#) and a [disarming charm](#). Otto was a [great man](#) and a [good man](#). He was a [gentleman](#) with a [generous spirit](#), and a [sense-of-fairness](#) that made him unequalled by no other. And, above all, he was a [wonderful family man](#). One can honestly say that Otto had a great life because he lived it so well.

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Adieu, Otto.

Thank you Otto for all that you have given us. You were a hero in every sense of the word. We were all friends and colleagues at the greatest time of our lives, because of you. We are truly at an end of an era. Here is an excerpt from Shakespeare. —



<< *When he shall die.*
Take him and cut him out in little stars.
And he will make the face of heav'n so fine.
That all the world will be in love with night.
And pay no worship to the garish sun. >>
(WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. ROMEO AND JULIET.)

This was written by William H. Gathercole (with Norah G.) with much collaboration from other friends. ***Odpočívaj v pokoji.*** (May you rest in peace.)

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A tribute to the founder of O.J. Company, published in 2007 and written by WHG & NORAH G

Forty years ago, Otto Jangl founded « O.J. Company », which was built from scratch to become the major distributor of products for the Green Industry in Quebec and Ontario. In his youth, Jangl graduated from Charles University in Prague with a Masters Degree in Agronomy. Prior to the start of « O.J. », he worked for several years at « J. A. Pilar Seed Export & Import » of Montreal, where he was responsible for grass and forage seeds. For a brief time, he created the distribution for the now defunct « Jack Vincelli Inc. ». Additionally, Jangl has always been proud to be a member of the Quebec's « Ordre des agronomes » (« Order of Agronomists »). At last, his great triumph was « O.J. Company », a solid business run with personal charm, warm handshakes, and honest practices. Throughout its forty-year history, « O.J. » has outlived all of its competitors. Today, Jangl's customers benefit from a full line of turf and ornamental maintenance products, including chemicals, equipment, fertilizers, and seeds. Jangl has now moved well into his eighties, and still enjoying relatively good health. His daughter Gabrielle, his son Phil, and his wife Ludmila, now carry on his great legacy.

The principal author was honoured to be associated with Mister Jangl and his business for thirteen years. Without a doubt, he can be described as a *measure of a true man*. Anyone who meets him can be reminded that

<< The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. >>

(MARTIN LUTHER KING.)