

# A change in perspective

## Native Hoosier and Purdue agriculture alum publishes magazines across the nation

By Tracy S. Petersen

**T**homas "Tom" Budd, BS '56, is a self-proclaimed optimist when it comes to American agriculture.

"I'm bullish about the future of agriculture," said the Purdue agriculture president and publisher of Farm Progress Publications.

In 32 years with the company, Budd has watched American agriculture evolve, and he has seen farmers and agribusinesses meet countless challenges. In the meantime, he has watched Farm Progress Publications keep stride with agriculture.

"Our editorial philosophy really hasn't changed that much," he said. "We try to help farmers do a better job of farming and of increasing their efficiency and their income."

Doing a better job of farming and increasing efficiency and income aren't necessarily harder to do today than they were when he joined Farm Progress Publications, Budd said.

"Farmers have more access to sophisticated science and technology than they did 30 years ago," he observed.

Because Farm Progress publications

reach nearly 1 million producers via 18 statewide magazines, Budd said he believes the company truly can play a role in helping farmers. Since the magazines are state-specific, each one addresses crop production changes based on local weather, soil types and cropping patterns.

"That's where our big advantage is," he said.

From his vantage point at Farm Progress Publications, Budd said he sees wetlands, taxes and the environment as some of the leading issues and problems facing today's agriculturists.

"Environment will continue to be important to agriculture and it should be," he noted. "We want farmers to be good environmentalists and most of them are."

Animal rightists and other activists also

pose a challenge to farmers.

"They always seem to have a lot of money and are well organized," Budd said, but added, "Usually the reasonable production practices with livestock prevail. Time is on the side of the farmer, here."

Keeping up with the ever-changing world of agriculture isn't always easy, since farming problems are multi-faceted.

"We've had to deal with a decreasing number of farms and farmers," Budd said, noting that it has been a challenge to stay on top of all of the agricultural developments.

"Fortunately, agriculture's still run

by the family farmer, and that's good," he said. There has been a concern in the past that corporate farming would displace family farmers but "that hasn't happened and I don't think it will."

"Farmers should always be proud of their profession," Budd said. "They do contribute a lot to the overall success of the country and our world."

For his commitment to helping American farmers, Budd, of Carol Stream, Ill., was honored this summer with the Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE) Reuben Brigham award. The award is the highest honor presented each year by ACE. It honors individuals who have made major contributions to communications in agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources.

Budd, a native of Lebanon, Ind., graduated from Purdue in 1956 with a bachelor's degree in animal sciences.

"I got both an education and practical training at Purdue," he said. Because Purdue did not have an agricultural communication program when Budd was on campus, "I took as many writing classes in the English Department as I could," he said.

Budd studied journalism at the University of Kentucky before serving in the U.S. Army. He worked at the Danville (Ill.) Commercial News as a news reporter and farm editor from 1958 until 1960 when he joined the editorial staff of Prairie Farmer. When the Indiana and Illinois editions were separated in 1975, he was named editor of the Indiana Prairie Farmer, and established editorial offices in Indianapolis. Budd was named vice president-editorial director for Farm Progress Publications in 1982.

Today Budd supervises more than 40 magazine editors who produce the 18 state

publications. He has directed the annual Farm Progress Show, which draws more than 150,000 visitors and 350 exhibitors, and is responsible for three other major agricultural shows.

Budd has been partly responsible for bringing together a number of companies which were purchased by Farm Progress Publications and "melding these far-flung holdings into a cohesive, successful branch of the company," according to Jim Oliver of the Purdue Agricultural Communication Service.

Allan Johnson, president of Farm Progress Publications, said, "Budd has a difficult job and does it very well."

Budd noted that he takes great satisfaction in developing young agricultural communicators.

"My mission has always been to help people," he said.

In Budd's award nomination he is cited for "training about 20 younger men and women as farm magazine writers and editors. He has bestowed his indelible quest for perfection on each one of them."

A 10-year Boone County 4-H member, Budd lists the Indiana 4-H Foundation among the boards of directors on which he has served.

Last fall, he served as co-chair of a Purdue Agricultural Communications curriculum review committee. Agricultural communications will be a good field in the future, he said. With the many changes in areas such as biotechnology and genetic engineering, "the farmers' need for information will continue to be very important."

With 32 years under his belt at Farm Progress Publications, Budd has found success and contentment in his career.

"If I look back I don't think I'd change too much of it," he said.



Photo Courtesy of Farm Progress Publications

Indiana native Tom Budd