

Farmers need positive communication



Orion Samuelson

By Dieter Krieg
DEKALB, Ill. - One of this country's most noted agricultural personalities, Orion Samuelson of radio and TV station WGN in Chicago, says it's time for farmers to stand up and communicate positively.

Farmers in Pennsylvania may not have heard of "Mr. Agriculture" too often, but the man is well-known and respected throughout the Midwest and other areas, including Washington, D. C. His farm-oriented radio and TV shows are syndicated on more than 100 stations and Samuelson himself has a reputation of speaking for farm people - not to - he speaks on their behalf.

Dedicated to his career, and enthused with his responsibilities, Samuelson has been quoted as saying: "My job is so varied and interesting that I often say I'm scared I'll have to go work for a living someday." But his responsibilities are by no means small - he is a programming director,

announcer, and executive for WGN; and they're not easy - he begins his days at 3:45 a.m., travels 75,000 miles a year, and attends meetings and conventions all over the country to keep abreast of what's heppening in American agriculture. When the schedule was "light" he can head for home at 4:00 p.m. He's not a man to let a day or even an hour of his life go by wasted.

A dynamic speaker with a moderately deep, clear voice, Samuelson has listeners in urban areas as well as on the nation's farmlands. Informing city listeners and viewers about agriculture is one of his goals. He not only reports on what is happening over the air, but frequently makes guest appearances at meetings. Last year he had 82 speaking engagements. Such was the case for three days early this Fall when he addressed approximately 3,000 farmers from all over the United States who came here on tours sponsored by A. O. Smith Harvestore Company. A group of 100 farmers from New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania was in the audience one evening, brought here as part of a tour sponsored by Penn-Jersey Harvestore of New Holland.

Like most speakers, Samuelson began his talk with jokes. Then came yarns spun around his own experiences as a farm boy in

Wisconsin, and life in the "Kickapoo Valley."

His talk became more serious when he said it's time for farmers to stand up and communicate positively. "Farmers are the most important minority in the world," he said in a deliberate tone. "Agriculture doesn't need sympathy, it needs understanding," the broadcasting personality said.

Agreeing that agriculture has its problems, Samuelson pointed out that merely telling about them won't solve much. "My next-door neighbor has problems twice as big as mine, because they're hid," he explained, adding that this is human nature. "We must convince people of the importance of agriculture; we must be proud of what we do. Why are we always on the defensive?"

He urged farmers to take a little time to make their feelings known, both around them on a "one on one" basis and by writing to congressmen and senators.

Born and raised on a 200-acre Wisconsin dairy farm, Samuelson delivered his speech in a manner which left no doubt that his heart is in agriculture. Taking one aspect of farming at a time, he lifted it up, pointing out the positive sides while keeping in mind the need for better understanding and greater appreciation.

The most moving part of the speech came when Samuelson related some of his experiences from overseas, notably the Phillipines. (Due to his success as a farm reporter, news director, emcee, and speaker, Samuelson has occasionally been singled out to cover global happenings in agriculture for the U.S. Media.

America is very much appreciated in the Phillipines, Samuelson remarked. The American farmer is especially revered. Chills raced up and down a few spines when he repeated the words of one Filipino farmer who was supporting his family on 2½ acres of land: "We're so proud of what they (the American farmers) do."

"Yes, we have our problems," the broadcaster affirmed, hinting that they often tend to hide our blessings, making us believe

things are worse than they really are. "There are so many (farmers overseas) who wish they could trade with you," he continued.

Before leaving the stage for a rousing round of applause, Samuelson quoted words from a plaque hanging in his office. They went something like this: "Lord, help me to work for good, not evil; success not failure; gain, not loss - so that I shall not regret the price I paid for this day."

DEKALB, Ill - In spite of problems encountered on the farm and in agri-business, farmers should be more enthusiastic and proud of their work, said Joe Kelly,

western regional sales manager for Harvestore.

Kelly pointed out that there will always be a need for food, and consequently a need to have it produced. "We have the means to produce," he affirmed, "this

is the best land in the world." The Harvestore Co. executive chose to make these remarks to counter some of the negative talk and thinking which has dominated some agricultural circles throughout the land. He cautioned that "short-term negative influences not affect our long-term decisions."

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