

## ‘Every five years you have to reinvent yourself’

❑ ‘Adapt or Die’ philosophy has kept Burd Farms moving forward for four decades

By Gary Brower, Editor

Richard Burd was just barely getting started in elementary school when Earl Butz, then the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, told American farmers that they could either change with the shifting tide or be swept away by it.

Now in the midst of growing his 42nd crop, Burd can see that Butz was indeed prophetic way back in 1955 when he warned farmers that only the nimble would survive.

“I have learned that about every five years you have to reinvent yourself,” said Burd, who grows 1,400 acres of corn and soybeans near Uniontown, Pa. “One of the guiding principles around here is the statement Earl Butz made. He said, ‘Adapt or die.’ You’d better learn to adapt to what is coming down the road.”

Like many, Richard got into farming by following in his father’s footsteps. However, Paul Burd ran a dairy and was a renowned herdsman in the region at a time when smaller family farms were the rule rather than the exception. At one time, the Burds had about 60 head of dairy cattle, and Richard cut his teeth around the farm doing some of the things his father didn’t particularly like to do.

“He didn’t really like to drive tractor much, so I got those duties when I was younger,” Richard said. “I drove for the first time when I was about 9, but didn’t really get into it until I was about 12. That is how I ended up where I ended



PGP photo by Brian Kelly

**EVOLVING OPERATION:** Richard Burd, now in the middle of his 42nd crop in southwestern Pennsylvania, said he learned early on that farmers have adapt to new ways of doing business or they won’t be in business for long.

### Richard Burd Farms

**Owner:** *Richard Burd*

**Location:** *Uniontown, Pa.*

**Type of farm:** *Grower of corn and soybeans*

**Employees:** *One*

**PGP customer since:** *2012*

up.”

When the Burds made the transition from dairy to cash crops, they almost exclusively grew corn. But never one to stand pat, Richard gave soybeans a try in the early ’80s, but it didn’t turn out well in the thin, rocky soil in the hills of southwestern Pennsylvania.

“The erosion was horrible and I quit

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Up or down, the market is always right. **See Page 2**

#### HOLDING STEADY



DDGS demand keeps prices strong. **See Page 3**



# Tradition

Establishing tradition is wrapped into everything we at PGP do. From buying corn, to selling DDGS, to providing freight services, the employees of PGP strive to provide superior customer service and quality products that will endure for generations to come.

## Rise or fall, the market is always right

By Brian Kelly, Grain Merchandiser

The market is always right.

A PGP corn producer told me he keeps this message near his desk, and when he doesn't like the price of corn or beans, it is a reminder that what he thinks doesn't matter to the market.

The market is correct. I came across the saying during some studying on markets. It is called the Efficient-Market Hypothesis.

It states the stock or commodity always trades at its fair market value, with all information already factored into the price. Therefore, it is impossible to "beat" the market, meaning all of the known information has been factored into the price.

However, new information will cause the market to react.

The 2015 growing season got started pretty much right on time, without any weather delays and the corn and beans appear to be coming right along.

Many growers have been saying (I'll use saying rather than complaining!) the price of corn isn't covering production costs and are looking for the price to rebound.

One grower said he heard a report on RFD-TV that corn could -- with could being the key word -- be in the \$4 to \$4.40 on the Board of Trade this summer. The reporters suggested if that occurs, producers should sell all of the unpriced corn in their bin and their new crop corn.

While we at PGP hope producers get



File photo

**TOUGH ROW TO HOE:** While some have speculated that corn may get as high as \$4.40 by mid-summer, others are saying there is threat of the price dropping as harvest nears, causing one analyst to suggest that the "folding money" is gone for now for corn growers.

### Corn update

a bounce in the market, what is unsaid and believed by many is there is a greater threat for corn to drop in price.

One grain marketing analyst said, the farmer can capture nickels, dimes, and quarters in the grain market, but the "folding money" is gone, for now.

### Corn Merchandising

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Please give Brian or Nikki a call to discuss your options. We encourage you to price some grain and place target orders to capture those dimes and quarters when they occur. We appreciate your support of Pennsylvania Grain Processing.



Pennsylvania Grain Processing, LLC

The PGP Agrisource is published quarterly by PGP for customers and employees of PGP.

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All questions or suggestions for future articles should be directed to PGP's marketing department.



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# Demand for dry distillers grains remains strong

By Steve Blackburn, DDGS Merchandiser

The demand for DDGS has remained strong because the export market has picked-up.

With demand staying high, prices have stayed strong as all of the DDGS using all we can produce.

We continue to closely monitor vomitoxin levels. The 2014 corn crop, on the whole, has shown slightly higher vomitoxin levels compared to the previous two years' corn.

Fortunately, vomitoxin levels in the DDGS have remained below 5 ppm. Along with the dried distillers grains, we offer wet distillers grains.

Those feeding beef and dairy heifers find the wet distillers add palatability to the ration.

Steve and Kevin will assist you in finding the best product to fit your needs.



Photo courtesy Ethanol Producer magazine

**LOAD 'EM UP:** A truck is loaded with DDGS at the Pennsylvania Grain Processing plant. Demand for the ethanol production coproduct has been up, keeping prices strong as of late.

## Distillers update

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## Added storage improves customer service

By Eric Meeuwsen, General Manager

Spring shutdown at PGP is in the rearview mirror and we are already looking ahead to projects for the fall.

We have completed construction of our new corn storage bin and the added space will allow us to serve our customers better.

In addition, we are installing blender skids that will allow us to offer our customers a variety of ethanol prod-

## Plant update

ucts, from denatured to pure ethanol. The blender skids will also allow us to load trucks directly with E-85.

At PGP, we continue to look for ways to improve our operating efficiencies to better serve our customers. As we enter our fourth year of operations in Pennsylvania, we want to thank you for your continued support.



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## **BURD: Pa. farm has been evolving for four decades**

*(Continued from Page 1)*

growing beans real fast. The first criteria is you have to be survivable and you have to keep the farm for your kids if they want to have one.” Richard said. “Soil conservation is the first step toward that. I vowed I would never plant beans again until something better came along and we could no-till them.”

Keeping in mind the words of Earl Butz, Richard never lost sight of the potential of raising soybeans in Pennsylvania. So as soybean science and no-till technologies evolved, he gave beans another try, with much better results. Today, he tries to keep a 50/50 balance of corn and soybeans, and rotates the crops each year. And every acre he plants is no-till.

“No-till has done the trick for us,” Richard said.

That, along with the crop rotation, are two of the keys to the success of Burd Farms. Richard said rotating the beans and corn annually is not something he simply prefers to do, but something he, and many others in the region, feel they must do.

“Economically, you don’t have a choice. Virtually everyone in this area does it that way. Very few of us grow more than one year of corn,” Richard said. “In our area of the world, that rotation is worth at least 10 bushel an

acre, maybe 25. We’ve documented this across multiple farms and multiple owners. It’s unreal.”

Just as he embraced soybeans as they became economically and environmentally feasible, Richard also jumped on the ethanol train when the plant, which is now Pennsylvania Grain Processing, was built in Clearfield in 2009. Over the years, local feed mills had been disappearing one-by-one and local farmers had to look elsewhere to sell their crops. Richard saw the ethanol plant as a new customer willing to pay a fair price for corn, and was one of the first to sign up.

“It used to be that we could sell all of our corn within 25 miles of the farm and that was really nice. We had a couple of old trucks and they were just dandy for hauling corn to local farms and local feed mills, and all that disappeared over a couple of years,” Richard said. “When the ethanol plant presented itself in Clearfield, that was wonderful. It was a big deal for us. I was one of the first people up there when the original plant opened up. I keep telling people, ethanol is what built my farm. If it weren’t for the ethanol boom, we wouldn’t be looking very good.”

Paul Burd retired from farming in 1992, which is when Richard took over the operation on as his own. The last two decades have seen Burd Farms

grow in bits and pieces, and Richard may be farming 1,400 acres these days, but the average parcel size is about 10 or 12 acres. The land spreads out over about 14 linear miles south of Uniontown, and the family farm sits near the middle. Richard says he does his best to keep the soybeans in blocks together and the corn together in another area, which helps to increase efficiencies when it comes to planting and harvesting.

Richard and his wife, Natalie, have two daughters, neither of whom is interested in carrying on the family farming legacy. Allison is an emergency room nurse and Ashley is a horse trainer in Tennessee. With no children ready to move in and take over, Burd Farms remains firmly in Richard’s control, for now.

“My goal is to get this place paid for and we’ll figure out what to do after that. Somewhere down the road it would be nice to find some farmer that would like to chance, but you really have to love this a lot to make it work,” Richard said. “The next six or eight years will depend upon my health. We are going to keep doing it as long as we can and keep looking for opportunities.

“This isn’t for everyone, but it is for me. I wake up in the morning and I can’t wait to go out and farm.