

CAMA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

by John Morriss, *Farm Business Communications*

Though no such official statistics are kept, it can be safely said that in the history of Canadian agricultural marketing, no one has sold more advertisements for more value than James Shaw.

Armed with experience selling several British farm publications, one of which he started himself, Shaw arrived in Canada in 1975. Since then, Shaw — known to his colleagues as “The Energizer bunny” — has given unparalleled service both to his clients and the publications he represents.

After joining *Farm and Country*, Shaw was instrumental in its successful rebranding as a leading publication for Ontario commercial farmers. He was also responsible for a sharp increase in sales when he joined the *Manitoba Co-operator* in 1985.

In addition to his success with existing titles, Shaw has been pivotal in the success of two new publications. In 2002 he joined the fledgling *Farmers' Independent Weekly (FIW)*, helping make it a dominant player in the Manitoba farm marketplace.

In 2007, after FIW joined *Farm Business Communications (FBC)*, Shaw was instrumental in the establishment and ongoing success of *Alberta Farmer Express*, which filled a long-time gap for a dedicated regular publication for farmers and ranchers in Alberta.

Shaw from FBC in December 2014, but he continues his long association with the *Western Hog Journal*, an important source of information for Prairie hog producers.

“James brought many innovative ideas to the field of agri-publishing. He has a unique sense of what makes good advertising, and brought forth

many impactful ideas that are in common use today,” says *Kantact* president **Len Kahn**.

Though no one works harder than Shaw at making a sale, he always puts the interest of the client first, never selling an ad that would not fit the publication's target audience. For Shaw, a client is a client, and he works just as



James Shaw

hard to ensure satisfaction for someone buying an eighth-page black and white ad as he does for an agency placing an order for a full page in four colours.

No matter how large or small a client you are, Shaw will call you back promptly if you leave a message after his now-famous “Thank you for calling 416-231-1812” voice mail greeting. And no matter how large a client you are, Shaw will provide not only good service, but entertainment.

“More than anyone I’ve ever known, Shaw has always understood the inherent value in strong relationships and a good story,” says *DuPont’s Joanne Hewitson*.

Shaw knows everybody, and everybody knows Shaw, but he has not used his extensive network of contacts just to make sales. Many **Canadian Agri-Marketing**

Association (CAMA) members have found themselves in new positions after Shaw has made a quiet recommendation for the right person to fill a job.

“One of Shaw’s strongest attributes is his willingness to mentor younger professionals entering the industry. Whether one-on-one, or at CAMA or other industry events, he always takes the time to impart his own experience and wisdom to those just finding their way,” says Kahn.

“When I joined CAMA 20-plus years ago, I was welcomed with open arms by many experienced and talented marketers,” says Hewitson. “By far, the most unique and memorable of those was James Shaw. Little did I know at the time how much he would influence my career, my marketing savvy and my passion for the ag industry.

“Over the years, I learned so much from Shaw: about positioning and differentiating your product, understanding your customer better than your competition and being able to clearly articulate the value you delivered. That education came from the advice he readily offered, but even more so from the way he thought about and promoted the publications he represented.”

Shaw is also well-known for his extensive art collection, which like his advice, he has always been willing to share with others.

“At many a meeting, Shaw would donate a painting from his collection to be raffled off to raise money for the Student Chapter,” says Hewitson. “James was the consummate salesman, but in a way that demonstrated how marketing and sales are two sides of the same coin.” **AM**