

Farming success came hard for Andrew Duda and family

When Andrew Duda came to the Oviedo area, there weren't any sophisticated tractors...no pre-coolers to prolong shelflife of vegetables...no computers to speed inventory.

The Checkoslovakian immigrant came to Slavia to form a religious community with friends who moved South from Cleveland. He brought with him his wife Katherine, and three sons...Andrew, Jr., Ferdinand and John.

Together they plowed the difficult, sandy Florida soil with strong backs while fighting the rigors of winter weather. Twice, their crops failed and the Dudas were forced to return North to factory and truck farm jobs. But they saved to come South again.

On a third try in 1927, they succeeded with a small celery crop to feed the family in Depression years. And, there was still produce left to sell at markets nearby.

As their crops succeeded in the coming years, Andrew Duda's three sons assumed management of the company and branched out from Oviedo. They bought acreage near Lake Apopka and learned to

raise vegetables on Zellwood's muck soil.

Crops were expanded...carrots, sweet corn, leaf vegetables and other crops became the products of Oviedo's A. Duda and Sons, Incorporated.

Over the 50 years that followed that first successful crop, A. Duda and Sons has continued to operate from its Oviedo headquarters.

Duda has branched out from Oviedo to locations across Florida. Today, there are farms at Belle Glade, Naples and LaBelle. The company has cattle ranches and sod farms in Cocoa and in South Florida, and two cattle feed lots...one at Ocala and another at LaBelle.

There are citrus groves in Central and South Florida, and Duda joint ventures with another firm in a bulk citrus concentrate plant at LaBelle. Another plant, near the Zellwood farm, makes the most of Duda celery crops by processing celery crescents for large volume industrial food companies in the United States.

The company owns Southland Produce, a California firm which

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Three views of downtown:
[top] Looking down Broadway toward Chuluota around 1920. [center] Looking up Broadway toward Winter Park in the early 1940's, and [bottom] looking down Central toward what is now FTU about 1916. The hotel is standing on what is now the site of the Masonic Lodge. [right] Oviedo's biggest unsolved mystery: the blowing up of the old bank around the time of the Great Depression. The bank was located on the corner of Graham and Broadway. To this day, the culprit, if he's still alive, might be walking the streets of Oviedo gloating.



Thursday, June 30, 1977

markets fruits and vegetables for other Western growers in California, Arizona, Idaho and Missouri.

And, in Australia, the company owns or has under lease nearly three million acres for cattle ranching.

From a small white frame office outside Oviedo, Duda has grown to a position as a leader in the U.S. food industry. Still modest offices here are headquarters for a worldwide marketing operation that provides a great deal

of Europe's vegetables supply.

Duda has become a leader in many fields of agriculture. A recent trade publication article noted Duda pioneered in applying computer techniques to farming. Everything from inventory control to cost analysis is programmed on its Oviedo computers, and, tied to each farming location gives farmers an instant information system.

With a priority on equipment and engineering development, Duda

operates an ongoing program in its Oviedo shop. Specialized tractors, harvesting equipment and transplanting devices have greatly increased the speed with which farmers may work their fields. And, the environment of the field worker has been enhanced by Duda techniques.

The company has continued to be involved in research programs that improve crops and protect the environment. Biologic control research has led to greater crop yield and

reduced unnecessary applications of pesticides to crops.

Despite the modern advances...computers, sophisticated field equipment, biologic research programs...Oviedo's A. Duda and Sons has held to basic farming beliefs.

It was President Ferdinand Duda who said: "The best fertilizer for a crop is the farmer's shadow." It is still the responsibility of a Duda farm manager to walk his fields every day...to keep the human element in farming.

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Grandfather Duda, on right, in celery seed bed.



John and Andy, Jr. in their Sunday best.



Andy, Jr. and Ferdinand "horsing" around.

WE'VE DONE A LOT OF GROWING IN 50 YEARS.

Half a century ago Andrew Duda, Sr. brought three sons to America and began growing in Florida, first to feed his family and then to feed his neighbors. As John, Andy, Jr., Ferdinand and their eight sons have grown, so have the family's farm operations. Today, Duda, a leader in America's Agribusiness Community, is dedicated to producing quality fruits, vegetables, citrus, beef cattle, and sod for the benefit of millions of "neighbors" here and abroad.

DUDA

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