

The Budget

by Linda Egenes

Although the Amish do not have telephones, they keep in close touch with other Amish communities by reading a unique newspaper, *The Budget*. Every Amish community has a volunteer reporter who writes down all the news—births, deaths, weddings, accidents, social gatherings, and even the weather—and sends it to *The Budget*. Each week this newspaper publishes more than three hundred letters, which are read by more than eighteen thousand Amish and Mennonites in North and South America.

The newspaper was started by John C. Miller in 1890 for the people of Sugar Creek, Ohio. Miller started receiving letters from Amish people who had lived in Sugar Creek and moved away to new communities. The idea caught on, and soon letters from Amish and Mennonite people filled the paper. Today, most of the letters are from Amish, but some Mennonite communities also report their news. The newspaper's publishers and staff are not Amish.

The associate editor of *The Budget* is George Smith, who has worked at the paper for more than sixty years and at one time was the owner. At age eighty, Smith still works every morning and several afternoons a

week. "My favorite part is reading the letters," he says. "Over the years, my wife and I have become friends with many of the writers. We visit them on vacations. When I receive their letters, it's like reading the letters of old friends."

Smith says that *The Budget* is important to the Amish because they often have large families and do not always have time to write letters to those who have moved to other communities. By reading *The Budget*, they can find out all the news about their friends and family who live far away.

Very little about *The Budget* has changed since Smith started working there. "Because the Amish live much the same as they did fifty years ago, it is hard to tell the difference between a letter written in 1987 and a letter written long ago," he notes.

Following are clippings from the March 25, 1987, issue of *The Budget*.

Burton, Ohio

March 18—Ideal sugar weather with freezing nights and thawing in day time. Most syrup is a good grade; market price this yr. is around \$25.00 a gal.

The new buildings on Lester Detweiler's new place are well underway. A frolic was held Sat. again.

Mr. Olin A. Yoder

New Wilmington, Pennsylvania
March 16—Mrs. Saloma D. Byler, who attended the quilting at Isaac R. Bylers' on Wed. of last week, got a chicken bone stuck in her throat, and had to go to a doctor. X-rays didn't show anything.

Bena had 12 women here to quilt on Thurs., on the king-sized that goes to Henry's doctor in Pittsburgh, Pa. It's a dahlia quilt.

Lovine J. Byler

Sherman, New York
March 19—Forgot to mention last week that the mothers surprised teacher Lydia Ann for her birthday last Tues. with a hot lunch and homemade ice cream and cake.

The saw mill shanty burned to the ground at Andy M. Miller's saw mill Tues. morn. The fire was caused by an over-heated stove. All papers and some personal belongings were lost. Clymer Fire Dept. were called.

Mrs. Andy J. Miller

Nappanee, Indiana
March 31—Stanley Yoder's horse got away from him last Fri. forenoon, going full speed for a few miles. It turned in at one of our neighbors'. Results a smashed-up buggy. No one got hurt.

Fannie Burkholder

Kingston, Wisconsin (East District)
March 29—We had two weeks of nice warm spring weather, but this morning there is probably six inches of snow on the ground. The Amish farmers around here have begun plowing.



The Budget is read by Amish all over the country. The paper spreads both important and everyday news from community to community; even the ads are geared toward the Amish.

Ezra Bontragers will have supper and singing for the young folks this evening. Next services are to be at William's again with Ezra Bontragers furnishing the cats. Marvin Kuhns and Fern Schmucker are published to marry. Their wedding is to be April 15th.

Calvin Schmuckers are blessed with a baby girl named Wilma Jean. Grandparents are Ivan Schmuckers and Oras Millers. This is Oras' first grandchild.

Noah Hershberger

