

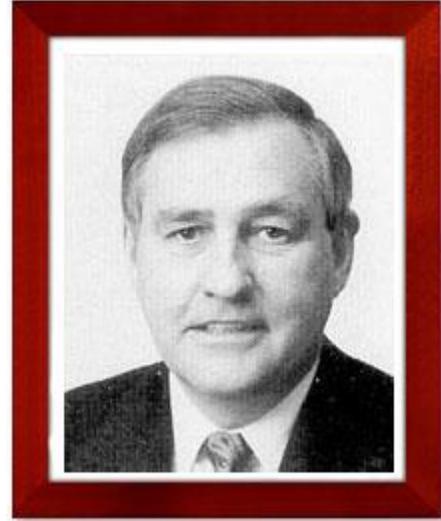
## J.B. Penn

**Ph.D. Agricultural Economics, 1973**  
**Senior Vice President, Sparks Companies, Inc.**

### Color My World

J.B. Penn ranks his trip to West Lafayette as a graduate student among the toughest of his life—a marathon drive from comparatively balmy Baton Rouge, LA., that culminated with a bitter cold January snowstorm. The voyage to Purdue University, however, paved Penn’s path for considerably friendlier, and more colorful, journeys.

“Department head Charlie French had a very aggressive management philosophy,” Penn recalls. “He recruited the best faculty and graduate students, and he greatly expanded the number of foreign students. The size and status of the program meant I competed against the very best, nationally and internationally.”



Penn has little competition when it comes to globe-trotting. He’s logged 65 trips to Poland, the first in 1982 in the height of the Cold War. Penn witnessed a dramatic metamorphosis through the years, one that took the country from black-and-white to Technicolor.®

“Poland was a pretty bleak place before 1990,” he recalls. “The climate makes the afternoons seem dark, and lights were always dim. People didn’t care what they looked like. Their dress was very utilitarian and functional.

“After the fall of Communism the change was remarkable—awnings appeared on buildings, streetcars were painted, and women started dressing in bright colors. People who were stifled just burst open with energy, enthusiasm, and creativity.”

Travels occasionally take Penn back to his hometown of Leola, Ark., where his parents, both 95, still live on the home farm. Several years ago, Penn purchased the adjoining farm—500 rolling acres once owned by his grandfather.

- 1965      B.S., Agriculture, Arkansas State University
- 1967      M.S., Agricultural Economics, Louisiana State University
- 1967-75   Agricultural Economist, Economic Research Service U.S. Department of Agriculture
- 1973      Ph.D., Agricultural Economics, Purdue University

- 1974 Adjunct Assistant Professor at Purdue University, July-August
- 1974-75 Adjunct Assistant Professor of Economics and Business at North Carolina State University
- 1977-78 Senior Staff Economist, President's Council of Economic Advisors
- 1981-87 Deputy Administrator of Economics, Economics and Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- 1982 Member of Presidential Agricultural Task Force to Honduras
- 1984 Member of Presidential Agricultural Task Force to Ecuador
- 1981-88 President and co-founder of Economic Perspectives, Inc., independent consulting firm
- 1988 Senior Vice President, Sparks Companies, Inc.

“ If you succeed in Purdue University’s agricultural economics graduate program, you can go out anywhere in the world and be successful. The graduate program does two things for you: It provides excellent training and it instills a high level of self-confidence.”