

“Singing Farmer” Bob Parrish demonstrates his vocal abilities to some of his cows.

THERE’ S ALWAYS A SONG IN HIS HEART

America’s “Singing Farmer” Becoming National Celebrity

There’s probably no better known farmer in North America than Bob Parrish, who’s recently been featured in magazine and newspaper articles and has appeared on numerous TV shows.

The Fennimore, Wis., dairy farmer is billed as America’s “Singing Farmer”, with a high baritone voice and a two octave range (A flat to A flat) that he says is better than Luciano Pavorotti’s.

“That’s a boast, not a lie. I never lie,” says Parrish, 74, who recently completed a three-month, 6,000-mile promotional swing through the Midwest and South giving away free cassette tapes of himself and making public appearances.

The tour came 30 years after his promising vocal career was put on hold by an untimely personal tragedy.

In the mid 1960’s, after two years of commuting from his farm to Chicago for formal training, the singer was poised for stardom. He had been a featured soloist at Chicago’s McCormick Place and was invited to sing at New York’s Carnegie Hall.

That’s when his wife of 23 years, Edna, died unexpectedly of a cerebral hemorrhage. She was 47. He was 42.

After that, Parrish stayed pretty much on the farm to raise his two young daughters, milk 150 cows, and farm 400 acres. He performed occasionally at such events as the World Dairy Expo and various farm shows around the country, but reserved most of his singing for his cows.

“Some newspapers have reported my singing increases milk production,” he says. “I can’t say that I ever noticed a difference. All I know is that they all used to push their ears forward when I sang.”

His repertoire includes gospels, oldies, patriotic songs and, of course, opera. “English-speaking cows prefer any of the former three styles, while Italian-speaking cows prefer the latter,” Parrish jokes.

After an “On The Road” piece by Charles Kuralt of CBS last summer, Chicago TV station WGN asked Parrish to sing on the air.

“I told them I had to get the corn harvested first,” says Parrish, who eventually appeared on Oct. 29. “When I asked them what they wanted me to wear, they told me to come straight from the field.”

By then, Parrish had sold his cows and farm and was kicking off his tour in his Lincoln Town Car, pulling a 17-ft. travel trailer. The tour gained him a lot of press attention.

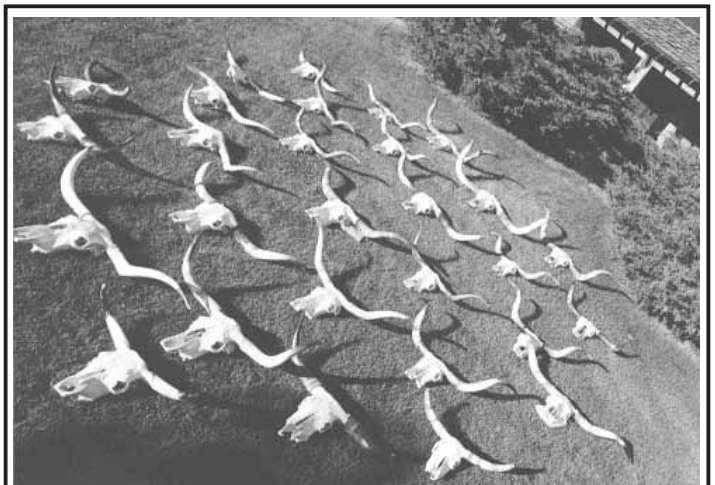
While Parrish is a master of self-promotion, there’s something else he’s trying to promote as well.

“I can be a product of great value to the American farmer by promoting the industry through my voice,” he says.

Parrish has three cassette tapes - oldies, gospel, patriotic - available for \$7.75 apiece plus \$4 S&H, or all three for \$20 plus \$4 S&H. To order, to hear a sample of America’s Singing Farmer, or book a performance, call 800 955-7190, 24 hours a day. Or write P.O. Box 121, Stitzer, Wis. 53825.



Parrish, accompanied by his dog, recently completed a 6,000-mile promotional tour.



Polished longhorn skulls make beautiful wall mounts, says Dickinson Cattle Co.

Texas Longhorn Skulls Are The Real Thing

Finding gifts for farmers or ranchers is not always easy. If you’ve got one on your shopping list, how about buying a Longhorn skull?

Dickinson Cattle Co., near Calhan, Colo., is the largest Texas Longhorn ranch in the U.S. It recently began selling real Longhorn skulls from animals raised on the ranch. Each professionally polished skull is one of a kind. Many are available with a color photo of the animal when it was alive.

Also available are mounted Longhorn steer heads, hoof lamps, rugs with the head on, leather-covered couch pillows, and tail pieces mounted on a stained wood wall plaque.

“The skulls make beautiful wall mounts and are real conversation pieces,” says Kirk Dickinson. “People who buy them are often nostalgic about the West and have a Southwestern decor in their house. Some of the skulls are very big and have to be mounted on a big wall or they’ll appear overwhelming. The horn spans range from 36 to 63 1/2 in. long. We run almost 1,000 head of Longhorns on our ranches in Colorado and Ohio, and about 50 skulls a year become available.

“We go through a 23-step process to preserve the skulls, making sure to eliminate any odors. It’s a lot of work to clean up the skulls so we won’t start on one unless it’s in good shape. We made our own boiler to

boil the skulls. After boiling them we spray them with a high pressure washer and apply hydrogen peroxide. A flat finish is applied to the skull and a gloss finish to the horns.

“You can buy Longhorns skulls elsewhere, but often they aren’t authentic. For example, in some cases the horns are bolted to the skull of a different cow breed. If you see a rope wrapped around the base of the horn, you can be sure that it’s not a Longhorn skull.

“The biggest skulls from bulls weigh about 30 lbs. Smaller cow skulls sell for \$200 to \$300 while some very old steers with massive horns sell for up to \$1,200.”

The ranch’s skull business got its start after a blizzard killed 40 percent of the Dickinson herd. Many observers thought the ranch was doomed to financial disaster. However, after the blizzard the skulls were recovered and polished. There was so much demand for the professionally polished skulls that a new business was formed. “We found that the polished Longhorn skulls were often worth more than polled generic cattle, even when they were alive. The sale of the polished skulls helped us rebuild the Longhorn herd,” says Dickinson.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dickinson Cattle Co., Inc., 24001 Hwy. 94, Calhan, Colo. 80808 (ph 719 683-2655).