



Butch can get around on his leg stubs and climbs in and out of his tractor cabs without help.

DESPITE LOSS OF TWO LEGS AND AN ARM HE FINDS REASON TO SMILE

Wounded Vet Makes Success Of Farming

By Gary Martin

James Robbins puts up about 30,000 sq. bales and 1,500 round bales a year. He operates his own equipment in the field, auctions part-time, feeds a few cattle, runs a hay and straw business and still has time for a wife and three children. You easily get the idea he does enough work for two men.

But James will be the first to tell you he is really only half of one man. He left the other half in Vietnam nearly 20 years ago...two legs and an arm.

James "Butch" Robbins was a member of the 101st Recon Unit operating near Hue, South Vietnam, in November, 1968. He was searching for an enemy weapons cache at the edge of a village when he stepped on a booby-trapped 105mm shell. Butch's torn body was first taken to the Army field hospital at Phu Bi, then on to Da Nang and finally to Camp Drake near Tokyo, Japan, where he was further weakened by malaria.

He surprised almost everyone by living through the ordeal. When strong enough to make the long journey home, he was taken to Walter Reed Army Hospital, near Washington, D.C. There doctors slowly put what remained of his body back together again. Two months later, Butch was sent as close to home as he would get for the next 18 months...the VA Hospital in Durham, N.C. More surgery followed.

Twentyfive operations later, Butch finally went home to the family farm near Rocky Mount, N.C. And almost immediately, his mother saw her son had not lost his characteristic spark of mischief...with or without two legs and an arm. While he was still in bandages, she recalls, he climbed into the family car and drove away, using an umbrella to reach the gas and brake pedals.

As his recuperation progressed, so did his desire to get around on his own and find a job. Butch worked for two years as a fire department dispatcher at Seymour-Johns Air Force Base. The Vietnam Vet who wanted to work, even without two legs and an arm, was honored by the Tactical Air Command as the Outstanding Handicapped Employee of the Year in 1978. While working for the Air Force, Butch was also hon-

ored by President Carter as the Outstanding Handicapped Federal Employee of the Year.

As the years passed, Butch became increasingly independent. He proved he could do about as much work as a man with both arms and both legs intact. And something else was happening to Butch...he was slowly being drawn back to farming and the family's custom hay business. The Ford New Holland dealer who sold him haying equipment recalls the first time Butch showed up at the store for parts. The dealer expected to meet him outside and help him from his truck into a wheelchair. But before the dealer even knew Butch was in the store, he heard someone pounding his fist and jokingly demanding, "Where are my parts? I need parts."

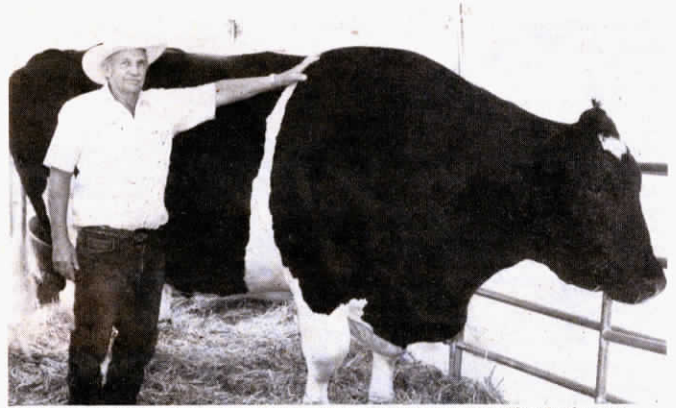
The dealer looked up from his work but didn't see anyone. He heard the voice again and, looking over the counter, saw a man hardly 3 ft. tall pounding his fist on the floor and flashing a big smile.

Butch will accept a lift down from his tractor if someone happens to be there when he needs it. But he's quite capable of getting himself both up and down from the tractor cab without help. Through constant use and necessity his arm has become exceptionally strong. On the ground, Butch walks on the stubs of legs that are shorter than his shirt-tail. But walk he does, slowly and with a rocking motion, and he always gets where he wants to go.

The thing for which Butch is best known in the farm country around Rocky Mount is his big smile. Somehow, this man who lost almost everything finds more reasons to laugh than most people with all their limbs intact. "There's no need to be bitter," Butch explains. "I'm alive, aren't I? I could have been brought back from 'Nam in a body bag."

Butch doesn't know the meaning of self-pity. "I know there are people who want someone else to do everything for them. They think the world owes them something because they've been injured. For me it was simple...your legs or your life. I've got my life."

When visiting VA hospitals, Butch meets



Oscar eats 100 lbs. of corn and 80 lbs. of hay a day and drinks 40 gal. of water.

WEIGHS IN AT 4,200 LBS.

World's Largest Holstein

By Dan Kitzhaber

Move over, Babe. Paul Bunyan's legendary blue ox has some competition for the title of the world's largest bovine. His name is Oscar, and he tips the scales at 4,200 lbs.

"When he's full, I'd say he peaks at about 4,500 lbs.," says his owner, Melroy "Shorty" Ronnigen of Pine Island, Minn. That's right. Oscar's four stomachs can hold 300 lbs. of food.

Ronnigen and his wife, Nancy, claim that Oscar is the world's largest Holstein steer. A normal market Holstein steer (a neutered male) weighs around 1,200 lbs. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the world's record for the largest bovine is 5,000 lbs., held by a Holstein-Durham cross-breed, Mount Katahdin, owned by A.S. Brand of Maine.

Oscar, age 9, has spent the past two summers traveling to more than a dozen state and district fairs around the Midwest, where he is displayed inside a red-and-white tent accompanied by his friend Sven - a normal-sized Holstein steer.

Oscar's measurements: 6 ft. tall, 12 ft. long, 14 1/2 ft. around the girth, 5 ft. deep in the chest, 3 1/2 ft. across the hip bones and 5 ft. wide across the stomach.

The Ronnigen says they feed Oscar standard grain, hay and water. But the proportions are anything but standard: He eats 100 lbs. of corn and 80 lbs. of hay a day and

drinks 40 gal. of water. (A daily cost of about \$8). "He'll drink 25 gallons of water at a time," says Ronnigen.

And Oscar is still growing - structurally, that is. The weight is not being added as fat. In the last three years, the Ronnigen says, he has grown a foot in length.

The Ronnigen bought Oscar when he was 3 years old. Ronnigen, who is a cattle buyer, found Oscar at the farm of Urban Mickow, near Plainview, Minn.

The Ronnigen said Oscar was being raised as a feeder steer when they bought him at only 2,800 lbs. Mickow had eight other large steers at the time, all from the same sire and all raised on corn silage. But Oscar was a foot longer than the others, and "I really liked the looks of him," recalls Ronnigen.

He bought Oscar, he says, with the intention of keeping him as a novelty, and within a few years, people started coming to see the big steer, which had grown to 3,600 lbs. Some of the Ronnigen's friends, impressed with Oscar's size, asked them to show Oscar at the county fair. As word spread, so did the demand for Oscar's appearances.

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vets with similar or often less bodily loss than his own. His advice to them? "Get your act together. You still have one good leg? And you have both arms? You better get a job."

Butch's friends are expected to treat him as they would anyone else. If his friends don't make jokes about him, Butch will do it himself. While Butch was working on the knoter of his hay baler, a friend looked at him, smiled and said, "You've got to get both hands on it, Butch." Butch almost fell off the baler laughing.

He was named "most likely to succeed" in his class at the Mendenhall School of Auctioneering. So far, auctioneering has been confined to the winter months, between baling seasons. But it's not uncommon for Butch, the auctioneer, to be introduced at a sale as "Half a man." This is not cruel name-calling to Butch, but his way of accepting himself and helping his friends do the same.

Butch has developed all the skills that go with being a good custom hay operator. He knows the sounds of his baler and can detect even an insignificant change that could mean

"trouble ahead." He can sense the slightest quivering of the baler's flywheel in time to save a shear bolt.

Butch does custom baling of Coastal Bermudagrass and wheat straw, traveling up to 20 miles from his home base. Baling of peanut hay sometimes takes him 40 miles from home.

Wherever he goes, whoever he meets, Butch makes quick friends. And the friends of Butch Robbins will never forget him...or ever again feel quite the same about themselves.

A television producer who was in Vietnam at the same time as Butch has made a motivational video about him. Butch is also in demand as a speaker. In his simple, but unique style, Butch can win a group just by smiling at them. And when he tells his story, all who hear will never forget.

For more information about Butch's speaking schedule and video tape, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, James "Butch" Robbins, Rt. 7, Box 180, Rocky Mount, N.C. 27803 (ph 919 446-3802).

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