

HE'S GOT HORSE SENSE

Stock Show's
Bruce McCarty
Swings a Wide Loop
in the Equestrian
Business. by Gail Bennison



BRUCE McCARTY, the horse show manager for the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo for 16 years, sits tall in the saddle in the equestrian world. In addition to his extensive duties at the annual Stock Show, McCarty has, over the last 35 years, produced all manner of horse shows, including every major cutting event. “Obviously, Bruce’s tenure and relationships within the equine industry and auction business benefit the Stock Show in numerous ways,” said Stock Show President and General Manager Brad Barnes. Just as important though, the City of Fort Worth benefits from McCarty’s resourcefulness and networking with the various equine events held at the Will Rogers Memorial Center, Barnes says. “Besides the Stock Show, the impact of the numerous horse shows the facility attracts throughout the year is a tremendous economic boost to our city,” he said.

Dr. Gerald Grotta is a “retired” professor from TCU who continues to teach courses in research in the Schieffer School of Journalism.

Grotta’s projections based on previous research are a good representation of the actual impact of the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo and the many horse shows at the Will Rogers Memorial Center.

Total visitors annually are projected at 1,664,104 — more than 600,000 of them from horse shows alone — and more than 85 percent of those visitors live outside Fort Worth. Total economic impact is \$367,374,433, with all but \$51,123,822 in what Grotta terms “new money for Fort Worth.” That means the dollars aren’t just being switched around inside the city.

“I consider these numbers very conservative,” Grotta said. “No multipliers are used. These are the actual projected direct expenditures.”

The impact is comparable to that of Texas Motor Speedway. A TMS presentation to the Fort Worth City Council in November said the raceway has an economic impact for about \$300 million annually to the region. Not all of that goes solely to Fort Worth, but like the dollars from the Stock Show and the horse shows, much of the money is new money from visitors who live outside the area.

“We appreciate all that Bruce does with the Stock Show & Rodeo,” said Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price, noting that the event draws around a million visitors over 23 days. “To pull off something of that magnitude takes great cooperation between great partners, and Bruce plays a vital role in that partnership.”

Long History With Horses

Over the last three decades, Bruce McCarty Promotions has managed or assisted with more than 3,000 auctions, including the \$16 million sale of the 2-year-old Thoroughbred The Green Monkey in Florida in 2006 to Coolmore Horse Farm, and record-breaking cutting horse sales.

McCarty’s auction business set a world record in 2007 with the sale of a Longhorn cow for \$150,000. The following year, that record was broken twice in one night, establishing a record of \$170,000.

McCarty served as manager of shows and major events for the National Cutting Horse Association for 13 years and served on AQHA’s Show Committee for 10 years.

He’s well known for his strong connections in the horse world,

his work ethic and his innovative ideas. He assisted with developing and managing the first AQHA Versatility Ranch Horse Competition held during the 2002 Fort Worth Stock Show.

He developed the Show’s Timed Event Challenge, which is now the largest registered Roping and Barrel Racing event in the United States and the second largest registered Pole Bending. He added Mustang Magic, the Gypsy Horse Show and two new shows for 2012 — Cowboy Mounted Shooting and

AQHA’s Ranching Heritage Challenge.

McCarty played an integral part in bringing the National Reining Horse Association Cowtown Classic and the Reichert Celebration to Fort Worth.

McCarty is a Good Hand

Fort Worth Stock Show chairman Ed Bass says that the Show is lucky to have McCarty.

“Bruce McCarty probably knows more about organizing horse shows, sales and equestrian events than anyone in the business, and he knows everyone in the business, and everyone knows him,” Bass said. “We really count on Bruce’s insight and communication skills to keep up on what’s going on in the equestrian world.”

Bass says there are two things you can be sure of any time you run into McCarty: “He’ll be working hard on something, and he’ll be upbeat.”

McCarty was born in Lufkin and spent his growing-up years in Burleson. He got involved in 4-H and FFA and started showing cattle while in high school.

“Everything starts right there,” he said. “We didn’t have a lot of money. As a matter of fact, my dad worked a second job at night sweeping floors so I could have a trailer to go to the cattle shows. He did everything he could so that my brother and I could do things he didn’t get to do as a kid.”

His first mentor was Charles Rollins, then a county agricultural extension agent for Tarrant County and later a highly successful and respected auctioneer. Rollins took McCarty under his wing.

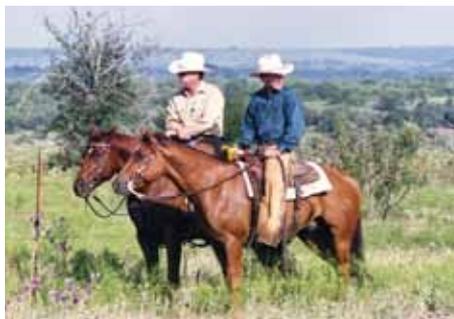
“Charles always made sure I had a summer job, and when I graduated from high school, he talked Dale Segraves into giving me a job at *The Cattleman* magazine in Fort Worth and my first ring at an auction,” McCarty said. “When you go to those sales, you get to meet a lot of people. This was a good start.”

Segraves, who owns Segraves & Associates in Midlothian, runs a prestigious horse show at the Stock Show every year and has been in professional sales management for 35 years.

“Bruce was just a young boy when I hired him to go work a registered cattle sale as a bid spotter,” Segraves recalled. “He thought that he would like the auction business. I’ll never forget when he came back and said, ‘You didn’t tell me it was gonna be this hard.’ I told him it would get better after he’d done it for a year or two, that it would start becoming automatic to him.

“He never quit being involved in the auction business after that

(Right top) McCarty works the Calf Scramble during the rodeo. (Right bottom) Riding with Jimbo Calhoun during an NCHA Sponsor Retreat in 1990. (Far right) With trainer Chase Dodd of Soddy Daisy, Tenn., during Mustang Magic at the 2011 Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo. Photos courtesy of FWSS&R, NCHA and Mustang Heritage Foundation/Jennifer K. Hancock



first job. He's professional in every sense of the word in the livestock business, not only in cattle but in the horse field, too. Bruce is a very thorough person," Segraves said. "He's one of those people who has an attention to detail. Before the event happens, he's gonna turn over every stone and look under it to make sure everything is right."

As cowboys often do, Segraves takes over the interview and weaves a tale.

"See, I was having a horse auction one time in San Antonio," Segraves begins. "Bruce was hired to work the ring. We was having a pre-sale party at the Holiday Inn out around the pool. Somehow, two of them other bid spotters decided that Bruce McCarty needed to be thrown in. He had his boots on, and he was all dressed up and went in the pool in front of about 500 people.

"He was good with it. Bruce is just a great guy," Segraves said.

Bob Tallman, a 2004 Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame Inductee and seven-time Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association Announcer of the Year, has known McCarty for 35 years.

"It's all in his eyes. One thing that Bruce McCarty would never say to you or me is that people trust him, and they trust him with very valuable items. If somebody said tomorrow that you got to pick somebody to govern your estate or take care of your family, Bruce McCarty would be on my Top 10 list. He's a good bastard," Tallman said.

"I regard him as a very dear, dear friend who looks out for me, and I look out for him. I don't have to talk to him every 60 hours or 60 days to find out if he's my friend or not. He's solid, his family is solid, and his business is solid," Tallman continued.

McCarty earned a degree in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M, and all through college, Rollins made sure he had a job.

"I pretty much was able to pay for college. Charles was really instrumental in getting me off on the right foot," McCarty said.

After graduation, he assumed he'd go to work for a cattle magazine but found there weren't any openings. McCarty taught freshman agriculture in Belton for six weeks when a job opened up working for *The American Quarter Horse Journal* selling advertising and taking bids. He worked there for three years, eventually becoming director of advertising.

"It was a really good way to meet a tremendous number of people in the horse industry all over the United States and Canada," McCarty said. "Back then, it was nothing to have a 1,000-page magazine. There was no competition, and the business was so good. We didn't have to sell ads; we just took orders."

From there, McCarty worked for six months in the racehorse business, where he learned a different side of the industry.

In 1981, McCarty went to work for the NCHA helping put together the magazine *The Cutting Horse Chatter*. It wasn't long

before he was managing 1,200 shows a year.

"I just kinda got lucky because NCHA was going through a great growth period, and I got to meet more people with different associations and got relationships built up," he said. "We put on competitions in many venues, and I picked up a little bit here and there and became somewhat of an expert in putting on cutting shows."

McCarty came up under the legendary Zack T. Wood Jr. who died on Feb. 13, 2010. During a 28-year tenure as the NCHA's leader and starting with just a two-member staff, Wood helped initiate the "Triple Crown" — the NCHA Futurity, NCHA Derby and NCHA Super Stakes events — and many others, including a year-end weekend World Finals show.

McCarty's prior experience with the AQHA and NCHA has been a valuable asset, says legendary Stock Show president and general manager and current president emeritus Bob Watt Jr.

"His knowledge and dedication continues to contribute significantly to the overall success of our Show," Watt said.

Enter Oklahoma City

McCarty credits Oklahoma City with keeping the NCHA in Fort Worth.

In January 1985, Oklahoma City sent a letter to Wood with a proposal for the NCHA to move there.

"It was a really good proposal to partner with us in putting on a Futurity," McCarty said. "Zack contacted Mr. Watt and some other people in Fort Worth and told them what was going on."

Wilson Franklin of M.L. Leddy's and longtime Stock Show supporter Philip Schutts got a group of people together to present their own proposal.

"Wilson and Philip walked in with a big check for \$200,000 to go to the contestants as prize money for the Futurity," McCarty said. "Immediately, the executive committee saw it could go into their pockets so they decided to stay in Fort Worth.

"That spurred the commitment from the Stock Show and the city to make the facility better. Mr. Watt and his dad both had been big supporters of NCHA so the Stock Show led the way," he said.



Not all horse sales take place in dusty arenas among people wearing boots and hats. Here's McCartney at the Fasig-Tipton Select Yearling Auction in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., in August 2011.

“They did a great job of planning. Nobody else had ever had a facility like this. The things they did, they did right. That was 25 years ago, and the stalls are still in good shape. Lots of people come to look at the facilities we’ve got here and incorporate it into theirs.”

The new Will Rogers facility opened in 1988.

“At that point, everyone felt it would be used for equestrian events and cattle shows and for the Stock Show,” McCartney said. “But after two years, there were more and more horse shows.”

And the credit belongs north of the Red River.

“If Oklahoma City had never tempted NCHA to leave Fort Worth, I don’t think they’d have the facilities they have today,” McCartney said.

A Job at the Stock Show

In the spring of 1985, McCartney mentioned to Watt that he had been thinking about going to work for the city and being an event coordinator for horse shows. He also wanted to expand his auction business.

“I casually asked Mr. Watt that if he ever heard any openings in the city to let me know,” McCartney said. “He called me about a week later and said he had a job working with the Stock Show. I would be getting new business at Will Rogers and keep the business they had by working through the Convention and Visitors Bureau. I’d also work for Mr. Watt, managing the horse show.”

“The city sometimes is strapped because of the bureaucracy, but Mr. Watt has stood behind me,” McCartney said. “Sometimes you just have to stick your neck out and make a decision with these associations, and they feel good knowing they can talk with a person who understands what it’s like to run a big horse show.”

It’s all about relationships.

McCartney’s auction business has continued to grow while working at the Stock Show. And because of his auction business and equestrian involvement, he can use his skills and networking to bring buyers and sellers to the Show.

In 2011, the horse shows attracted more than 3,800 entries in eight breed/discipline shows.

This year’s 116th Show will run from Jan. 13-Feb. 4.

A significant and exciting part of the ongoing \$32 million im-

provement campaign at Will Rogers Memorial Center is the new Equestrian Multi-Purpose Facility being constructed along the east side of Will Rogers at the corner of University Drive and Harley Avenue.

Approximately 740 new horse stalls will be added on the lower level of the new building, while two 100-foot by 200-foot indoor exercise and warm-up arenas will be above. An expanded underground tunnel system will allow livestock to be transferred throughout the complex without interfering with traffic or exposing the animals to inclement weather.

Partial delivery of 132 new Priefert horse stalls was made in time for the Arabian Horse Association Region 9 Championship Show and the American Paint Horse Association Youth World Championship

Show last summer. More than 700 new stalls will eventually be set up in the new Equestrian Center, scheduled to be completed by summer 2012.

“The new additions to Will Rogers ought to help tremendously with more exercise pens and stalls,” McCartney said. “In a perfect world, I don’t know if you ever have enough covered exercise areas, but with the city’s commitment for the new expansion, we were able to get two new shows, the Reining Horse Show and the Reichert Futurity. The city was pretty aggressive in going after those shows to be able to beat out the competition, and I don’t believe we would have gotten them without the city’s commitment.”

The Will Rogers addition makes Fort Worth more competitive with Oklahoma City and Tulsa, its biggest rivals in equestrian shows.

“I’ll tell you what,” says Kirk Slaughter, director of Public Facilities and Events, “now is one of the most exciting times for Fort Worth and for the Will Rogers Memorial Center Complex.”

McCartney is a big part of that.

“People know Bruce, and he knows folks from the industry from all these years of being involved,” he said.

But McCartney also has another skill.

“I don’t know if you’ve ever heard him do auctions or horse sales, but he is amazing. Just amazing,” Slaughter said. “Bruce is really good at conducting sales, and when you hear him do the auctioneering, it’s a blast to watch him.”

The horse shows are a year-round marketing opportunity.

“The Stock Show has a good relationship with the city, and we both want to get more business in,” McCartney said.

Preserving the American Mustang

A part of the rich heritage of the West includes Mustangs — wild horses roaming free and descended from the horses brought to North America by the Spanish. They — and wild burros — were protected by Congress in 1971.

But there are overpopulation problems where they run on public land, and a number of organizations — among them the Mustang Heritage Foundation in Georgetown — work toward adoptions of the horses that have been taken off the free range.

Organizations raise awareness of the issue through competitions and other events.

McCarty has made history with the Mustang rescue effort. He helped craft Extreme Mustang Makeover events and is the auctioneer for the public adoptions that are held at the end of events.

Trainers take on the challenge of competing with an American Mustang at Makeover events across the nation and compete for cash and prizes while displaying the trainability of American Mustangs in hope of finding a suitable adopter.

Patti Colbert, executive director of the Mustang Heritage Foundation and recipient of the 2011 National Cowgirl Hall of Fame's Fern Sawyer Award, is the creator of the Extreme Mustang Makeover, through which more than 2,000 of America's iconic wild horses have been placed for adoption.

McCarty and Colbert have been friends for more than 30 years.

"If you don't know Bruce McCarty in the horse business, you don't know squat," says Colbert. "McCarty is the hub. You need a job, call Bruce; you need to know the skinny on anything equine, call Bruce; got some good gossip, call Bruce. He has a very sic 'em mind that moves at warp speed. It can come up with ways to promote a rodeo, fundraiser, sale or kid's birthday party better than anyone.

"He's got an eye for cattle and horses, because he's worked thousands as they go through the most prestigious sale rings in the world," she said. "Even though he's sold million-dollar Thoroughbreds to sheiks, he still treats every owner and adopter with respect. Stay on his good side, because when Bruce McCarty's got your back, you can take on the universe."

Home on the Ranch

Bruce and Lori McCarty have been married for 27 years and live on their ranch in Weatherford.

Son Tate, 22, is on his way to achieving his

goal of graduating from Colorado State University. Daughter Shelby, 21, is following in her dad's footsteps and will graduate in Texas A&M's Class of 2013. They both showed horses and cattle as youngsters, and together they've developed a small Shorthorn herd and have their own cattle business.

"I've been lucky," McCarty said. "I've worked for Ronnie Blackwell at AQHA, Zack Wood, Mr. Watt, Mr. Bass and Mr. Barnes. That's a pretty good group of guys right there. I've benefited so much from them because they take a lot of that heat off me. I appreciate everything they've done." **fw**

