

creatively styled into everything from quilts to boxer shorts, so finding an appropriate lining should be a cinch.

With a good repertoire of popular equipment brand-name paints—and the proper licensing agreements—a creative casket artist could reproduce any number of machinery lines, current or historic. A Minnesota friend, for instance, has a whole equipment shed full of classic Case tractors and would no doubt vote for a final paint job in the traditional orange of his beloved antiques.

And one might have chiseled on the memorial stone the old farm line: "Outstanding in his/her field." Which is probably more appropriate than the logical—but probably politically incorrect—option: "Plowed under."

For our orchard friends, reproductions of storage crates might be reminiscent of the simple, utilitarian pine boxes of yesteryear. Which have always made more sense to me, anyway, than overpriced, glitzy caskets. And a granite marker reading "Final harvest."

The artistic possibilities for memorial tributes to agriculturalists are almost unlimited: from grain-bin complexes to draft horse pulling sleds, combine cabs to fresh produce displays (I've seen some really nice ones on the sides of reefer-trucks lately), cotton pickers to cranberry bogs, aquaculture to artichoke stands.

While economics and aging have sliced the ranks of the nations' dairy farmers to only

about 90,000 of us remaining, we still have traditions to uphold. For us devoted breeders of the Holstein cow, whose black-and-white markings have been depicted in every other product imaginable, a spotted casket would seem the obvious choice

when departure time arrives. For a memorial slab, why not the obvious: "Mooooooved up?" Perhaps I should reserve that one personally. And trust that I get sent the appropriate direction.

Feb. 9 Is Food Check-Out Day

GLENMONT, NY—New York Farm Bureau reminds consumers that Wednesday, February 9, is Food Check-Out Day. A mere 40 days into the calendar year denotes when the average American will have earned enough income to pay for their entire year's food supply.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, on average, American consumers spend only 10.9 percent of their disposable income for food. When applied to the calendar, that comes out to 40 days. That diminishing length of time seems even smaller when compared to last year when the average American had to work until May 11, an additional three months, to pay for their taxes.

"Food Check-Out Day is a terrific day that commemorates our farmers as some of the most efficient producers of food in the world," said Judi Whittaker, New York Farm Bureau Promotion and Education Chair. "It also demonstrates to the pub-

lic just how much they benefit from the proficiency of our farmers, by obtaining an endless supply of safe and affordable food in the marketplace."

To help celebrate the occasion, New York Farm Bureau will be donating food to Ronald McDonald Houses across the state. Numerous counties will also participate by promoting the message of affordable food throughout their communities in grocery stores, schools, libraries, small businesses and their local media.

For additional information on Food Check-Out Day, contact your local country Farm Bureau President or New York Farm Bureau at 1-800-342-4143.

If you are unnerved by the subject of death and dying, please skip this column.

Read the funnies instead.

If, on the other hand, you can believe that—even in death—one can find humor, then hang in here with me on this one. My qualification for addressing this subject is that an interest survey in which I took part some time ago came back notifying me that, among a few other career possibilities, I was suited to be a funeral director. Which is almost as steady work as milking cows. And surely pays better.

That all said, I was highly intrigued by a news release issued recently over a marketing survey done by a casket manufacturer. That survey found that consumers' major concerns about a burial casket was how it looked and what kind of "statement" it made about the occupant's life.

Thus it is not surprising that a Texas company is reportedly marketing Art Caskets, personalized to depict significant and important parts of the soon-to-

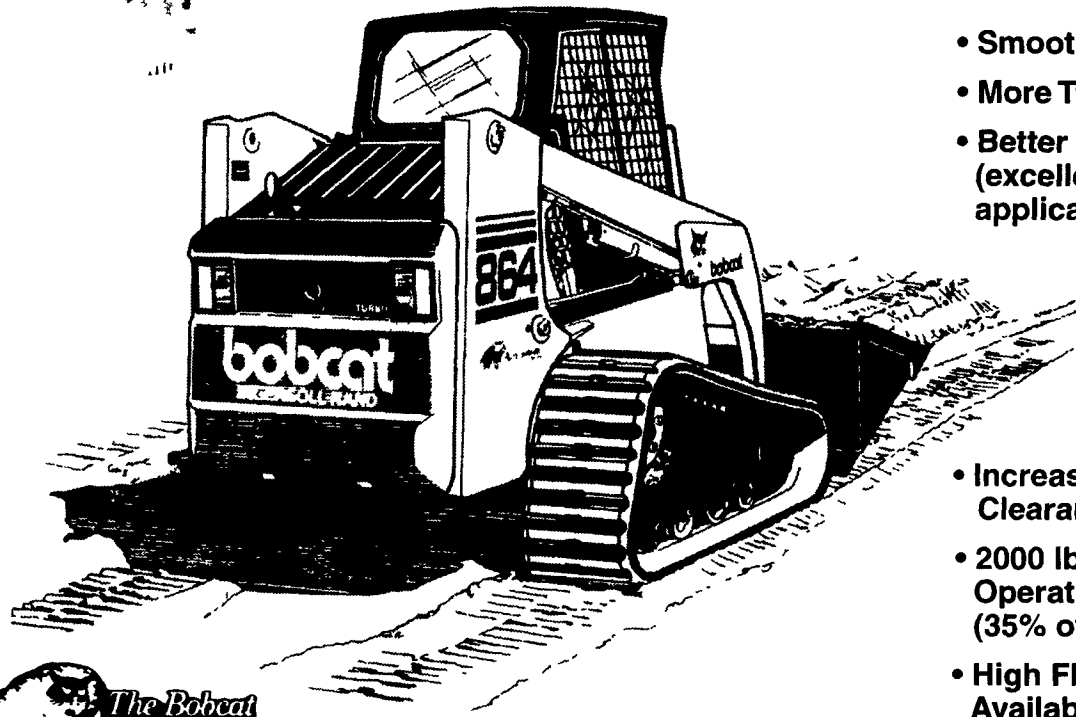
be-interred's life and interest. A next logical (I guess) step was to license the company to use the colors and logos of favorite university sports teams on the caskets of diehard (no pun intended) fans. Sort of taking Penn State tailgating to the ultimate end.

Since many farmers are equally adamant about certain brands of machinery as faithful college fans are to their teams, agriculture could offer its own whole marketing field for this product.

What immediately comes to mind are the myriad of items, other than parts, made in the popular cheery yellow and green of John Deere. Why not a yellow and green casket for those absolutely devoted brand name equipment users, perhaps with painted on wheels, maybe a cab even? Steering wheel, optional. Or utilizing the more boxy shape of a forage wagon or, for the ultimate have-the-last-laugh jokester, a manure spreader. Fabric stores already carry a line of J.D. logo yardages, which I've seen

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