

FARMER'S MUSIC STRIKES A CHORD

LOCKWOOD FARMER WRITES AND PERFORMS HIS OWN MUSIC

FOR NATHAN WEHRMAN, THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOLS ON THE FARM ARE HIS WORK HORSES AND HIS TRACTOR. BUT HIS PEN, TUCKED INTO THE POCKET OF A PEARL-SNAP SHIRT, AND A PAD OF PAPER MIGHT BE A CLOSE SECOND.

Wehrman owns and operates a 2,900-acre farm near Lockwood, Missouri, with his wife, Kaylyn. By day, he tends to more than 1,300 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and hay, as well as more than 320 cattle and 21 horses. Wehrman admits he is busy, but he still finds time for his quickly expanding hobby: writing and performing songs for friends, family and community members.

"The guitar is my release from working," Wehrman says. "I try to play a little every night before I go to bed. The guitar stays right by my bed."

Wehrman isn't a trained musician or a professional performer, but that doesn't diminish the power his music has with audiences. Wehrman's music is chock-full of farm humor, honesty and cowboy soul. His songs are conversational, almost story-like. Simple, acoustic melodies don't distract from the song's substance, and the meter doesn't feel forced. Some songs describe humorous experiences, such as his song titled "Prolapsed Cow," while others are more serious, such as "It's Okay to Cry." Wehrman's devotion to God often factors in, as it does in "God's Land."

"Sometimes I don't always get it in some of these true to life songs, but even in my cowboy songs I try and get some kind of a Christian message in," he says.

Wehrman's wife Kaylyn helps him by typing the lyrics in a large font before his performances. Kaylyn also records him playing each song after he first writes it so he doesn't forget the melody for later performances. He says practice is key to a successful performance.

"I've probably written 70 or 80 songs," Wehrman says. "But if I don't keep them played every so often, I start getting all those tunes jumbled together."

As for his inspiration, Wehrman credits country music singer-songwriters Lindy Hearne and Larry Gatlin. Wehrman recalls attending a concert 34 years ago where Hearne was performing — just sitting on a stool, singing and playing the acoustic guitar. "After that concert, I went out and bought my own acoustic guitar, and I just started plucking away," Wehrman says. "I'm actually opening for Lindy tonight at a friend's house concert," Wehrman adds, grinning.

Wehrman began writing and performing for just his friends and family, often around a campfire at the family cabin. Now, he writes songs and performs for events including wed-

**STORY AND
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dings, church picnics, Farm Bureau meetings, family reunions, friends' birthdays and even Lockwood High School's Baccalaureate this year.

"Somehow I let it out of the bag that I could do this and it's kind of exploded since then. I could get real busy real fast if I wanted to," he says.

Wehrman recalls the Baccalaureate fondly, and says the pastor who spoke called him just two days prior to the event and outlined his sermon. Wehrman tailors each song he writes to the event it is to be performed at, and his performance at the Baccalaureate kept students' attention better than speakers of previous years.

"Those kids sat and listened to every word," he recalls. "One girl came up to me afterwards and asked for the lyrics, and there was one mother who came up and said 'Your song went exactly with what the pastor spoke about.' The whole idea tickles me a little bit," Wehrman admits.

Dandy's Song

Written By Nathan Wehrman after returning from Colorado

Em C D
He was born on a damp spring day,
Em C D
Blaze faced sorrel colt - So full of life.
Em C D
Poco blood flowin' through his veins Em C D
He grew strong and fast - and tough as nails -
C D
Had a heart that wouldn't quit.
Em C D
He'd give you all he had - Then he'd find some more.
C D
Dandy - You were a good ride!
Em C D
Pretty to look at - so smooth to ride
Em C D
Chasin' cattle was his life
Em C D
Ropin' bulls or draggin' to the fire or chasin' elk on the great divide.
C D
He was strong and fast - He could out run the wind.
C D
Had a heart that wouldn't quit.
Em C D
He'd give you all he had, and then he'd find
C D
Dandy - You were a good ride!



Wehrman feeds horses on his farm. He finds time to write and perform music while operating a 2900 acre farm with more than 320 cattle.

The lyrics for a song can strike Wehrman at any moment, often when it is least convenient. Because evenings often have fewer interruptions, he writes some of his best lyrics late at night, sometimes as late (or as early) as 3 a.m.

"One night I was so tired, and God woke me up about 3 in the morning," Wehrman remembers. "It was just like 'boom,' and I had the whole song, both the melody and the lyrics. I was like 'God leave me alone, I need some sleep, wait till the morning.' But He wouldn't, so finally I got up and I went to the bathroom and set at the edge of the tub and wrote it all down. It didn't take but 10 or 15 minutes."

Tired from being woken at 3 a.m., Wehrman forgot his pad of paper the following day while doing work on the farm. He was forced to retrieve a cardboard pizza box from the floorboard of his truck to jot down the last line when it came to him.

"Somewhere around here, we've still got that old pizza box with the original lyrics," he says. "I try and keep all those little scribbles and scratches, the original stuff."

While writing about himself or farm life is easy for Wehrman, his most difficult writing experience was for a friends' wedding.

"It's one thing to write your own experiences, or songs that God gives you," Wehrman says. "But just try to imagine a bride-to-be coming up to you and asking if you can write a special song for her first dance. And I was like 'I'll try.'"

Writing for someone else was a foreign concept, so he approached it by stepping into their shoes. He imagined what the bride might be thinking during a wedding and what the groom might be thinking, and the result was a duet. He enlisted a friend to sing the portion that a bride might say to her groom, and he sang the portion that a groom might say to his bride.

"It actually came out really well," Wehrman says. "I played it, and when I got done, she was crying. I looked over, and I asked them, 'I guess that means it's okay?' They both said, 'Yeah, it's perfect.'" **FB**



The Wehrman farmhouse in 1915. Wehrman is a fourth generation farmer, and his family's farm will be a Century Farm next year.