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Bud Gone, But Not Forgotten

SARAH ARMSTRONG

To all of those who have walked through, studied at, or worked for ISU College of Veterinary Medicine, February 6, 2000 marked the death of a friend. Bud was one of Iowa’s best known and most loved steers. He was a gentle giant in the large animal hospital, which has felt emptier to all who have wandered past the empty stall known as the “Bud Zone” since his death.

Bud, a brown Swiss steer, came to ISU in 1980. He was one of ten calves bought for research on hormonal influences on the immune system. For three years, he participated in immunology experiments with Dr. James Roth, distinguished professor in veterinary microbiology and preventative medicine. Bud, then known only as No. 36, was involved in about ten research projects and was published six or seven times.

“He was very friendly and easy to work with,” said Dr. Roth. Bud was already unique and well known among the researchers for his personality. He was said to willingly walk through the chute, and after finishing his turn, watch as they bled the others. Following his research career, Bud couldn’t be sold because of an interferon inducing drug that had been tested on him.

In 1983, along with four other calves, he became a permanent resident of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital at ISU College of Veterinary Medicine. As a resident in the veterinary teaching hospital, Bud participated in rumen research, and a rumenal fistula was placed in his left flank. Through this fistula, students were able to learn more about ruminal digestion, and clinicians were able to provide “Bud Juice” to treat cows in need of ruminal microbes. Bud also donated blood when needed.

“The people hardest hit are the students,” said Lisa Bomberger, student services specialist. For veterinary students, Bud was a good luck charm and a friend. It has been tradition for students to visit the “Bud Zone” and rub Bud’s head for good luck before an exam. Bud also helped many classes with fundraisers, including the class of 2002’s “Bud’s B.S. Bingo.”

The public has also been well acquainted with Bud. Many tours go through the college every year, and Bud was always a highlight. Children from daycares and schools always loved seeing Bud and the “window” in his side. They would giggle and wipe their faces after Bud would give them a really wet lick. He willingly held his head out of his stall to let everyone pet him.

Dr. Monica Howard, with thirty to forty veterinary students watching with

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Sarah Armstrong is a first-year veterinary student at Iowa State University.
Allyn Ackermann, 7, feeds Bud a small snack during one of her many visits.

interest, performed the necropsy on Bud. The exact cause of death was not determined due to advanced autolysis, but a large abscess was discovered in Bud’s right caudal lung lobe. The abscess measured 0.5 by 0.5 meters, and weighed approximately forty pounds. Seventy-five percent of the right caudal lobe was affected, and the lung had adhered to the diaphragm. Culture showed mixed anaerobic growth, including *Bacteroides fragilis*. According to Joanne Kinyon, a bacteriologist at ISU, this anaerobe is the most refractory to treatment.

Dr. Howard described the mood around the school as somber. Bud was memorialized by veterinary students at the February SCAVMA meeting. Students read poems that they had written to remember and honor the beloved steer. A memorial video, which showed pictures taken of Bud throughout his life at ISU, was played for the student body as tissues were passed around.

"Bud had been a member of the college longer than all of us," said Julia Hansen, SCAVMA president. "He was a symbol of the entire school, and he meant a lot to all of us." Bud’s head will be mounted to honor him for all that he did and for all who he helped in his life at ISU. Bud died on Sunday, February 6, 2000 at the age of 20.