

# Students Buy Buddy, the Swayback Cow, As Bonny Oaks Sells Off Dairy Herd

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Students at Bonny Oaks School were bothered Tuesday by a midday distraction coming from the school's dairy barn, about 300 yards from the classrooms.

At the barn, a loudspeaker brayed its distorted sounds almost too fast to understand, signaling an auction. From time to time, the burp-gun language of the auctioneer was briefly interrupted as one item was sold and bidding began on another.

For convenience, items were listed by number. The sales went smoothly and efficiently until the last item, No. 761.

When the bidding on item 761 was opened, a youthful voice immediately responded:

"\$25!"

Only a few tense seconds passed before the auctioneer barked, "Sold!"

At the front of the crowd, three boys cheered jubilantly, knowing the sale meant that "Buddy," an old, swayback, commercially useless cow would remain on the school's farm.

School officials' decision to sell the other dairy cattle had not been made easily. Like Buddy, the other dairy cattle had been there for years and had become part of the

school's atmosphere. All boys 14-18 worked with the cattle. But the school is beginning a transition, officials said, and some changes in the farming operation are necessary.

Except for Buddy, the school auctioned off its dairy herd and milking equipment Tuesday.

Chairman of the board Mike Patten said residency periods at the boys' home will gradually become shorter than in the past, but dairy cows still need some continuity.

"They don't like turnover," he said.

Even with the problems of maintaining a dairy herd, he said, the board was still divided over phasing it out.

Patten pointed out several people in the crowd who, though they did not work at the boys' home, had worked with the farm program over the years. An inspector for Dairymen Inc. was among those who came to see the end of dairy farming at Bonny Oaks.

All the animals on the auction list had their ages recorded, most no more than five or six years. But for No. 761 the list simply said, "old."

Buddy is anywhere from 14-18 years old, depending on who you ask. But it was obvious that everyone's favorite cow was the old, milkless swayback.

"She's not good for anything," one of the boys said. "That's why we want to keep her."

Avery Atcheson, Robert Pittman, and James Green are three of the boys who have pulled themselves out of bed every day before dawn to milk the cows. Pittman said he even started to get up as usual Tuesday and then remembered he didn't have to milk that day.

All three said they're glad they don't have to get up quite so early now, but they didn't want to let Buddy go. Between themselves and some of the other boys who work with the cows, they pooled \$25 to save Buddy from the auction block.

Atcheson suggested to Buddy that she do what E.T. did — pretend she was dead for two hours so they wouldn't have to sell her.

When no one raised the boy's bid for Buddy, the other people assembled, mostly men, applauded when the auctioneer pronounced her "sold" for \$25.

The senior bovine will spend the rest of her pastoral existence at Bonny Oaks without the rest of the dairy herd. But there will still be the pigs, the beef herd, assorted ducks and chickens, and some boys who are quite attached to her.

All three of the boys at the auction said they are looking for summer jobs at another dairy farm.