



Davida Carroll and her award-winning steer Bully

PHOTO BY BILL HESS

Love makes Bully good

By Bill Hess
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There is joy and sorrow in Davida Carroll's heart as she leads Bully through a drizzily rain across green grass toward an \$1,850.00 paycheck.

High overhead, the frosted peaks of the Chugach moun-

tains disappear into heavy clouds while the silty, glacial-fed waters of the Matanuska River cut at the very edge of the Carroll family's property, just outside of Sutton.

A black cowboy hat with a sagging brim protects the 12-year-old Athabaskan girl's face

from the rain, but enough drops work their way in to conceal any tears which might escape from her happy-sad eyes.

Bully is a black Angus steer; fat, pampered, and obviously happy to be with this little
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Following disappointment, Bully won his ribbon

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person who has bestowed upon him so much attention and care.

Carroll received Bully as a Christmas present from her parents, Dave and Fay, and she took such good care of him that he won a purple ribbon at the 1982 Alaska State Fair.

Now Bully must go the way of all good beefcattle; to the slaughterhouse and the butchershop. And Davida, who grew as close to this thousand pounder as other children to to their dogs and cats, must think of the honor received at the fair, the joy when her own regional corporation, Ahtna, were so impressed with her accomplishment that they decided to buy Bully for \$1.85 a pound from her.

It would be very hard to think of Bully as steak, spare-ribs and hamburger out at Alyeska Pipeline Station Number 12. Very hard.

Carroll raised Bully, whose real name is Lightning, as part of a 4-H project. "I went out to my grampa's in Wyoming," she remembers the event which first sparked her interest. "They has lots of animals there. I wanted to have some."

Twenty months ago, Carroll acquired a day-old heifer and shortly after that a three month-old heifer. She planned

to raise them to maturity and then to put them to work bearing calves. Then last December, Bully came along and she began getting him ready for the fair.

Much work needed to be done. Twice daily, Bully required two-and-a-half pounds of grain to supplement the hay which he ate in tremendous quantities. Being a thirsty fellow, he also demanded about 10 gallons of water daily, in cold wather as well as warm. He had to have his shots; shots to keep him from getting sick, and shots to help him get over the three cases of pneumonia which struck him.

As a show-steer, he needed to be washed, combed, and brushed. "It takes a lot of responsibility," Carroll's mother, Fay says. "I thought she would get tired of it, but she loved it." Fay says if anything, her young daughter gave the steer even more attention than would be expected. "She'd spend about two hours a day with that steer. She was always washing him, brushing him. That's why she spent so much time with him."

Keeping a steer in feed and medicine costs money. To meet her expenses, Carroll took a job babysitting two children ages five and eight. In the summertime, she had them six

days a week from nine until five. Now that school must be attended, she begins her babysitting as soon as she gets home at about 3:30 in the afternoon, until six or seven p.m.

Wintertime proved tough. At first, Carroll kept Bully in a small barn of her mother's, but when one of her mother's cows calved in December, Bully had to move out. He caught pneumonia three times.

Before the fair, the 4-H livestock had to be submitted for a preliminary judging which would determine whose animals would be eligible for a special auction Sept. 3.

Poor Bully. He was too fat. "Davida was heartbroken," Fay recalls. "She bawled for three hours." Yet Bully could still be entered in the fair. Carroll put him on a strict diet. When fairtime came, Bully was looking good. He was not too fat, but he was certainly not skinny. His back was nice and long and his legs were short. Judges are impressed by these things.

And then he got to the sawdust. "He didn't like the diet at all," Carroll explains. "He ate a bunch of sawdust. His stomach bloated up." This would happen a short while before judgement time. Carroll took Bully and walked him and walked him until the bloating

subsided. The tactic worked. When Bully appeared before the judges wearing a halter which Carroll had made herself, the judges were impressed, as the purple ribbon testifies. Carroll also won some ribbons for the halter.

"He's real nice," Carroll says of Bully. "He likes anybody that'll pay attention to him." He especially likes Davida Carroll.

"I'll cry," Davida admits already fighting tears about Bully's upcoming sale. "Well, for a couple of days, until I get my other calf." She hopes it too will be a show-winner.

The Carroll family eats a good deal of beef, but Carroll does not believe that sending Bully to the slaughterhouse will change her tastes. "As long as we don't eat my special one here, I'll be alright."

"Last year, we butchered a beef named Ricketts," her mother recalls. "Everytime we had beef, the children would ask, 'is this Rickett's, or is this town meat?' I would say it's town meat, but it was really Ricketts."

"I don't mind eating him," Davida quickly interjects. "He was ugly!"

Carol Craig, the assistant manager of Ahtna Development Company, was most pleased to be able to purchase

a beef from a shareholder. "I was talking to a 4-H counselor," she recalls how the purchase came about. "She mentioned this girl who had worked so hard but was so disappointed because she could not send her steer to the auction."

The name Carroll was familiar to Craig, who investigated and found that the girl was an Ahtna shareholder. Ahtna Development runs a catering service and the purchase of the steer seemed like a great way to supply some of the company's needs and to help out a shareholder at the same time. At \$1.85 per pound, Craig admits that the beef might be just a tiny bit more expensive than some the corporation purchases. "It's worth it, though, to help a shareholder," she says.

As for Davida, she plans to get busy with her next steer, which should have come down from Delta over the weekend. Already, she has traded one of her heifers for the labor needed to build a small barn for her new steer, and has sold the other to get the money needed for materials. This winter, her steer will stay warm.

In addition to her cattle, Davida owns three horses, a dog and cat. She plans one day to run a ranch, filled with livestock, and hopes to compete in the rodeo as a barrel-racer.