

THE COLONEL



Stanley E. Stout, 64, died unexpectedly April 30, 2006, at Via Christi Regional St. Francis Medical Center in Wichita, Kan.

Stout was a purebred livestock auctioneer, a Kansas State University (K-State) alumnus and a member of the American Hereford Association, American Quarter Horse Association, National Auctioneers Association, K-State Ahearn Club, Livestock Marketers and K-State Block & Bridle. He was on the board of directors of the American Royal and a Chase County 4-H alumnus of the Bazaar 4-H.

He is survived by his wife, Brenda; son, Justin Stout; three daughters — Jessie Stout, Jamie Felton and Jodie Brethour; six grandchildren; two stepsons and a stepdaughter.

Thursday, May 4, 2006, was a long day. It was the day we laid to rest one of our true legends, “The Colonel.” It was a day that stoic ranchers and cattlemen from across the U.S. said goodbye with tears running down their cheeks. It was a day when the auction chant and voice of Stanley Stout blasted through the loud speakers one last time at the Flint Hills Rodeo Grounds in Strong City, Kan. As the memorial service for an icon in livestock auctioneers closed with the sound of Stanley selling at the 2006 National Western Stock Show, those who had held back their tears opened the flood gates and not a dry eye was seen.

I began setting up the P.A. system for Stanley’s memorial service at about 7 a.m. on the day of his funeral. As the rain poured down on my unprepared body I looked upward and smiled and said, “Stout, you sorry SOB...you’re getting me again aren’t

you?” It was almost like I could see that familiar twinkle in his eye in one of the rain clouds above and hear his booming voice say, “You BETCHA!”

All of us who knew Stanley would agree, being the consummate practical joker he was, to have more than 1,000 people sitting on cold aluminum bleachers in the drizzling rain mourning his passing would be the ultimate Stout prank. Each of us would have given anything, if when passing his lifeless body, he would have popped up and said, “Ha! Just kidding!”

I’m betting I’m not the only one who thought that might be a possibility when hearing of his untimely death. “Hmm, just another Stout prank,” I thought as did many others. Sadly, we were all wrong, and the man whose voice became so familiar with hundreds of successful purebred sales across this country was gone forever on April 30, 2006.

Stanley Stout made the auction more exciting. He made it more interesting. There was never a dull moment when he was behind the microphone. Whether it was announcing the ring crew for the sale or thanking the women behind the complimentary lunch, Stanley was always colorful. There wasn’t a sale that Stanley called that he didn’t earn every bit of his salary. He deserved every cent we ever paid him. He made us all money.

If there is a lesson to be learned in any of this it is we are all on “borrowed time.” None of us knows when our time will come, and we should all “live like we were dying” (to borrow a phrase from a famous country song). Today could be the day. Are you

ready? However, I also know this is not necessarily my decision to make. We can only cherish the time we have and the ones we love and not hold anything back, for we really don’t know what the future holds.

I do know the future will hold more sad days for us. There will be many “firsts” in the coming year. There will be that first fall sale that Col. Stanley E. Stout won’t be behind the microphone introducing the livestock press representatives. There will be that void of the familiar Christmas card that always hit our mailbox in late December. The purple neckerchief all of us loved won’t be there the next time the K-State Wildcats go bowling. That familiar Cadillac adorning the “Eat Beef” license plate on the front won’t be barreling down the road for a visit again anytime soon. It’s going to be a long year of firsts.

Stanley Stout spent his lifetime making people laugh. It seems so unfair that on a rainy day in the Flint Hills of Kansas, he made us all cry. There will never be another Stout and for that we can all be somewhat thankful, but it doesn’t make it easier. The emptiness and the pain that we all are feeling now can only be eased by the memories and laughter that this crazy little guy left us with. That’s all we have and for those memories we should all be thankful, thankful that we were all touched in one way or another by the man that many of us just knew as “Stout.”

Stout, we will miss you like you will never know. Thank you for being “you” and for never changing who you were or what you were. You were one of a kind. You BETCHA!

— **Garth Gardiner, Ashland, Kan.**

