

Don Huber
9/11/41 - 2/14/02
(re-printed from Cornbelt BUC-etin)

Cornbelt suffered a huge loss on February 14 when Don Huber died. You know, though, along with the deep sadness and sense of loss, the more I think of Don and remember that devilish grin & laugh of his, the more I start to smile. Somehow it seems ironic that we lost him on Valentine's Day - a day to celebrate matters of the heart --> Don's heart was as big as they come, especially when it came to anything AMBUCS - he never said no to AMBUCS.

Don joined Cornbelt 11/30/88. He became a Big Hatter on 2/4/93. Don was one of the few AMBUCS I've ever known that looked good in his Big Hat, too - and you never would have collected a fine from Don for forgetting his hat - he was proud to wear that hat and never missed an opportunity to tell people about AMBUCS when they would ask him why he wore the hat. Don participated. If he was in town, he attended every meeting (even if he got there a little late - of course, we all knew he operated on "Huber-time" - 15 minutes later than everyone else). On Saturday mornings, he participated in rampbuilding. He'd have coveralls on and work until around 9:30, when he'd strip down (frequently to wolf whistles & clapping & cheers of "Don't take it off") to his nice clothes and head to work at the dealership. He especially liked our evening ramps since he could work start to finish.

Not only did Don love building ramps, but he also participated fully in the "trappings" and fun-stuff we did! He never missed a social and, even though he was in the hospital during his last few weeks, he still participated in our Visibility Month requirement for wearing his pin at all times - it was firmly affixed to the pocket of his robe! Jerry tried to nab him, as did Bill and I, but he always had it on and loved "one-up-ing" us! Oh, and he happily accepted the chocolate chip cookie reward! He also believed completely in the giving of AmTrykes and giving to Living Endowment for Scholarships. He believed we need to give scholarships to train the therapists that eventually prescribe the AmTrykes and get people back into their homes so they'd need a ramp! Don loved helping create independence for people with disabilities!

Don's history with Cornbelt was full of involvement. In 1991, as Vice President, he had to take over the Presidency from Carol Sauder due to her disability from a fall. He continued as President through 1993. His leadership and involvement didn't end there -- while we don't have records of various duties Don had back through the years, I can tell you what I remember. When I joined in 1995, he was in charge of Fundraising - at that time we parked cars at the Interstate Center for third Sunday markets - Don would contact volunteers then show up at 5:30 am at the I/C to "crew boss" volunteers throughout the entire day - most of us worked 4 hours shifts -- not Don, he worked whenever needed. He organized pizza making and he also set us up with our first stint working concessions at the Air Show -- he organized all the workers. We gave him a lot of grief because he went to the Western Open that weekend, but he was prepared to skip that and work had we not had enough volunteers. He phoned frequently to make sure all was going smoothly.

When we decided to do our first Auction in 1999, Don collected tons of donated merchandise. Additionally, he worked the Auction, holding up the various items (he was the one without the short skirt on, guys!). He helped collect money at the end of the auction and helped dismantle the display ramp we had built. For our second auction, he was actually one of the auctioneers - and he coaxed money out of us all!

Don held the position of Membership Chairman from 1997 through 2001, but he was always recruiting - he didn't have to have an official title! Officially, Don is credited with recruiting 7 members - Bill McHie, Jack McNiff, Al Bedell, Fred Esken, Hassan Najid, Pete Hettinger, and Jack Gilmore. The actual number of his recruits is much higher, though -- he "gave" new members to other Cornbelt members so they could attain their Big Hats. Don was Sergeant-at-Arms from at least 1995 through 2001. Additionally, he served as S@A at all of my District functions for the past two years and Fall Conventions. We sure had fun with fines, fees, etc. And he collected! - I mean, who is going to argue with someone who's six feet tall, 200 pounds and a shaved head?

When Cornbelt took on the Fall Convention of 2001, Don was right there helping - everything from getting merchandise donated by ISU to selling raffle and 50/50 tickets through the entire convention to being the crew boss on one of the ramps we built. Whatever was needed of him, he did. Don never said no to AMBUCS. For the 2001-2002 year, Don was elected to the Board of Directors. In November of 2001, our President resigned and the V.P., Jack Gilmore, became President. At that time, some members of the Board approached Don and asked him to take over as Vice President and move into the President's position in 2002-2003. I remember well what he said: "I'll do it for the club". That was Don.

In addition to being a great AMBUC, Don donated his time selflessly to several other causes. He worked for the Humane Society and was an advocate for the organ donation program. Many of you already know that Don had a kidney transplant several years ago. He was on the waiting list for another kidney at the time of his death. Don was also a MAJOR ISU fan and attended most basketball & volleyball games. He also ran the steam engine at the Cornfest. And he was good to individuals, too--if someone needed a favor, he seldom said "no".

I could go on and on about Don - he will be greatly missed. Don's family has planned a Celebration of Life Ceremony for April 13 from 4-7 pm at Beck Memorial Home. Please plan to attend. Cornbelt will also be doing something special in memory of Don -- if you have ideas or thoughts on what should be done, please call Jack Gilmore (309-378-4045). As you all remember Don, think about what you personally can do to honor him. My suggestions: Be more like him in the way you participate in this Club. Give it your full support like he did. And, STOP RIGHT NOW, take out your driver's license and make sure you have signed the back of it for organ donation. Also tell your family members you want to donate - the final decision is theirs.

Finally, as you think of Don, smile.....he'd like that!