

Elsie Visits The 2009 Ohio State Fair

Elsie—a fixture of Americana through parts of two centuries, thirteen U.S. presidents, World War II, the birth of rock and roll, men landing on the moon, and the creation of the World Wide Web—was the star of the show when she made a special appearance August 6 through 9 at the Ohio State Fair in Columbus.

Since 1939, and the first Elsie—You'll Do Lobelia—there have been at least 32 live Elsies and more of them have come from Ohio than any other state. The Knoop family from Sidney, Ohio, have bred five of the Elsies.

After three days of meeting adoring fans and mooing through television interviews, Elsie made her grand entrance on the arm of 89-year-old Kenneth Knoop to start the fiftieth anniversary Ohio Jersey Futurity.

Elsie's appearance was co-sponsored by American Dairy Association Midwest and the Ohio Jersey Breeders Association.

An Advertising Icon

Elsie was voted as one of *Advertising Age's* ten Advertising Icons of the 20th Century because of her effectiveness in promoting her brand, her longevity, her instant recognizability, and her cultural impact.

Elsie first appeared in 1936 as one of four cows—the others were Mrs. Blossom, Bessie and Clara—in medical journal ads promoting the healthfulness of Borden milk. She captured the American public's attention later that year when the famous radio announcer, Rush Hughes, read a letter from one of those ads on his show:

"Dear Mama," it began. "I'm so excited I can hardly chew! We girls are sending our milk to Borden's now. Love, Elsie."

A star was born! An artist's portrait of the friendly-faced bovine with dewy eyes and long eyelashes and wearing a necklace of fresh daisies appeared in magazine ads and on billboards. Borden's was flooded with fan mail for Elsie!

Those fans came looking for her at the World's Fair of 1939 in New York City when they visited Borden's "The Dairy World of Tomorrow" with the newly invented rotary milking parlor—called the Rotolactor—and a herd of 150 pedigreed dairy cows of all breeds.

"What is Elsie?"

The answer was a Jersey—You'll Do Lobelia from Elm Hill Farm in Brookfield, Mass.

"We chose her because she always had her ears up," said Jim Cavanaugh, past Executive Secretary of The American Jersey Cattle Club. Cavanaugh was one



Kenneth Knoop from Sidney, Ohio, had the honor of escorting Elsie at the 50th Ohio Jersey Futurity in early August. Knoop and his daughter, Donna Griewe, have the distinction of breeding six Elsie's since her beginnings in 1936.

of the Borden Boys, a group of 60 young agriculture and dairy college students who cared for the cattle and demonstrated the milking parlor to the public.

A beautiful green blanket was made with "Elsie" embroidered in gold. A bow was added to her tail, and a wreath of black-eyed susans was placed around her neck, and presto! Elsie the Cow came into being. She was put on the Rotolactor between milkings, and people lined up to see her! By the time the World's Fair closed, Elsie was the #1 attraction.

Everyone agreed. "Elsie has become the glamour cow of all cattle history and the symbol of the dairy industry, its symbol of health and nutrition and wholesomeness."

From Sensation to Stardom

In 1940, Elsie accepted a role in the motion picture, "Little Men" and received rave reviews! She married her love, Elmer, and they started a family. On August 4, 1942, Elsie was escorted by New York City mounted police as she took her son "Victory" to be registered in person at The American Jersey Cattle Club office on 23rd Street in downtown New York City. Then they toured the country, promoting the sale of U.S. War Bonds and raising more than \$10 million for the war effort.

In 1947, Elsie gave birth to a son while at Macy's department store in New York City. A million people entered Borden's contest to name him—more than had ever entered such a contest. "Beauregard" was the winning name, and he often kept Elsie company as she traveled the country in her custom-built "Cowdillac."

Elsie became so famous that marketing surveys in the 1940s found that 98% of the American public recognized Elsie. One study showed that more people recognized Elsie than President Harry Truman!

Elsie has been presented with the keys to more than 200 cities. She has made special appearances on the *What's My Line?* and Mike Douglas television shows, at the Kentucky Derby, the Indianapolis 500, the Rose Bowl Parade and at Walt Disney World in Florida. In fact, Elsie is the only non-Disney character ever to appear with Mickey Mouse!

Promoting the Goodness of Dairy

Elsie and the Borden brand are now licensed by Dairy Farmers of America, which last year started the "Friends of Elsie" campaign to highlight the special relationship between dairy farmers and American consumers.

Elsie continues her moooving schedule of public appearances. She criss-crosses the United States to meet her admirers at stores, fairs and convention centers; and also schools, hospitals and senior citizen homes. Before coming to Columbus, she hosted Reading is Fundamental's Read-A-Long at the Children's Museum of Houston. In addition to demonstrating the importance of reading, Elsie brought milk for the kids to remind them to get their daily dose of vitamins and to fuel up to be smart.

She even has her own website: elsie.com.

More than ever, Elsie is a symbol of the best the dairy farm and American agriculture has to offer.