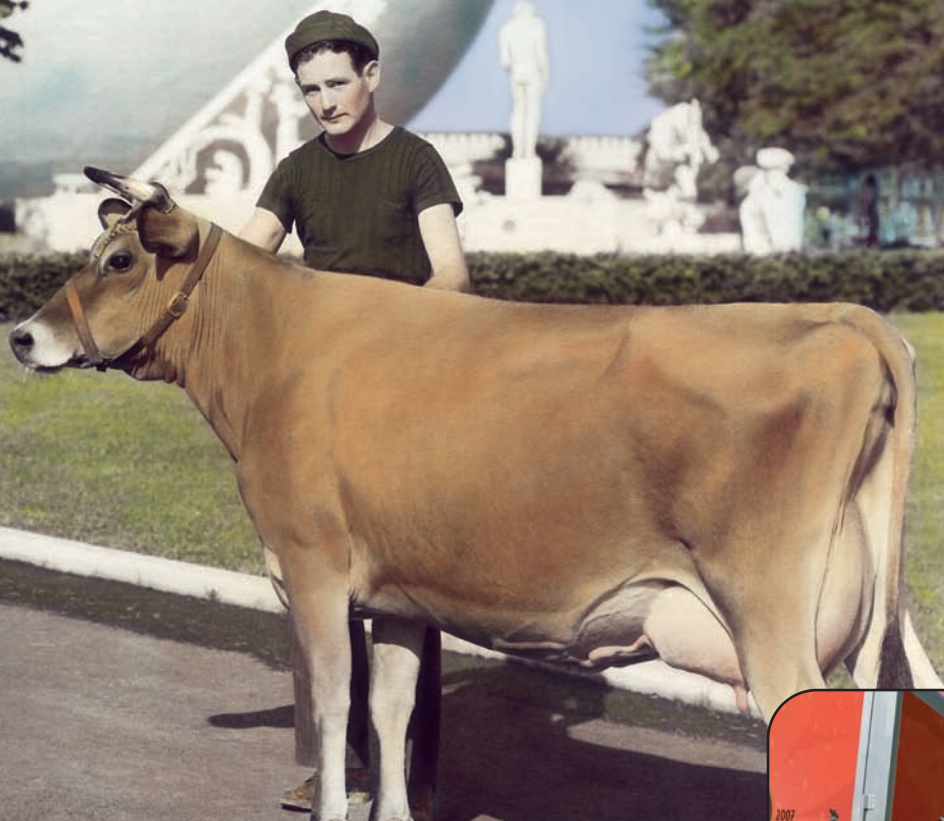


# Jim Cavanaugh... He helped bring Elsie to life



AT THE 1939 NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR, he is shown with Observer's Bride, a Jersey from Hallmark Farm. Shown in the background was the famous Perisphere.



ON HAND AT THE SMITHSONIAN'S Washington D.C. celebration of Borden's Elsie the Cow this past June was Jim Cavanaugh.

**S**IXTY-EIGHT years after Elsie went from Borden's advertising cartoon to real-life cow at the 1939 World's Fair in New York, the Smithsonian opened a Borden Exhibit at their "Treasures of American History" exhibition in recognition of the company's 150th anniversary. Jim Cavanaugh was on hand for the event. Jim relives that experience, as well as his leadership over four decades that has reshaped the image and demand for the Jersey cow, as one of the longest tenured breed association executive secretaries.

## You helped select the first real-life Elsie. What were your selection requirements?

As you may know, Elsie was just a caricature until people came to the Borden exhibit at the World's Fair. Once at Borden's exhibit, most visitors first asked where the restroom was; their second question, "Where's Elsie?" At first, there wasn't any Elsie. So the Borden's advertising people asked us to go pick out a live Elsie.

We wanted a cow with personality, one that would pose for the camera without having a lot of help. When we photograph cattle now, usually someone is out front shaking an umbrella to have their ears up; we were looking for a cow that put her ears up naturally. *You'll Do Lobelia* was just that cow.

A friend of mine (Marion Smith, he's a retired veterinarian in Arizona now) and I went through the Jerseys with Vere Culver, who was in charge

of the Borden herds-men.

Smith said to us, "There's a cow that always looks like she's looking at people."

He told me the cow's name and so we went and saw her. If you see the picture of the first Elsie, she always has her ears up. You could take a picture of her and show her anywhere and she'd have her ears up.

**Borden's "Dairy World of Tomorrow" became the second most visited display at the World's Fair. Why do you think people are so fascinated with Elsie and cows in general?**

So many people, and I'm going to use New York City as an example, have never seen a live cow. I had a friend (now deceased) who came out with an advertising agency to the 1939 World's Fair. He'd never seen a live cow until he went to the Borden exhibit and saw those cows and, in particular, Elsie.

**There were more cows than just Elsie at the exhibit. How many were there?**

There were a 150 cows with 30 of each of the five major breeds. I went to the World's Fair in April 1939 and left that November. The World's Fair opening was delayed because of an electric workers strike. It was supposed to open in March, but it really opened about the first of May.

The Borden Company went to the breed associations and asked the associations to loan

them, so to speak, 30 cows of each breed. It was up to the breed to select them. Each of them did it a little differently. The Brown Swiss people selected their cattle pretty much in the East. The Guernseys and Jerseys went clear across the nation. Holsteins and Ayrshires included cows from Canada. The trick was if a cow got sick or got mastitis or stepped on a teat, then you had to have a replacement. This was because we wanted the barn full, and so additional cattle were selected.

## How did you become a Borden Boy?

The director of public relations of the Borden Company, W.A. Wentworth, wrote to the Dean of Agriculture at 25 ag schools and said the Borden Company is going to have an exhibit at the World's Fair. Originally, maybe 30 boys came in, and that wasn't quite enough to run three shifts. So we ended up with 60 college students.

The Dean took the letter over to the dairy department chair. At this time, I was milking the university herd three times a day. I was taking a semester off to make some money to pay for school. The chair thought maybe I'd be the right guy to go. I said sure.

He said, "Maybe they won't pay you anything."

I said, "I'll go anyhow." I wanted to get out of milking those cows three times a day.

The exhibit was delayed due to the strike, but I still got on a bus in Manhattan, Kan., and took a bus to Manhattan, N.Y.

I went to Borden headquarters and said, "Here I am."

The headman asked, "What are you doing here? We don't have any cows yet."

He then had me start working in the office, and I was the lucky one. I worked in the office the entire fair. I never worked in the barns.

Up until that point, I'd never been out of the state. I can remember crossing the Mississippi, going through cities like Kansas City and St.

Louis. It was quite an experience. I didn't get off that bus to sleep or anything.

## Did Borden eventually buy You'll Do Lobelia?

Yes, they did. All those cows were loaned by the owners through the breed associations to Borden. When Lobelia wound up being such a special cow, they bought her from Elm Hill Farm, Brookfield, Mass.

## Over the years, you have maintained contact with the Borden Company by selecting later incarnations of Elsie. Tell us more.

By that time, I was with American Jersey. Anytime Borden needed a Jersey, they would contact me. One time they wanted a cow for the Rose Bowl parade. By this time, it was difficult to find Jerseys with horns on them. But because of our work in classification, I knew of a herd of Jerseys in San Diego that had horns. So I went out there and met with a Borden fellow, and we selected a cow to play Elsie and ride in the Rose Bowl parade. The title of their Rose Bowl float was "Please Don't Eat the Daisies." They had daisies around Elsie's neck.

Then there was the day Disney World opened. Borden got together with the Disney people, and we found the horned cow near Columbus and flew her to Disney World. They tell me that it was the first time that Mickey Mouse ever had a live animal with him — when Elsie appeared with him at Disney World.

**In 1956, you were named executive secretary of the American Jersey Cattle Club and outlined these four goals to the membership:**

1. Sell the industry on value of Jersey milk.
2. Dramatize the efficiency of Jersey cows.

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**3. Increase Jersey's production average.**

**4. Attract dairyman to the Jersey breed and consumers to Jersey milk.**

**Looking back 50 years from that declaration, what would you say were major factors that led to the Jersey's strong influence today?**

It was one very specific thing. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the work of Dean Plowman and his associates, developed sire summaries so you could tell which bull was going to sire the best-producing cattle. When they developed this, they told the breed associations about it, and I just grabbed ahold of it. We needed to get more milk out of those Jersey cows, so I pushed and got our board to approve higher-producing sires for higher-producing daughters. In a very short time, we moved the Jersey from maybe 8,000-pound lactations to 15,000. We did it by selecting sires.

**You were with Jersey in 1953 when the board decided to purchase the Jersey Journal. What has owning that magazine meant to the association over the years?**

It has meant everything. Prior to that time there were conflicts within the breed. Some people wanted to have only show cattle; others wanted to have high-producing cattle. Before we owned our own magazine, the private magazine would cater to their advertisers, and they would do things that wouldn't help the breed make progress. Once we owned our own magazine, we could go full steam ahead and do the right things.

**Other significant events like the formation of National All-Jersey in 1957, the creation of the AJCC Research Foundation in 1967, and the addition of the Jersey Marketing Services in 1971 helped move the Jersey cow forward. Discuss those impacts.**

All-Jersey, in the beginning, was a fluid milk program where we had a trademark called All-Jersey, and dairies got franchised to sell milk under the All-Jersey label. That made the demand for Jersey milk and the Jersey cow better. It was a key part of creating demand for Jerseys.

The Research Foundation funded research to help prove what was better for Jerseys. We raised some money; then we would farm out projects to various schools.

Prior to Jersey Marketing Service, states like the Wisconsin Jersey Breeders Association would have sales, but the private sales manager would take advantage of the free help the Jersey Association gave him to select and sell cattle, and the sale's manager took the commission and made the profit. When we started Jersey Marketing Service, then we picked the cows, we got the benefit, and we sold the right kind of cows and got some commission from it. So it put money in; it helped us have a lot more field representatives because we had the Jersey Marketing Service.

**What role did the Jersey orga-**

**nization play in getting multiple component pricing implemented? How did project "Equity" play a role?**

We just knew that milk ought to be paid for more than just butterfat. We started advocating multiple component pricing. We had a fellow named Guy Crews, who was head of our milk business for awhile, and he was followed by Calvin Covington, who is now in Florida. We presented it in a manner that it was a better thing for the dairy industry, both producer and processor, and it was a better thing for the public. That's why we pushed component pricing; and it's pretty much taken over across the country now except for the Southeast.

We needed some money to fund

this effort. Joe Lyon was president at the time. He and I kind of together said maybe we could get people to checkoff some money and put it in the fund to let us promote milk and promote component pricing. We called it the Equity Program. People would checkoff money for each hundredweight produced to the Equity Program to let the Jersey Association push component marketing.

**The Jersey cow may be enjoying more popularity today than ever before. What do you think is the next step needed to further boost her value to today's dairy producers?**

Make more of them. The staff at the Jersey Association is doing a great job. The big boom in Dalhart,

Texas, is going to require a lot of Jerseys. The Jersey Association is helping those dairymen find good Jerseys. They're trying to have the right kind of cows so that they'll make a profit for the owner.

**What did you learn about marketing and promotion working with Elsie and later the Jersey breed?**

At Kansas State, in college, I majored in production but minored in manufacturing. While taking those manufacturing courses, I knew that we needed to sell the product. That was included in my first statement about four things that make people want Jersey milk. So I just always felt that we had to be a part of marketing, as well as a part of producing milk. 