

RIDING THE RAILS WITH RED POLLS... THE ELGINVUE STORY

A Glimpse Into the Past – The Way We Were

by Ken Harwell

Red Polls have a glorious past in this country. The breed simply would not be the potent package of beef genetics it is today without the contribution of a variety of pioneers, each blazing a trail in their own way. Such is the case of Elginvue Stock Farms,



Karl L. Mueller

Arlington, Minn., and brothers Karl and John Mueller. They "rode the rails" to promote Red Polls in an era long since past and helped Red Polls become what they are today – a breed with an unmistakable niche in the beef industry.

It's a tired old cliché, but nevertheless true, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Borrowing from the wisdom of that observation, the Elginvue story shows that the philosophies of those two pioneering brothers, and their father, still fit today.

But first, the Elginvue story or the beginning of the Red Poll bloodlines, simply referred to as the "Elgins," needs to be told. Roy Mueller and his two sons named their operation Elginvue because

the base genetics and breeding came from a bull named Elgin Advancer, a descendant of a great breeding bull, Melbourne Advancer. Melbourne Advancer was bred by F.A. Sloan. John had seen offspring of this bull exhibited by Fred Esterly and was duly impressed. Elgin Advancer was used as a foundation for "The Elgins", thus coining the name Elginvue (or a view of Elgins).

In their operation, the three Muellers (Roy and his sons, Karl and John), had distinct responsibilities. For example, Roy was the boss and thus was "The Ramrod". John was responsible for the breeding program and was "The Breeder", while Karl was in charge of showing and promoting and was "Mr. Showman". They respected each other's area of authority and used those names frequently in their advertising.

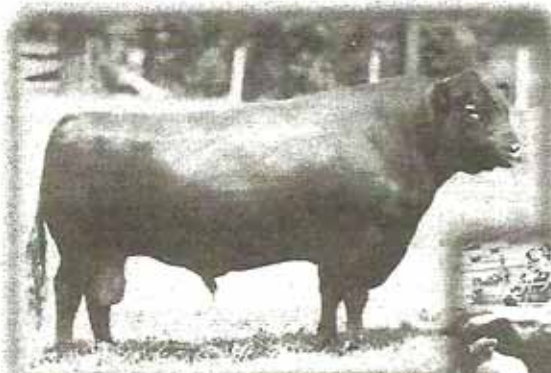
The incredible show record achieved by Elginvue Stock Farms from the period of 1947 through 1954

throughout the Midwest State Fair circuit, Canadian National Shows and National Red Poll Shows is unlikely to be matched, ever. Elginvue, in that period, won an amazing 64.8% of all classes in which they competed (a total of 729) and 61.7% of all championships, both divisional and grand (a total of 264).

Karl was the spearhead of those unbelievable accomplishments. And it began at age 10 when Karl and John walked their 4-H calves 4 ½ miles into Arlington to compete at the Sibley County Fair and then walked them back home when the fair was over.

The beginning of Karl's "Box Car Days" followed shortly after his state fair days. For eight years, Karl

used the rails and his own customized boxcar to haul the show string of Red Polls. According to articles written about those days, the most suitable type of boxcar to use



(above) Gold Coin Advancer, who was a son of foundation sire Elgin Advancer AR, was Junior Champion at the 1942 National Show for Elginvue. (right) Three Elginvue cows were milked in the "Udder Class" at the 1952 National Show. "Mr. Showman" Karl Mueller is milking the cow at left.



were the ones designed to haul automobiles. These could be converted into a two-story arrangement with the upper story used to store ground feed, beet pulp, hay and a large water tank. The show boxes, equipment, cots and "grub boxes" were all stored there.

The real challenge in traveling by train with the show herd was that every twelve hours the cows had to be milked – by hand. At fairs they could sell the milk to people showing swine, but most often it just had to be dumped. While this might seem very foreign to the fast, modern way we do things today, it was an important step in promoting Red Polls. Karl made many direct sales on these trips, further validating the value of the investment Elginvue made by "taking the show on the road."

In those days, a different type of animal was featured. Those were the days of emphasis upon the dual

(continued on page 32)