



“STAR”

1939-1979

Star climbed out, stuttering, bawling, breech, unruly child with a tomboy forelock. July 17, 1939, and war was in the barnyard air, and mud, and straw, and methane gas.

As a calf herself she sucked on mother's milk, and an idea formed in an oblong head. What a career one could have taking food into the body and making food for other bodies. What a triumph, to turn green Wisconsin grass into breakfast for the millions.

Star grazed and grew, broad in the shoulder and staunch in the rump, and when the day came that she was mounted in the barnyard, she took charge of it all. She was never coy or dumb, she always determined and resilient. She turned the bull's push into her own affirmation. She was an artist of the long pasture.

Milk flowed, tons of it. Milk by the canister, by the crate, by the tanker, by the refrigeration car. It streamed from her glands like an army of paint, it poured across the Wisconsin

milkshed.

One-year-olds in Chicago sucked, and whole families in Michigan. Old men breakfasting alone in apartments soaked toasted bread in her milk. Convents of bustling women emptied steel milk cans to the last white drop. Young women peeled away the cardboard stop, and spooning the cream into coffee cups.

These are the figures: 325,000 pounds of milk, 100,000 gallons, a half million quarts shimmering and condensing in milkmen's carriers, a million pints from one mighty engine.

Years passed, tourists from across the farm belt came to the county fair, came to the state fair, to behold the gracious, generous beast. Thirty calves, each with the identical forelock, were her offspring.

At the age of 38 years, the equivalent of 230 human years, the oldest cow in history, still put in her hours at the pump, surrendering daily 15 pounds of high-butterfat milk.

On January 16, 1979, in the same weathered barn she was born in, Star knelt and died. No life, no milk, no chinking glass, this titan of production, this heroine of health, this raiser of children, this fortifier of America, elided into memory.

"It seems so empty now," the woman who led her to pasture all those years, said of the old milk barn.

"She was a good creature, a hard worker. She was a friend."