

# Dairy farmer leaves strange legacy

BY JANE BRESEE  
Staff Correspondent

A large model of a sailing ship is a strange legacy for a dairy farmer to leave the world. This is the story as far as it can be pieced together.

Karl Markert, the creator of the ship model, was born in 1905 in Weinsberg, West Germany. He worked as a blacksmith in Germany and came to the United States in 1928 where he was employed by a bus company on Long Island.

As the story goes - he saw a picture of a German sailing ship on a postcard, probably one sent to him from Germany, and for some reason the picture inspired him to make a small replica of the ship. Perhaps he had always dreamed of being a sailor and was captivated by the grace and beauty of sailing ships; perhaps he was just making a fancy cabinet for a radio which in those days was quite a novelty; or maybe he was homesick and needed something to take up his time.

Karl made detailed blueprints and afterward built the model in his spare time in the basement of a friend's house. It took him three years to complete it.

The model ship is not a small work of art. It is constructed from strips of brass layered and shaped to form the hull. There are three tall masts, holding 17 copper rectangular sails and 4 triangular lateen sails, also copper. The model measures 4 by 6 feet from stem to stern.

The sailing ship is perfect in every detail right down to the one inch door on the deck house which opens and closes on tiny hinges. Miniature life boats, each supplied with diminutive oars, are hung at intervals along the deck.

The rigging is strung exactly as a real ship would be, but wires are used instead of rope, and fastened with little pulleys to the railings and deck. It is a maze of detail - even to the "rope" ladders leading to the top of each mast.

As an added whimsey, Mr. Markert installed a radio (which no longer works) under the deck, and lights inside the hull to shine through the real portholes.

He named her the El-Ba Rose



Markert's great-niece, Karen Laman, marvels at the tiny lifeboat on the ship model at her home. Her mother, Mary Ann Laman, remembers admiring the ship as a child when she visited the Markerts at their farm.

Preoccupied with making the model ship, young Markert must have survived the depression in the early 30's on Long Island. During that decade he met a girl, also a German immigrant, and married her.

In the early 1940's, the young couple moved from the city to a dairy farm near Greenwich, New York, near Sarasota. Why they moved is a question no one can answer: perhaps there was no opportunity for advancement where he worked, maybe he had always dreamed of being a farmer and was sick of city living, or he might have become a farmer to escape the draft for the second World War. He couldn't have been blamed for that as for a soldier he would have been cast an enemy to his own relatives and friends in Germany.

The niece of Mrs. Markert, Mary Ann Laman of Waverly, New York, who supplied this information, visited the farm when she was small.

It was a small dairy farm, she remembers, and remote - the mailbox was a mile away from the house. Her uncle loved horses and had a couple of riding horses in addition to his working team. Of course, he shod them himself, having been as blacksmith in Germany. He must have also loved German Shepherd dogs, for two are evident in one of the snapshots saved by his sister-in-law, Mary Ann's mother.

Mary Ann believes her aunt and uncle never took a vacation away from the farm nor ever went back to visit Germany. They lived on the farm for over 30 years until one day in 1974 when Mr. Markert went out with the dogs to get the cows, the dogs came back without him. He died as he would have wanted - doing his regular chores.

Soon after that, Mrs. Markert gave the ship model to Mary Ann, and a few years later, Mrs. Markert died also.

The Markerts had no children of their own. They left practically nothing except the ship model, the plans for it,

and some snapshots. The farm was sold and apparently not even a horseshoe was saved as a remembrance.

There is no trace of any other work of art Mr. Markert might have created. Surely he must have gone about his farming with the same meticulous attention to detail exhibited in making the ship, but it is not remembered or recorded.

Now the ship is in the huge Victorian home of Don and Mary Ann Laman at 313 Chemung Street in Waverly, New York. The Laman's wish it could be seen by many more people in order to be fully appreciated.

The Laman's themselves value antiques. Don has a part time business refinishing and selling antique furniture. The old carriage house out back is full of furniture beautifully restored.

Upstairs in the Laman's lovely old home, the model sailing ship, the El-Ba Rose, rests, a silent monument to a clever young man's forgotten dream. What a unique legacy to leave the world!



Karl Markert, now older, and dressed in working clothes, is seated proudly astride his prize horse.

His farm buildings are in the background.



The young Karl Markert, proud of his recent accomplishment stands happily beside the sailing ship model which took him three years to build.

## Homestead Notes