

He Has for 33 Years

'...Stirring Buttermilk Beats Bug Chasing...'

By BOB NEWCOMB
Of The Register-Guard

Emile "Chris" Christensen decided long ago that "I'd rather stir buttermilk than be a bug-chaser." He's never regretted the decision.

For the past 33 years Christensen has been stirring buttermilk in his own creamery in downtown Eugene. He is co-owner with his wife, Alice, of Christensen's Dairy Store, at 149 E. Broadway.

"We're only a small creamery—probably the only one of our size in the state," Christensen says. And he acknowledges that his business is something of an anachronism in today's business world where the trend is for large consolidations. "But we're just too dog-gone bullheaded to quit," he declares.

Today at 63, Christensen is a stout, vigorous man with ruddy cheeks, an eager grin and a head capped with wavy white hair. He recalls he was just 12 years old when he decided to go into the creamery business.

Christensen's father was a native of Norway and was a methodist minister at Stanwood, Wash., while Christensen was growing up. "There wasn't much money in ministering," Christensen reflects today, "but we had five acres of land so I bought a cow, and then another, and sold milk to a creamery. And I saw even then that my future was in manufacturing, not in milking cows."

Christensen remembers that as a boy he was impressed by the creamery in Stanwood, and especially by the life of the bacteriologists—"bug-chasers"—who worked there. To him those specialists seemed to be leading "soft lives," an impression that later proved false, he says. But indirectly it started him on his long career in Eugene—one which he describes today as "wonderful and rewarding."

In 1917, Christensen moved with his parents to Portland, served a short time in the Navy during the final months of World War I, and then entered Oregon State College at Corvallis (then known as Oregon Agricultural College).

"They used to call it the 'Cow College,'" Christensen recalls with a smile. "But I've never been insulted by it. Cows have treated me pretty good for a long time."

Christensen caught his first sight of Eugene while still a student at Corvallis. "I thought then, and I've always thought, Eugene was the prettiest town I've ever seen. I knew then I wanted to come back some day."

He came back in January, 1922, just one month after graduating from OSC with a bachelor of science degree in bacteriology. For 18 months he worked in a dairy plant here, but then took a job as a chemist in the bacteriology department of the Carnation Milk Co. in Portland, a position he held until 1927. It was during those years, he confides, "I decided bug-chasing was not for me."

Bacteriology, Christensen says, is the basis for all creamery production, and his experience in the field has been helpful to him. "But I prefer stirring buttermilk," he says. In 1927 he returned again to Eugene, and has called it home ever since.

The years leading up to the depression of 1929 were hard ones, Christensen recalls. "I soon found myself out of a job and I couldn't find work for love nor money." At a time when many businessmen were closing down, Christensen—then 30—invested all his savings (\$900) in the creamery and cafe that he still operates today.

"I always wanted a creamery of my own—one where everything would be under my own fingers," he says. Since that time, his Eugene creamery has become an integral part of his life.

Dressed in white work clothes, rubber boots, and standing in the tiny creamery where he has labored almost constantly for more than three decades, Christensen can reach in only a few short strides all of his manufacturing equipment. There are a dozen or more empty 10-gallon milk cans lining a rack, a small ice-cream freezer, a wooden vat where he makes cottage cheese and more milk cans in a tub of



EMILE CHRISTENSEN
'...Too Bullheaded to Quit'

water where he mixes bacteria and milk until it becomes buttermilk.

"This is my whole life," he says. The creamery, which occupies no more than half of the store area, is joined to the front portion of the building, containing a lunch counter and grill managed by Mrs. Christensen.

All of the dairy products he makes—butter, milk, ice cream and cottage cheese—are sold only to customers, either to cafe patrons or "over the counter."

Eugene has gone through some dramatic changes in the past 30 years, but Christensen's business has remained an island of the past, almost in the center of Eugene's fast-growing downtown center. Almost all of the store's equipment is the same as it was in 1929. Cafe patrons can still drink all the buttermilk they want for ten cents—only a nickel more than was charged during depression days.

Christensen laments the bygone days when a man could launch himself into a private business with an investment of \$900. Today, he says, "to start a similar business would cost a man from \$60,000 to \$75,000."

Christensen says he has no plans for retirement. When the lease runs out on the creamery store building in several years... maybe then. Until then? "I'll keep right on stirring buttermilk."



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FASHION

BMR

reporter

There's every indication that the second annual Northwest Charity Horse and Fashion Festival on June 8, 9 and 10 will be a complete sell-out. The two sponsoring groups — Eugene Hunt Club and the Eugene Welfare League—report a large demand for tickets already. They're on sale at the Thrift and Gift Shop, 2839 Willamette St., or you may secure ticket application blanks in our store and other Eugene business houses. Specific information concerning times and prices will be given if you telephone DI 3-4621.

The three-day affair will start on Friday with a cocktail dance and fashion show in the Fair pavilion before the Friday evening horse show. We're doing the fashions, and are presenting a very special "first." It's a showing of American Boutique Collection which will be exclusively ours in Oregon. Naturally, we'll be telling you more about this before the show.

Saturday night's spectacular performance on the tankard will be followed by a champagne supper and dance, with a Sunday afternoon horse show climaxing the ambitious project to benefit charity.

And now for our newest love — Safari Brown. It's a "brown" brown, an exciting look for summer, replacing the cloyed "little black" dress and much, much smarter. You can tell we've gone Safari-Brown-happy when you see our new store decor and you'll have all the thrills of a big game hunter as you follow our Safari Brown fashion trail through the jungle.

Brown as the freshest new color for summer makes good sense and is partly responsible for bringing back the chicness of the white shoe. Bone white accessories with brown is an unbeatable combination any place, any time. Equally smart is the use of gold accessories — even for street wear. Don't overdo it but give your brown costume impact with gold shoes fashioned with stacked leather heels or a smashing gold handbag. Gold sandals or things are terrific for patio wear, too.

Brown, you'll find, will stimulate your imagination. For example, Vogue Magazine shows a flawless brown basic dress topped by a sensational pink hat. You'll like the possibilities of the orange and yellow tones, too, to paint your own fashion picture.

We're so enthusiastic about Safari brown that we've secured it in almost every type of garment — sleek little sheath, casual voiles and lawns (in a great rejuvenation of these fabrics), floating chifons for after-five, crisp blouses and shorts and even swim suits!

On the subject of fashion, is there a woman who doesn't yearn for a wig? We think they're the greatest and we've found an inexpensive version for only \$18.00. It takes very little practice to adjust them and you can easily coax them into almost any demilure, second floor.



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