

## Portrait Of A Dairy Leader—RCMA Honors Art Little

BATAVIA, NY — Art Little was born and raised on a small dairy farm in the hills of New Hampshire. After seeing his father struggle to earn a living through dairying, he decided he would devote his life to improving the dairy farmer's status.

For this devotion to the farmers in the Northeast, the Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency (RCMA) presented Little with a plaque to thank him for his fifteen years of service to its dairy farm family members. RCMA members are especially grateful to Little for giving "that extra effort" that has been a major factor in the current success of RCMA.

Indeed Little's work on behalf of dairy farmers did go beyond the call of duty. Even after his 1984 heart attack, which his doctor said would disable him for life, he continued to work for RCMA because it was a cause he believed in.

In 1973, when dairy farmers were caught in the most serious cost/price squeeze within the last half century, Little helped bring the first over-order pricing agency into being, and began establishing fluid milk prices above the Government-set price.

According to Little, dairy farmers were in "dire straights" and many people traveled to Washington to see about improved farm prices, but the United States Secretary of Agriculture refused to give a price increase through the Federal Order System.

"Under the advice of the Director of the Dairy Division, Yankee Milk (now Agri-Mark), Richmond Co-op, Nedco, Mass. Co-op Milk Producers Federation, Upstate, Niagara, and Dairylea Co-ops joined together to form a common marketing agency. RCMA came into being on June 23, 1973 when the first officers were elected from

these eight cooperatives; and I was asked to be the Executive Director in August," explained Little.

Although working full time as the economist and office manager for the Northeast Dairy Cooperative Federation, Little accepted the position, and began to consider what the agency's organizational structure should be. Under Little's guidance, RCMA was effective for 18 months, between 1973 and '75, in New England and Western New York in establishing prices over those set by the Federal Order. "We collected \$22 million in 'over-order premiums' for dairy farmers," said Little. "In August 1975, we established our last over-order premium at that time because of low membership and market competition," he explained.

In December, Fairdale Farms of Bennington, VT charged Yankee Milk and RCMA with "price-fixing and monopoly" said Little. Being the only RCMA employee, Little acted as advisor for the lawyers from the two law firms in New York and Connecticut who worked on the 9-year long case. Although still employed at Nedco, Little spent 75% of his time on the lawsuit. "I was so convinced that RCMA was the only way to go, it seemed the only thing to do," explained Little.

During these nine years, Little continued to push RCMA to all dairy farmers, attending meetings throughout New England and New York State and answering questions about RCMA. The lawsuit ended in August 1984, when the US Supreme Court refused to hear the case.

Shortly after that, Little suffered a heart attack which incapacitated him for four months from



his role in RCMA and his brand new position as Assistant to the Vice President of Membership at Dairylea Cooperative in Syracuse, NY. "It appeared that I would never go back to work; but I firmly

believe it was through my faith and my determination not to be disabled that I got back into the workforce," Little said. He returned to work in the fall of 1984 only to find that RCMA was on the front burner again. According to Little, independent producers wanted to be part of RCMA this time. Therefore, on legal advice, the RCMA by-laws were restructured to allow for his.

From early '85 to late '86, Little worked with many dedicated volunteers traveling throughout the 11 states in the Northeast to sign up dairy farmers, estimated to be nearly 30,000 in all. Little became physically exhausted from this sign-up effort of scheduling as many as five meetings per week, sometimes twice a day, in the afternoon and evening in different locations.

This led to another health failure in late 1986, at which time his doctor forbid him to keep up his fast pace and ordered him away for two weeks. Although very difficult for him, Little decided he must notify the RCMA Board that he would withdraw from his position as Executive Director as soon as they could find a replacement for him.

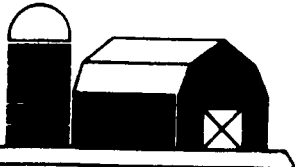
In January 1987, Ed Anna was hired to fill the position. Little worked 100% for Dairylea from then until mid-1987, at which time Anna requested Little's assistance at RCMA. Since then, Little has been working for RCMA on a part-time basis. He said he enjoys the work, but "it's difficult for me to understand why all producers won't participate in this program, where there is no danger of losses and much to be gained."

Little said, "I've always been hopeful that when I'm through, dairy farmers will be a little better off than they would have been if I wasn't around." According to Little, the whole RCMA business has been difficult on his family, but they have been very supportive of everything he has done, "particularly my wife Helen". Little said, "Although I missed a lot when my three girls were growing up, I worked hard for RCMA because I wanted to help dairy farmers. I firmly believe that RCMA is the only way dairy farmers are going to get any price relief or improved income over the long term. I feel we are making headway through RCMA; we are improving the status of the dairy farmer."

### NEWS FROM

REGIONAL COOPERATIVE  
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**RCMA**



### RCMA Announces 28 Cents For October Milk Premium

BATAVIA, NY — The Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency (RCMA), the 22,000-member dairy farmer organization, paid to its members a 28¢ cash premium per hundred pounds (cwt) of milk shipped during October.

"We have done what many people didn't believe was possible," said RCMA Executive Director Ed Anna. "We distributed \$37 Million in our first 14 months of payouts (since September 1987); and farmers will receive many more RCMA premiums in 1989 because we're stronger than ever!"

Anna said 1988 was a good year for RCMA and its farmers. "The 28¢ per cwt. premium on October milk is double the January premium of 14¢ per cwt." According to Anna, the highest premium paid to members so far was 30¢ per cwt. on milk shipped during April 1988.

When asked what has contributed to the success of RCMA, Anna said the farmers have made RCMA successful by standing

together, "perhaps like they have never stood together before in the Northeast".

Anna explained that whenever dealers decided they wouldn't participate in the RCMA program, dairy farmers promised not to ship their milk to those dealers. "When those promises came long, loud and clear from hundreds of producers and dairy farm leaders, dealers came to realize that RCMA was, and is, a force to be reckoned with," said Anna.

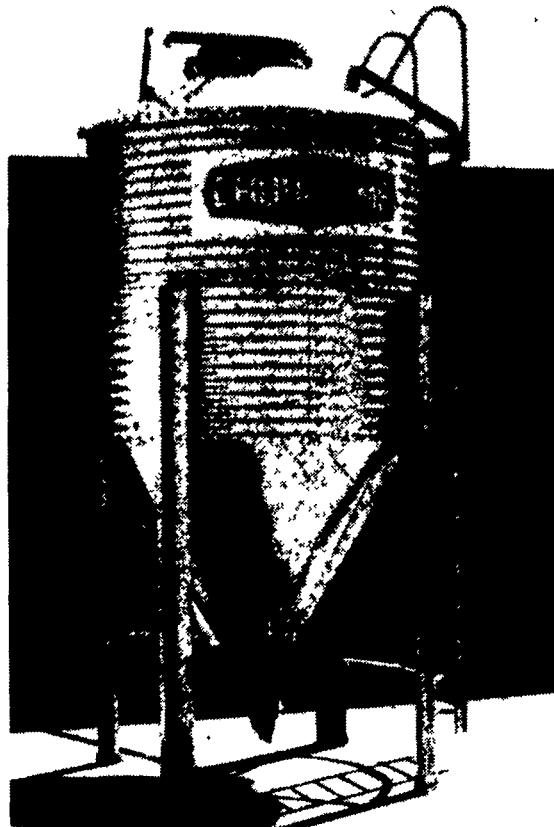
"RCMA is a force with compassion and understanding," he said, "first for dairy farmers, and secondly, for processors and consumers." Anna said RCMA has been successful because it has been "good for farmers, good for processors, and good for consumers."

Although RCMA is strong, some farmers still have not received the peace of mind that comes with pricing their own milk. Anna said, "RCMA encourages all of these farmers to join." Call: 1-800-634-3723.

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