



Of Legacies and Leaders

In early February, I attended the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC) annual meeting. Topics discussed at this year's meeting included how to plan strategically for an uncertain time and how to create value for all members. What stood out in my mind about this year's meeting though, was the realization that it was the last major national meeting John Dilland would attend representing MMPA members and sharing his expertise in cooperative matters with managers from around the nation. John has served MMPA for 35 years of our 94-year history, and my calculator is telling me that he has therefore witnessed 37 percent of that history. In that time he has seen "the good, the bad and the ugly," but he has consistently given his all to aid us in achieving our goal as captured in our mission statement of "marketing our members' milk to the greatest advantage possible."

NCFC is a federation of co-ops formed to promote and protect the value of farmer cooperatives. MMPA is a member of NCFC. MMPA's General Manager and Director of Finance attend the NCFC meeting each year, giving them the opportunity to meet with their peers from a variety of other farm co-ops. Two members of the MMPA Board of Directors attend the meeting on a rotating basis, to allow for exposure for all board members. Those who attend then report back to the rest of the board, sharing what they learned about co-op governance and other pertinent information. I've never heard

MMPA directors who attended say that they didn't think the time spent attending wasn't a good time investment, and the same is true of the General Manager.

In the years I have been a member of MMPA there have been three General Managers. When I became a member—and sometime later when I served on the Advisory Committee—the General Manager was Jack Barnes. Jack not only supported our industry during his tenure, but he also continued to support our industry after his retirement. I remember him working in his community educating people not to fear new technologies like rBST. I've always admired Jack for his professional manner, service to MMPA members, and for hiring John Dilland in 1975 in his first position at MMPA as Controller of Finance.

Next came Walt Wosje as General Manager. I had the opportunity to know Walt on a different level than I had known Jack. I first knew Walt from the member standpoint, then as an Advisory Committee member, and later as a member of the MMPA Board of Directors. Being a board member meant working with the General Manager more closely and more often than I had before. With a clearer understanding of the General Manager position and its duties, my respect for the position grew. I witnessed in Walt a great dedication to MMPA members and to our mission statement. I admired his ability to connect with members in a professional manner.

John Dilland is the only GM I've known as a member, Advisory Committee member, board member and now as MMPA President. Even though I've known John throughout the years in his various roles, just as you have, I am privileged to have had the last three years as president to experience firsthand the dedication John has to MMPA and the co-op philosophy. Using the strength of co-op marketing power and collaborating with other dairy co-ops has added significantly to the bottom line of all dairy producers. John embodies the spirit of MMPA, and it is that spirit that has led to the collective success we as members and as a co-op have enjoyed. He treats members and his staff with a quiet, steady respect and is respected in return. John and his staff have worked diligently to protect members' equity in their co-op while enhancing pay prices.

We all know that change is inevitable. John says it's time to move on, time to give someone else a chance to lead. He says it's his time to give something back to the community. I think he has already given far more than he has taken from the greater community as well as the dairy community, and we wish him well in his retirement. Building a winning team that will ensure the continued success of MMPA is probably the greatest legacy any of us can leave behind. John can take pride in knowing he has carried on the tradition of leaving MMPA well positioned for the future.

Ken