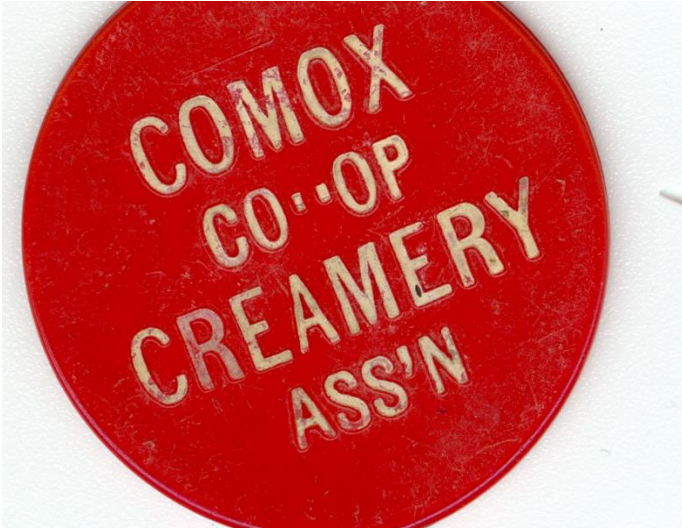


**THE VAN REEUWYK FAMILY AND THE GROWTH
OF MILK DISTRIBUTION ON NORTHERN
VANCOUVER ISLAND FROM 1953
AS RECALLED BY BRAM VAN REEUWYK**



**ON HIGHWAY 19 AT BLACK CREEK ON A SNOWY
JANUARY 29, 1954 MORNING**



**CAMPBELL RIVER/NORTH
VANCOUVER ISLAND MILK
DISTRIBUTION FOR THE
COMOX CO-OP CREAMERY
ASSOCIATION
CIRCA 1953/69
AS RECALLED BY
BRAM VAN REEUWYK**

In the early 1950's northern Vancouver Island experienced a major growth boom centered in Campbell River with the construction of the John Hart hydroelectric dam and generating station on the Campbell River in 1949. As result of this new electrical supply, Crown Zellerbach Company expanded to the area building and then operating a large pulp & paper complex, opening in 1951. In 1955 construction crews began work on Quadra Island to tunnel/drill/blast/and remove Ripple Rock in Seymour Narrows. In 1955 BC Power Commission began construction of two additional hydro-electric dams and generating stations upstream from the John Hart Dam (at Ladore Falls and Upper Campbell Lake). Western Mines began preparations for a copper/lead/zinc mine at Buttle Lake in the Strathcona Park area. As well, both the logging and fishing industries were prospering and growing at the surrounding islands and mainland inlets.

Until the late 1950's the northern terminus of the Island Highway was at Campbell River, therefore dairy product (and all freight) for businesses north of Campbell River on the east coast of Vancouver Island was shipped by Union Steamship or Coast Ferries direct from Vancouver. The west coast of Vancouver Island dairy customers (including Ucluelet, Tofino, Gold River) were served by freight ship from Port Alberni.

In 1951 my father, Peter van Reeuyk (1915-2011), had immigrated to Canada from Holland, settling in the Comox Valley with my mother Mary and my two sisters Maria, and Yolanda. Dad found construction work immediately at Comox Airport building the RCAF hangars. For his first day of work as a laborer in Canada, Dad dressed very formally including a tie. He quickly learned from his fellow workers that this was not the appropriate dress-code for a construction worker. Dad actually enjoyed working with the public and had been the owner/operator of a home delivery service in

Amsterdam selling butter, cheese, and eggs. His goal was to find a similar line of work in Canada. He applied for a Driver/Salesman position at the Comox Co-op Creamery Association while continuing to work at the Comox airport. In August 1953 the then manager of Comox Creamery arrived at our home to hire Dad for the driver-salesman position on one of the two routes serving Campbell River daily (ex-Wednesday & Sunday) from the Courtenay plant. Dad was delighted with this new opportunity.

The van Reeuyk family leaving Rotterdam on the MV Veendam November 29, 1951. I am standing by dad who is waving.



On his milk route Dad soon recognized a market opportunity to also sell eggs to his home delivery customers. He then purchased 500 chicks to raise on the farm the family had rented in Courtenay. Several months later with much chicken-raising assistance from the entire family, he was successfully selling eggs on his route.

By 1955 the volume of dairy products for the two Comox Co-op Creamery Association routes to Campbell River had by far exceeded the service capacity of the routes due to the building and construction boom. Several times per week Comox Creamery would be required to dispatch an “over-load” truck for the routes. Dad then approached Comox Creamery (new) manager Jack Parkin regarding the start of a distributorship based in Campbell River. Both parties agreed and signed a 5-year distribution contract to service the area from a branch depot, effective January 1956. Our family moved to Campbell River in the mid-term of my 5th grade at Bevan School. Dad hired Ernie

Winnig to continue as the driver for the second route serving the area. He also purchased a third (larger truck) for the daily product haul to Campbell River from the Courtenay plant.

Our entire family assisted in establishing the local presence of the business, with my sister Maria working on Saturdays' by swamping on home delivery routes and part-time after-school book-keeping. I was a swamper on routes as well, and washed the trucks every Wednesday after school. In 1959 when I was age 14, Dad had determined that I was "tall-enough" to drive and I was dispatched to make deliveries to BC Packers on Quadra Island for the seasonal business spike provisioning the seine boats on weekends, occasionally by ferry and occasionally by launching the family's 15 foot boat. As well, my Mother and I loaded our small Austin car with cases of dairy product for home service sales at the Bloedel, Stewart & Welch logging Camp 5 (20 dusty km) north/west of Campbell River. I recall that our first week sales were very successful and we quickly sold out of product. The following week we loaded the Austin with even more product to avoid selling out of product early. However, when the Camp 5 customers were canvassed that second week, we heard time and again, "no milk today thank you, we have *been to the river*". I was puzzled by the "*been to the river*" response, until Mom informed me that on their pay-day, Camp 5 residents would drive to Campbell River to cash their pay-cheques and purchase their bi-weekly groceries. The Camp 5 route was short-lived. At age 16, now driving legally, I was delivering to Campbell River restaurants after-school as a part-time route-driver.



On Highway 19 at Black Creek. Dad (Peter van Reeuyk) with Comox Creamery supervisor Bill Gullet (inside truck) assisting on a snowy January 29, 1954 morning. The Courtenay to Campbell River highway (19) had recently been paved, but could still be challenging in the winter, so a plant employee would be assigned to assist with home service deliveries.

The first Comox Creamery branch in Campbell River (circa 1961) – it was then a 4 truck/4 driver operation (L–R): Allan Sloat; Peter van Reeuyk; Wally Birtwistle. (Missing from the photo is Jon Prins)



From 1956 to 1969 our Campbell River branch grew from 2 routes, 2.25 drivers and 3 trucks; to 8 routes, 10 drivers and 8 trucks. In 1965 the Store and Home Service routes to Kelsey Bay/Sayward were acquired by the Campbell River branch (they had been served for the past 6–years from Courtenay by Port McNeil Milk Ltd.)

Also in 1965 the Tahsis (Logging) Company built a pulp mill and town site in Gold River and the area was connected by public highway to Campbell River, replacing limited access gravel logging roads which had only been available to the public and freight only via Vancouver Island Coach Lines buses. The milk route that could now serve Gold River also delivered dairy orders to the MV Uchuck III, for furtherance to Tahsis Co–op, Tahsis Sawmill as well as various logging camps and stores on the Vancouver Island west coast. Ice Cream orders would be packed in double–lined corrugate boxes and sealed with Dry Ice. The Campbell River branch became a major Dry Ice customer. A Home Delivery route was successfully established in Gold River to compete with the only other dairy brand (Foremost) that was available in Gold River (at the new Super–Valu store) to the new residents. Service to those areas was typically challenging in winter due to the road conditions. During the winters, the delivery trucks frequently required snow–chains, particularly those delivering to Gold River and Kelsey Bay. The Gold River and Kelsey Bay driver would frequently find their stationed Home Delivery truck in those areas “ploughed–in” and covered with a large blanket of snow. It was not a great start to that part of the day.

By 1967 due to the continued growth, Dad determined the business required his full-time sales and management attention. He created a Route Foreman position and offered that to me. I left employment in the electronics industry in Vancouver and returned to Campbell River. My wife Carol then also became involved in the family business by assuming the Book-Keeping duties. Carol also assisted with the occasional re-positioning of the home service trucks that were stationed in Kelsey Bay and Gold River. Carol recalls very tricky winter road conditions over the Menzies Mountain summit, with the truck fish-tailing dangerously from side-to-side.

The second Campbell River Branch of the Comox Creamery in photo from 1968



Dairyland

PETE van REEUWYK
BRANCH MANAGER
RES. 287-7927

1301 ELM
CAMPBELL RIVER, B.C.
TELEPHONE 287-6811

In 1968 Dad was approached by Neil Gray of Fraser Valley Milk Producers Association to sell the Campbell River distributorship to FVMPA for them to consolidate that distributorship for their planned merger with Comox Co-op Creamery Association. On January 4, 1969, Dad was appointed Dairyland's Campbell River Branch Manager.

Dairyland Branch Managers Meeting at Head Office, Sperling, Burnaby ~ 1970



Rear (L-R): **Jack Parkin, District Manager Van Island**; Jack Gray, FVMPA Public Relations; **Henning Skaarup, Branch Manager Port Alberni**; **Bob Curson, Branch Manager Victoria**; Bill Ingles, Branch Manager Terrace; **Bill Granoukus, Port McNeil Milk**; **Dave Mitchell, Branch Manager Powell River**; Doug Hoy, Manager Bulkley Valley Kitimat; Jack Godfrey, District Manager, Interior; Percy Condon, Retail Operations Manager; George Vernon, Sales; Tom Kershaw, Pacific Milk Sales; Charlie Webster, Manager Haney Branch; Sam Fogel, Advertising Coordinator; **Art Mahwinney, Branch Manager Nanaimo Middle (L-R)**: Len Hobson, Branch Manager Prince George; **Bill Gullett, Plant Manager Courtenay**; Bill Hawes BC Distribution Manager; unknown Revelstoke distributor; Jack Aird, Sales Manager Vancouver; unknown, Revelstoke Distributor; G.W. (Bill) Ramsell, Burnaby Wholesale Manager; **Ron Mottershead, Courtenay Branch Manager**. Front (L-R): Jim Kerr, Northern District Manager; Jan Creighton, Burnaby Plant Superintendent; **Peter van Reeuyk, Campbell River Branch Manager**; Moffit Goepel, Dairyland Comptroller; George Rule, Dairyland Sales; Hugh Robin, District Wholesale Manager;

This photo also appeared in the FVMPA employee publication called Milk-Break.

Dad retired from Dairyland in August 1971, and I was appointed to the Campbell River Branch Manager position. Dad then focused on their other business ventures, as well as enjoying 27 winters in southern California sun with my Mother.



Dad handing over the keys of the Dairyland Campbell River Branch office to me in 1971.

I remained as Campbell River Branch Manager until 1983 when Carol and I moved to the Qualicum area (with our 3 children) to manage the Nanaimo and Port Alberni branches. In 1987 I became Courtenay Branch/Plant Manager and in 1990 promoted to Regional Manager Vancouver Island. In 1993 we relocated to Vernon as the Regional Manager Interior BC. We moved to Coquitlam in 2000 to continue working for Dairyland (Saputo in 2001) at the Burnaby office as BC Regional Director of Distribution and Logistics until retiring from a long and rewarding dairy industry career in 2007.

Since 2004 our son Richard van Reeuyk (third generation) has been employed at the Dairyland/Saputo Burnaby office as Transportation Supervisor coordinating the inter-plant product transfers and logistics.

Recalled November 2015 by: *Bram van Reeuyk*