



Leading citizen Robert Little

# Robert Little, 89, venerable businessman - citizen

## spotlight on people

**By Denise Romberg**  
The town of Richmond Hill has been honored with a fantastically creative man. Robert D. Little is that man.

Almost 50 years ago he created a Ford dealership that served not only Richmond Hill, but a surrounding 50 miles radius.

In 1946, he created a book of poetry and from an intensive hobby, he has created his own registered iris hybrids.

He's done a lot in his lifetime. He's seen Richmond Hill grow from a village of 1200 residents to the thriving and virtual suburban city it is today.

R.D., as he's known to many, was born in Campbellville, Ontario.

Back in 1916, when he left school in Guelph, and with his certificate in business, he began his induction into the automotive industry.

He took time, almost 20 years, to learn the ins and outs of the world's leading business.

He worked for Ford Motor Company for six years. He spent a few years with General Motors too — just to sort of round out his education.

**Joined air force**

But his education, at this point was disturbed by the war. In 1917, Little joined the United States Air Force. As a pilot, he was stationed in Texas.

When he was discharged, two years later, he returned

to Ford. This time he was secretary to the chief engineer at the Ford plant, then located at Highland Park in Detroit.

Things started going badly for Ford. Their competitor, General Motors was growing, and Henry Ford's finances were suffering.

"He ran out of money and had to close down the plant for six weeks", Little explained.

**Believed in Ford**  
Nevertheless, Little believed in Ford.

In 1927, when Little moved to Richmond Hill and opened his Ford dealership, he saw the potential. The car was an unusual product then.

His first big seller was the Model 'A', which came out in 1928.

"We sold 100 Model 'A' Fords in 1930," he says. "There were no salesmen then either. My brother and I sold all the cars".

**Businessman still**  
Little is somewhat removed from the car business today. Sure he breezes into the office each

day to sort through the mail and check out a new car. He dresses in a dapper suit and tie and looks much younger than his 89 years.

His afternoons command other interests. Since his air force days, Little has been writing humorous verse, or limericks.

"I enjoy writing", he says. "I particularly enjoyed writing the poem that was read at the hospital fund raising dinner about a week ago."

One of his first attempts at writing limericks was this, a

contest entry:  
A private from Kalamazoo  
One day found a mouse in the stew,  
Said the sergeant, "Don't shout,  
And wave it about  
Or the others will want one too".

More of his poems have been published in a book called "Rhyme and Reason".

**Loves gardening**  
Little has been an "avid gardener" for many years, he says. "When we built the house on Arnold Street in

1956, I decided to attach a greenhouse to our home". Little specializes in hybridizing irises and lilies. In fact, he has registered and named four different irises he developed.

Little is a member of the Richmond Hill Horticultural Society and a past president of the Ontario Horticultural Association.

**Local politician**

He was a politician too. During the four years he served on town council, he spent a good deal of his time on both the public and high school boards.

Little is a past district governor of the Southern Ontario Lions Clubs and his membership in the Richmond Hill Lions dates back to its inception.



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