

Industry Man of the Year: Jim Reynolds 'sweet' life

BY SARAH HENRY
Record-Eagle staff writer

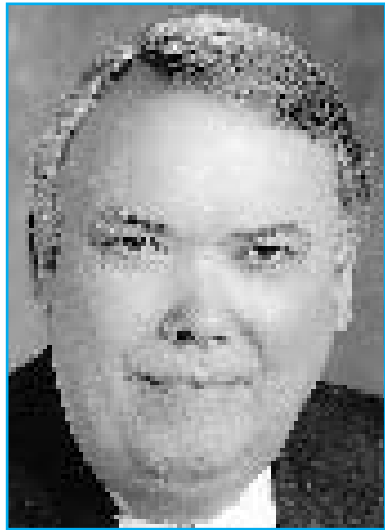
The only thing better than a fresh sweet cherry is one coated in sugar and drenched in chocolate.

Jim Reynolds, a former lawyer from Chicago makes a living out turning the fruit into bite-sized confections and maraschinos.

Reynolds was nominated by the Cherry Marketing Institute and declared Industry Man of the Year by the National Cherry Festival for his leadership of Gray & Company, according to Judy LaCross, director of the Cherry Promotion.

"We feel that he as a person and his company have had a significant impact on the cherry industry," she said. "We all do our part, but some do more, so those are the ones we single out to honor."

When law didn't provide the career challenge Reynolds was looking for, he turned to business — the cherry busi-



Jim Reynolds

ness. He packed his bags and headed east and then west, finally settling in Portland, Ore. where cherries are abundant.

"If somebody told me I was going to be the cherry guy, I would have thought, 'Oh dear, really?'" Reynolds said. "But I'm very content with it today. It's made a good life for me."

The red dye scares of the '70s and '80s left a dent in the maraschino business, but Reynolds took the bull by the horns and now produces 90 percent of the maraschino cherries sold in the United States.

"It's almost impossible to go to the supermarket and buy maraschino cherries that Gray & Company did not make," he said.

Reynolds didn't stop there — Gray & Company also bought out the Queen Anne chocolate cherry cordials from Hershey and now produces them in the largest plant in the world, located in Hart, Mich.

"I thought it was more a cherry product than a chocolate product," Reynolds said. "I thought that if we got in on it we could gain the greatest market share because we would have the lowest cost and could do it more efficiently (than Hershey)."

Reynolds invested in high-tech equipment to produce

the cordials. After some machinery mishaps, the transformation of the cherries into chocolate-covered treats is now a smooth one. Robots drop the cherries into sugar and chocolate and then drop them into trays, he said.

"The cherries that are used in the candy have to be very small," Reynolds said. "So we use the cherries here in Michigan as our primary resource."

A new product, Truffle Cherries, will be available in stores during the starting during the 2003-2004 holiday season, Reynolds said.

"The truffle cherry everybody will like because its outer shell is rich chocolate and then inside is a softer, melt-away type chocolate," he said. "It's not quite a mousse, and then inside that is the cherry."

Reynolds spends much of his time staking out orchards and investigating cherry crops with his favorite companion,

Rosie, a German short hair pointer.

"The cherries are our number one ingredient, so I decided several years ago that wasn't a job I was going to delegate to somebody else," Reynolds said.

He also travels abroad to other cherry-producing countries like France, Italy, Turkey and more.

"I travel to these places so I know how many cherries there are in the world so I know I'm paying the right price," he said.

He said he may need to start depending more heavily on imported cherries due to recent light crops in the United States.

As Industry Person of the Year, Reynolds will attend a special presentation at the Northwest Michigan Horticulture Research Center at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 8. He will also appear in the DTE Energy Cherry Royale Parade.

National Cherry Festival print winners depict cherry point of view

MELANIE TACOMA
Record-Eagle staff writer

Every year the National Cherry Festival looks for the artist whose work will be the artistic face of the festival. This year, the winner in the adult category is "Cherries by the Bay," submitted by Michele Buday of Traverse City, Michigan.

Buday painted the scene, appropriately titled "Cherries by the Bay," in honor of the years that her family has spent enjoying the National Cherry Festival and the West End Beach near downtown Traverse City.

"The painting shows a real summer feeling," said Patti Schaap, print contest event director.

Buday has lived 21 years on the west side of Traverse City. She recalls riding her bike to the beach on hot summer days and painting area scapes in her mind. "Cherries by the Bay" is Buday's second entry in the National Cherry

Festival's Commemorative Print contest.

Buday has attended various art classes at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City, and operates her own business, Northern Michigan Watercolors, specializing in reproductions of her watercolor artwork. Her artwork can be found on note cards throughout Northern Michigan.

The student winner is Candice Graggf, who graduated this year from Traverse City Central High School and is studying Visual Imaging Technology at TBA Career Tech Center. Her painting features a basket of cherries spilled onto the grass with a bay and lighthouse in the background.

"I live by the water on the Old Mission Peninsula, and am always looking out there," Graggf said. "I thought I could bring in the nature aspect of the Cherry Festival."

"The painting was one my first attempts at watercolor,"

she added. "That was fun."

Kasey Send, 9, of Wisconsin, took first place in the youth category with her print "Cherry Burst," which features cherry people being launched from a volcano. "It's very whimsical," said Schaap. "It's really cute and very different."

"The idea came from my art teacher at school," Send said. "It was a project we did. I had rocks coming out of the volcano, and I colored them red and made them cherries."

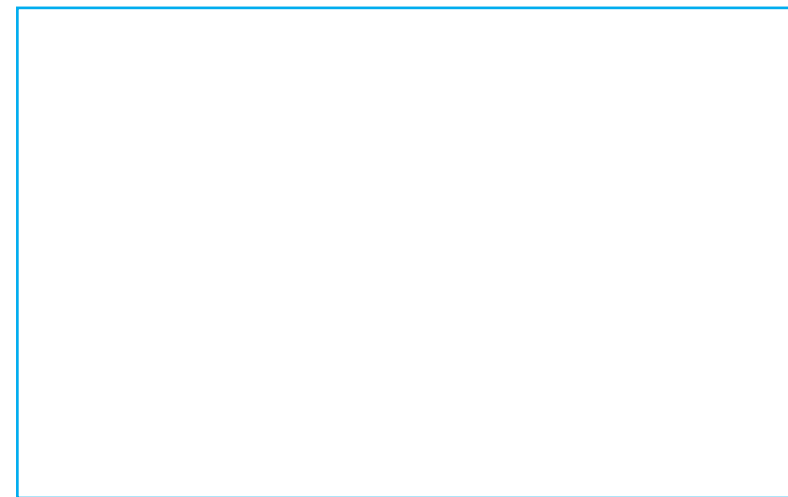
Send, who also won the youth division of the print contest last year, said she probably won't enter the contest again next year, because she wants other kids to have a chance to win next year.

Patti Schaap, director of the print contest, explained that the judges selected winners based on the pictures' color, brightness and on how well the picture promotes cherries and the National Cherry Festival.

"The prints must have something to do with cherries," Schaap said. "Whether they're bursting out of a volcano or setting on a table."

Send will ride in the Touchstone Energy Junior Royale Parade on Thursday, July 10 at 6:30 p.m. and Graggf

will ride in the AAA Michigan Heritage Day Parade on Wednesday, July 9 at 7 p.m. All three winning prints will be displayed in the National Cherry Festival office through the month of July. Buday's print, "Cherries by the Bay" is available for purchase.



The Traverse City Record-Eagle's 'Grand Traverse: Reflections Along the Bay,' a pictorial look at the area, will be sold at the National Cherry Festival's Souvenir Pavilion.