

Investment was a way of life for NCF volunteer Bill LaCourse

BY CATHY STATHAKIS
Special to the Record-Eagle

If one word could describe the life of Bill LaCourse, it would be "involved."

He was involved as a devoted family man, husband and father; he was an involved civic leader, committed to the development of Munson Medical Center and the National Cherry Festival; he was an involved volunteer with organizations such as the Elks Club, Boy Scouts, March of Dimes, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The list of Bill's involvement in the Traverse City community goes on.

When he passed away on May 8 of this year, Bill left a void felt by all who had the privilege of associating with this "involved" man of accomplishment.

But it was his involvement in the Cherry Festival that Bill remained committed to for 50 years and it is the Cherry Festival that, especially at this time of year, appreciates his involvement and, for those who worked with him, they miss him very much.

"Bill was a mentor in my early years with the Festival and a good friend who enjoyed life," said Jack Smith, Festival volunteer and Trustee. "He was totally committed to the Festival, serving in many capacities, doing whatever was necessary to get the job done. He will be greatly missed by the Festival family."

Bill first became involved with the Cherry Festival in 1952, just one year after moving his wife to Traverse City from their home in Wyandotte, MI, to raise their new family, which included their first child, baby daughter Shayrrl. The family moved away for a few years as Bill began his career in the insurance industry, and returned in 1960. Since 1963, Bill was involved with the Cherry Festival until his death, except while caring for his wife Betty who passed away in 1981.

Last year, as a tribute to her ailing grandfather, Aryn McCready, Shayrrl's daughter, competed as a candidate for National Cherry Queen.

"My father always loved the

Bill LaCourse, far right, celebrating a recent Christmas holiday at Jack and Gail Smith's home, along with other members of the National Cherry Festival Family. Bill passed away this May and the Festival's Volunteer Recognition Day will be dedicated to him.



queen's events," Shayrrl said. "He was very paternal with the girls."

Bill volunteered wherever he was needed and held positions as Cherry Festival president in 1986 and 1987, director of general events, parade director, chairman of the Board of Trustees, and director of the Hole-in-One Contest, which he was instrumental in creating.

As an insurance advisor, Bill opened the Traverse City office of the Massachusetts Mutual Insurance Company in Traverse City in 1968 and was past president of the Michigan Life Underwriters Association.

Bill retired in January 1996, after 41 years in the insurance business where he held desig-

nations as Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU), Life Underwriters Training Council (LUTC), and Life Insurance Counselor (LIC). He had served clients through Mass Mutual for 34 years.

Bill always encouraged new clients to become involved in the Cherry Festival and always took time off from work, from a week to 10 days, to participate in the Festival himself. He believed that being involved in community always brought back business.

"I feel strongly about having commitment to community," Bill once said. "It shows people that you are not just interested in yourself — you care about others and you want to help. But it does eventually

flow back and bring business."

One of Bill's more memorable Festival experiences was as parade director in 1976 when President Gerald Ford participated in the Cherry Royale Parade. He was inter-

ested in the details that went into the security planning for a presidential visit, including daily meetings with the State Police, FBI, Secret Service,

See **BILL**, Page 56 ▶



Bringing Dreams To Life, For Life.

Dreams that fit your lifestyle and come with a lifetime structural warranty. Call or visit for *Lindal Living* and *Lindal Planning*, our new color planbooks featuring 82 great floorplans.

Independently distributed by:

LINDAL CEDAR HOMES OF TRAVERSE CITY

425 South Airport Rd. W., Dept. R,
Traverse City, MI 49686

(231) 946-8520
1-800-343-8520

<http://www.leelanau.com/tclindal>

"Over 37 years experience designing and building Lindal Homes"



712-705899-CF

W E E K E N D S O F
G O O D T A S T E

EAGLE'S RIDGE CONFERENCE CENTER
SUNDAY BRUNCH – 8am to 2pm
\$9.95 per adult & **\$5.95** children 12 & under

DOUBLE EAGLE RESTAURANT
Open for Lunch & Dinner
Come and enjoy our new **Healthy Choice Menu**

Showtime Buffets available on selected dates.
Call for more information:
(877)714-8WIN or (231)271-7068
www.casino2win.com

TRAVERSE BAY ENTERTAINMENT

Leelanau Sands Casino - Double Eagle Restaurant
Peshawbestown, Michigan - 20 miles north of Traverse City on M -22

Eagle's Ridge Conference Center
is located behind Leelanau Sands Casino.
Owned and operated by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians