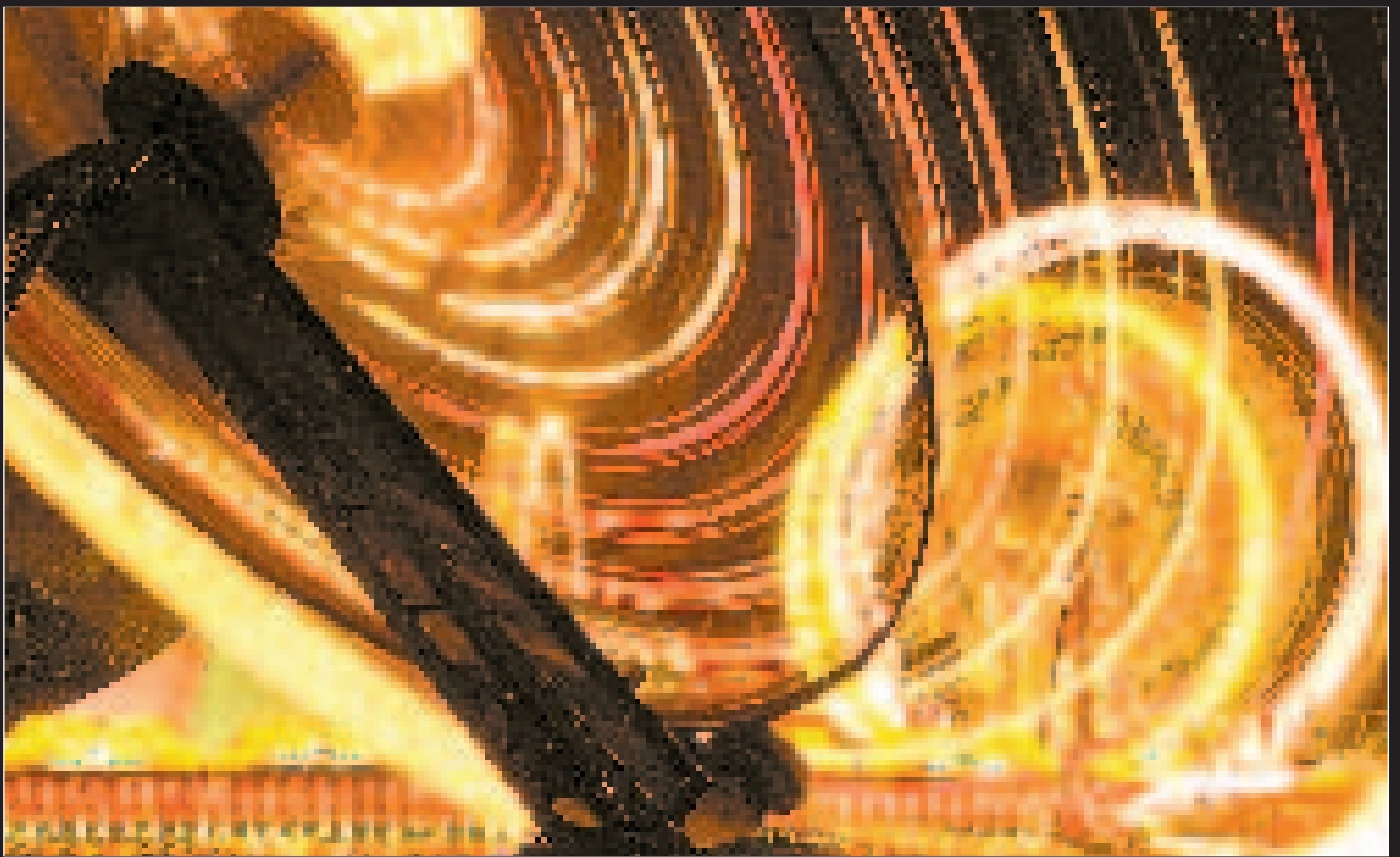


# 2004 NATIONAL CHERRY FESTIVAL

**A LOOK BACK**



Record-Eagle/John L. Russell

The lights of the midway glow during the National Cherry Festival.

## Weather, crowds off — but fun was on

**T**RAVERSE CITY— Tourists came by the thousands to the latest installment of the National Cherry Festival and braved cloudy skies, rain and oft-chilly temperatures for what many considered a successful event.

“I love the Cherry Festival,” said Sheri Freels, a festival ambassador. “I think it’s great. I heard the numbers were down, but it seemed to me every time I was downtown there were plenty of people.”

Tom Kern, Cherry Festival executive director, said the festival started and ended strong, but overall attendance and revenues fell short of expectations.

“So far the revenues are down,” he said. “We’re estimating a decrease of about 20 percent.”

Local business operators say the weather helped them, pulling people away from the beaches and into stores.

“We had a really good week, mostly because of the weather,” said Kerry Glaesmer, owner of Votruba Leather Goods Co. “It was cool and not sunny, so a lot of people were shopping.”

Lori Buchan, owner of The Banana Tree, said her store was almost too busy.

“It was awesome,” she said. “We had an awful lot of business, but we had an awful lot of damage, too.”

With so many people in her store, Buchan said many items were broken,



damaged or stolen.

Cherry Festival week produced few problems for law enforcement, said city police chief Michael Warren.

“We actually had a real laid-back festival,” he said. “We had a lot of arrests and towed a lot of cars, but it was no more than any other year. We had huge crowds especially on Saturday, and there were no problems. Of course there’s a ton of traffic, but you might as well just grin and bear it. It was a great festival from our standpoint.”

Festival week can be taxing for those who live near the ruckus, but some said the influx of people didn’t bother them.

Fifth Street resident Brendan Hall, 16, said he still ventured downtown, despite the crowds.

“I get a little bit sick of how much traffic and commotion there is,” he said. “But it’s not that bad.”

Neighbor Sylvia Mitchell agreed.

“Personally, I like it,” she said. “But if it were like that all summer long I would get tired of it.”

Traverse City resident Kim Skeels attended numerous events, despite the lack of sun.

“It was still fun,” said Skeels, whose daughter, Leah, 7, was a princess for Westwoods Elementary. “We went to both parades, and saw the Blue Angels. Because of the weather we didn’t get down to the Open Space as much, but it was a great week.”

Story by GINA GOODMAN Record-Eagle staff writer

