

Concessionaire OF THE MONTH

BRAD RIBAR, CCE

Loret Foods

White Bear Township, MN - Brad Ribar and his family have been roasting corn and selling cheese curds among other items for over 25 years. *NICA* had a chance to sit down with him and ask him a few questions.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A CONCESSIONAIRE AND A NICA MEMBER?

BRAD RIBAR: I started in the concession business in 1985 and joined *NICA* in, what I think was, its second or third year.

WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING YOU REMEMBER ABOUT NICA?

BR: I remember Gary Crutchfield explaining the idea of putting together a group effort to give individuals a voice.

HOW AND WHY DID YOU GET INTO THE CONCESSION BUSINESS?

BR: I was at the age where I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do for a living; I just knew I didn't want to work for anyone. The idea of a corn stand started in 1980 and finally happened in 1985. At the same time my father-in-law (Jim Peters) asked if I would be interested in going into the cheese curd business with him. I jumped at the opportunity and *Loret Foods* was formed; a name formed by combining the names of our wives Lori and Ethel.



Brad, Lori, Sarah, Libby & Matt Ribar

IF YOU WERE NOT A CONCESSIONAIRE, WHAT WOULD YOU BE?

BR: Good Question! I hope I never have to find out.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A CONCESSIONAIRE?

BR: The excitement of the season, seeing new locations on a weekly basis, always being on the move and under pressure, meeting different friends, the satisfaction you feel at the end of a good day or good event, and the customers that are there to have a good time.

WHAT IS YOUR BEST SELLING FOOD ITEM?

BR: At the *Minnesota State Fair* it's roasted corn. At all other events it's cheese curds.

DO YOU HAVE ANY NEW ITEMS COMING TO YOUR MENU THIS YEAR?

BR: We haven't added any new products in years and are not planning to. We just keep trying to improve on the products we have.



The first Deep Fried Cheese Curds trailer



Corn Roast at the 1999 Minnesota State Fair

WHAT IS SOMETHING PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU OR LORET FOODS?

BR: Most people don't know I spent 19 years working in the sanitation department at the *Minnesota State Fair*. I don't think there was a job or position that I didn't do or have. I still miss it.

HOW HAS THE CONCESSION BUSINESS CHANGED SINCE YOU FIRST STARTED OUT & WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

BR: The obvious changes are nicer equipment, many, **MANY** more regulations (health, electrical, fire, DOT, etc.), and lower margins. My favorite change I've noticed is that concessionaires are more willing to help each other than in the earlier days. It's a hard enough business when we get along; I would hate to see it if we were just out for ourselves.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR CAREER?

BR: Working with my family and watching my kids start to take over. Also the fact that the concession business became strong enough to allow me to get out of the Christmas wreath business.



Brad & Harry's Deep Fried Cheese Curds today



Cheese Curds at the Wisconsin State Fair

WHAT HAS BEEN MOST INFLUENTIAL TO YOUR SUCCESS WITHIN THE PAST FIVE YEARS?

BR: My Kids! And my key help. They are great with the employees and we are nothing without wonderful employees! A lot of press coverage the last few years hasn't hurt either.

WHAT IS THE FUNNIEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED IN YOUR CONCESSION CAREER OR TRAVELS?

BR: The time two friends and myself had to give a presentation at a Zone 4 meeting. Just as we were going to enter the room, one of my buddies passed out. The two of us had to go ahead with the presentation filling his part and not knowing if he was okay or not. It wasn't funny at the time but it's fun to talk about now!

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR FREE TIME?

BR: I love to spend time in the north woods of Minnesota.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT NICA?

BR: The fact that *NICA* puts us on an even playing field with the carnivals in our industry. It gives us a voice! I also enjoy the chance *NICA* provides for fellow concessionaires to get together and share ideas.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS YEAR?

BR: A new trailer from *Century Industries*, no mosquitoes, and my truck reaching 600,000 miles.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH NICA MEMBERS?

BR: Take pride in what you do, and do what you say you will do. ▲



Addison & Bailey, 3 & 4, Working their first Fair