
RCI: Regional Wrap-up



Tours, candy clinic and management — Disney style

Retail Confectioners International (RCI) held its fall regional institute in late September in the Disneyland area of southern California.

TOURS

The much-appreciated networking among peers at the RCI Regional began during the tours of the Los Angeles-area confectionery shops and attractions.

Helen Grace Chocolates

Helen Grace Chocolates of Lynwood, California, was founded in 1944 by Bill and Helen Grace on the occasion of Helen's 30th birthday. In the beginning Bill would make the candy in the evening and Helen would sell it the following day. After several years in one storefront location, they moved to a larger store in Lakewood, which at the time was a growing bedroom community with GIs coming back from World War II. In the early 1950s, an ice cream and candy facility in Lynwood came up for sale and the Graces purchased this along with several stores run by the former owner. In the succeeding years, the Grace family continued to grow their business by expanding their retail locations.

In the 1960s the Boy Scouts came to the company and wanted to do a fundraiser using the fudge Easter eggs for which the company had become well-known. The success of the project launched Helen Grace Chocolates into the fundraising business. A fundraising division was formed and sales personnel began to visit schools, churches and other youth and charitable organizations. In addition to fudge eggs, Helen Grace began offering chocolate bars and boxed chocolates as fundraising items. The fundraising division became the main revenue driver for the company in the late 1970s and remains so today.

Seeking retirement, the Grace family sold the business in 2001 to the owners of Shamrock Corp., a family business out of Greensboro, North Carolina. Shamrock has a school fundraising division.

Helen Grace Chocolates operates a candy kitchen and

four main manufacturing lines at its Lynwood facility, producing creams, caramels, toffee, nut clusters, caramel nut clusters, meltaway truffles and bars.

RCI toured one building dedicated to the kitchen and enrobed items, and one building dedicated to moulded items. Production is about 10,000 11 oz boxes/day for fundraising; the bar-moulding line produces about 100,000/day.

In addition to the production facility, Helen Grace Chocolates maintains a factory outlet at the Lynwood location. The outlet carries a representative variety of packaged products and also serves as a pickup spot for small group fundraising.

In addition to fundraising chocolate sales, Helen Grace Chocolates has seven chocolate shops in the Los Angeles and Orange County region of southern California.

Hawaiian Host

Hawaiian Host of Gardena, California, was founded first in Honolulu by Mamoru Takitani, who had always dreamed of being a candymaker. He purchased a local confectionery and renamed the company Hawaiian Host.

In 1980, the operation expanded to Southern California; the Gardena facility started production the following year. This plant has a total of 70,000 square feet of production space as well as a warehouse. The main items that they produce here are chocolate-covered macadamia nuts, *Maui Caramacs* (caramel with diced nuts covered in chocolate) and chocolate-covered almonds. They also sell salted and unsalted macadamia nuts in cans.

When RCI toured the facility, the company's main line was producing the chocolate-covered macadamia nuts. These were hand-packed into boxes.

Queen Mary

Lunch and a guided tour of the Queen Mary completed the agenda for the first day.

Disneyland

By the time the tours ended and the buses returned to ►