

# Great Grizzly Times

NORTH CENTRAL INDUSTRIES, INC. MARCH 2005 VOLUME 1, ISSUE 6



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12th Season!

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8th Season!

Camille M. Gruesbeck  
Accounts Payable  
2nd Season!

Lori Y. Crespo  
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1st Season!

Jesse Barrera  
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1st Season!

Charlie Phipps  
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20th Season!

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Warehouse Asst. Manager  
8th Season!

Jack Miller  
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18th Season!

Brenda Said  
Production Assistant  
9th Season!

## A Message From The President, Richard B. Shields: China & Fireworks Manufacturing

I just returned from my third trip to China in the last 12 months. I have visited China well over 100 times in my years at NCI. China as you know is the primary source for fireworks coming to the USA. We primarily use a half dozen high quality manufacturers and exporters. They understand the American market and our firm's desire for high quality products at reasonable prices. On this trip I arrived in Hong Kong and then traveled to Guangzhou, Luyang, Changsha, Nanning and finally to Beihai, China. At the present time, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces continue to be the largest producers of consumer fireworks. Beihai and Guangxi provinces lack the number of locations but the producers there are high quality and experienced. Their costs are typically higher but their products are noticeably better. There are hundreds of producers and almost as many that want to be exporters.

Back at our office we receive calls, emails and faxes almost daily from companies wanting to establish a business relationship with my company and the Great Grizzly Fireworks Group. All of our suppliers are carefully selected and scrutinized for their ability to produce quality products. In addition, they must be innovators in product design and marketing. That is exactly why we use them. We value their relationship and knowledge of the manufacturing segment in China. Because of the stiff competition for export business the really good producers place a high value on reliable, longtime import customers such as NCI. The China government and the competition for export markets continue to change the way business is done in China. These days an explosion at a factory in any province will shut down all factories in that area until government safety auditors can visit and inspect all factories in that area. Many factories are forced to close or move as cities have grown around their facilities. Many factories have told me that it is much more difficult to find workers to staff their factories than it was just a few years ago. Costs continue to rise in China for supplies, chemicals and staff. Shaky producers are at risk to be fined or go to jail if their company was to have an explosion. Local government is also held accountable by the China government in the event of a tragic explosion. Shipping rates are on the rise and only stiff competition among the shippers has kept increases to a minimum. China has market pressures and many government regulations just like in the USA.

Many products that we sell are still cheaper than the selling price in the late 80's or early 90's. Expect this to change in the not too distant future. China is changing rapidly and we expect our industry to be involved in that change. We go to China to anticipate where the market is going and to be on the leading edge of these changes. The good news is that the long time reliable and well-managed fireworks entities in China continue to do fine. The others are closing and going out of business. Such is the business cycle both here and abroad. The business cycle is changing in China. It will change for China's customers as well.

Dear Boomer,

*(A Table of Contents with a twist!)*

Stacey's role at NCI has really changed - what do we have her doing now?

**FIND OUT IN STACEY'S ARTICLE ON PAGE 2!**

You didn't get to hear from Camille her first season so how is she doing entering her second season of fireworks?

**FIND OUT IN HER ARTICLE ON PAGE 2!**

Mandy is here one minute, gone the next - and back again!

**FIND OUT WHY IN HER ARTICLE ON PAGE 3!**

There is a new person answering your calls - meet her here!

**LORI WILL TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT HERSELF ON PAGE 3!**

What's new pussy cat, what's new???

**GET THE INSIDE SCOOP ON PAGE 3!**

Never visited us? See our commitment to customer service!

**CHECK OUT DISPLAYS ON PAGE 4!**



## Upcoming Industry Events

### Indiana Fireworks Distributors Association (IFDA)

Dues are now being accepted for 2005 membership. If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Richard Shields, IFDA President for more information, at (800) 800-2264. For information regarding the Indiana Fireworks User's Association (IFUA), please contact IFUA/IFDA Executive Director Steve Graves at (800) 535-7477.

### International Symposium on Fireworks Society

The 8th International Symposium on Fireworks is scheduled to be held April 18-22 in Shiga, Japan. For more information, please visit their web site at [www.isfireworks.com](http://www.isfireworks.com).

### Pyrotechnics Guild International (PGI)

#### 2005 Convention

The Pyrotechnics Guild International will be having their 2005 convention August 6-12 at the North Iowa Fairgrounds in Mason City, Iowa. If you would like more information about PGI, visit their web site at [www.pgi.org](http://www.pgi.org).

### National Fireworks Association Trade Exposition

This event will be held September 8-10 in Fond du Lac, WI and will include seminars, trade show, and product demonstrations. For more information please visit their web site at [www.nationalfireworks.org](http://www.nationalfireworks.org).

### American Pyrotechnics Association (APA)

#### 2005 Convention

The 57th Annual Convention is scheduled to be held in San Francisco, California September 21-25. For more information, contact the APA at (301) 907-8181 or [www.americanpyro.com](http://www.americanpyro.com).



## "On the Road Again..."

By Stacey Smith

Hello to all of my fireworks friends and customers! It's been a crazy winter filled with lots of snow and lots of ice but it's finally time to start thinking about those warm days of summer, which means only one thing.....4th of July!! Normally I like to write about my travels and for the last couple of years I didn't do much traveling but that was not the case last year. I am happy to announce that I attended the APA Convention in late September 2004 and it was held at Walt Disney World in Orlando, FL. The weather was hot and sunny and the resort was beautiful. We visited the Trade Show, which boasted lots of fireworks products from many different companies along with many different brokers. It was interesting to view some of the new products that will be coming out this year along with some ideas for products in the future.

One morning after we had eaten breakfast we had the pleasure of listening to a featured guest speaker, his name was Hal Moore. Some of you may recognize his name from the motion picture "We Were Soldiers" in which Mel Gibson portrayed this man, Lt. Col. Hal Moore in the movie. I was very honored to be in his presence. He told stories of some of his experiences that he had when he was fighting in the Vietnam War. The power that this man had over everyone in that room was amazing! We all sat listening so intently on what he had to say and the way in which he said it was as if he were reliving the moments all over again. It was very powerful and the only sound that could be heard was the voice of this man talking. By the end of his speech there was not a dry eye in the room for he had touched us immensely. This was a memory that I will take with me forever.

We had dinner with some fellow fireworks companies, brokers, etc. one night and afterwards we watched a fireworks show. The dinner was amazing and the fireworks show was awesome, but I must be honest, the most memorable event that happened that night was getting my picture taken with Joey Fatone from the band N'Sync. Here I was having dinner enjoying the company of those around me when all of a sudden one of our brokers tells me that one of the guests was a famous singer and lo and behold, there he was sitting about 10 feet away from me! I must thank Jackson Zhao from Panda Fireworks for walking me over to his table and giving me the opportunity to get a picture taken with Joey. For a girl that is not quite in her 20's anymore I must say, I was giggling like a schoolgirl. I wore a smile for the rest of the night.

We ended the convention with a dinner party that was held at the Beach and Yacht Club outside along the pier and it was breathtaking. The evening was picturesque, the food was delicious, the drinks were fruity and refreshing and the music was peaceful. All in all it was a great ending to a wonderful convention. I am currently busy planning my next trip in February to the APA Winter Conference which will be held in Las Vegas so hopefully by the time this is printed I will have come back a wealthy woman! VIVA LAS VEGAS!!

Until next time, may God bless us all,

*Stacey*

## The Fourth is for fireworks, food, and fun!



A local policeman had just finished his shift one cold November evening and was at home with his wife.

"You just won't believe what happened this evening, in all my years on the force I've never seen anything like it."

"Oh yes dear, what happened?"

"I came across two guys down by the canal, one of them was drinking battery acid and the other was eating fireworks."

"Drinking battery acid and eating fireworks! What did you do with them?"

"Oh that was easy, I charged one and let the other off."

### Firecracker Burgers

1 pound ground beef  
1 (4 ounce) can diced green chilies, drained  
1 teaspoon beef bouillon granules  
4 slices Monterey Jack cheese



Preheat an outdoor grill for high heat, and lightly oil grate. In a medium bowl, mix the beef, diced green chilies, and bouillon. Shape into 4 patties. Grill patties 3 to 8 minutes per side, or to desired doneness. Top each patty with cheese about 2 minutes prior to removing from grill.

### Philly Firecrackers

1/2 cup sour cream\* 1/2 cup mayonnaise  
1 green onion, chopped 2 tablespoons prepared horseradish  
1/2 teaspoon salt 1/2 teaspoon pepper  
8 (12-inch) flour tortillas 1 lb. roast beef, cut into 24 thin slices  
2 (6-ounce) packages deli-style sharp Cheddar cheese slices (optional)  
2 cups shredded iceberg lettuce



Stir together first 6 ingredients until blended. Spread evenly on one side of each tortilla; top with 3 beef slices and, if desired, 2 cheese slices. Sprinkle evenly with shredded lettuce. Roll up tortillas lightly; wrap in parchment paper or plastic wrap.

## Fittin' In at NCI

By Camille Gruesbeck

Upon completing my first season in the fireworks business, I must say I'm awed by the people in this profession. I have never met such a nice group of people! Prior to coming to NCI, I was a commercial loan analyst at a local bank for five years...I must say it is nice to be out of the suits. Some of you may notice a change in my name, and you are correct, I got married last year during our shutdown time off.

During our off-season, I have been concentrating on taking over the accounting details of the business. All while trying to leave time for the fun stuff, learning all our products, working on a DVD that includes some of our bigger items, and revamping our website. Be sure and check out the new design of [www.greatgrizzly.com](http://www.greatgrizzly.com). I hope you find it easy to use and very informative.

I have found North Central as place to call home. My co-workers are great and there are many opportunities for professional and personal growth here. Richard blessed me and my husband, Brad, with the opportunity to travel with him and Stacey and her husband to Orlando, FL for the APA Convention this past September (pictured below). That was a wonderful experience. It was helpful to meet some of our customers and suppliers and to see the full circle of the company operation.

I'm looking forward to next year's article as I'm sure I will have much more experiences under my belt to talk about.

*Camille*



Pictured: NCI Employees & other guests at 2004 APA Convention.



## Reloading Mandy For All She's Worth

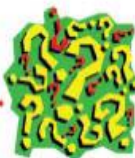
By Mandy Jones

Greetings to all of our great customers! May I say, it's good to be back writing to you. For those of you who thought I was gone, here is the lowdown on what caused my hiatus last year. Following the birth of our beautiful son in November of 2003, I chose to leave North Central to stay at home with him. It was a very personal and unplanned decision for my husband and I of which I am indebted to North Central for their understanding and compassion. Unfortunately, I left so abruptly that I didn't have the chance to tell some of my dearest customers goodbye. But then the opportunity arose for me to come back on a part-time basis last season and I am still here! I will be working part-time through the 2005 season after which time I am leaving to continue nursing school. But this will be my 8th season and I can at least say that I never missed a one!

I would like to think that since I wasn't here last year to do the newsletter that it just can't be done without me! I doubt that is so but I will think it anyway. In addition to the task of putting this newsletter together, I have still been handling all the drop shipment containers as well. Since drop shipments are not a large portion of our day-to-day business we feel that our system needs to be reworked to simplify it. Sometimes in the midst of improving a system over the years, the realization is that the process has become more extensive than necessary. I have been working on ways to revamp our current system and in doing so, we hope to be able to ease the transition once I am no longer here. I am also working with Lori to teach her about the inner workings of the fireworks industry and teaching her all that I know about our products. She will also be taking over my responsibility for the administrative duties for the IFDA.

I am very excited about all of the new products we have this year and I will be working very hard to make this a successful season for North Central and for you. I will be here all season to answer your product questions and concerns and to take your orders! Again, with a heavy heart, I say farewell to the fireworks industry and will think of my customers often. May your businesses be prosperous and may you have a life full of colorful chrysanthemums and wispy willows filling your night skies. Thank you for the memories....

Mandy



### Did You Know...

I bet you knew that pyrotechnics were used in lots of Hollywood movies but did you know that one famous pyro boo-boo occurred on the set of "Blown Away", a movie about a Boston bomb squad? They were blowing up a yacht in Boston Harbor, and they SO underestimated the percussive effect that office building and apartment windows were shattered 30 blocks away! Luckily, the studio's insurance paid for the damage; and because 14 cameras captured the explosion from every conceivable angle, the mishap became the centerpiece of the studio's marketing strategy.

Coming Soon  
in 2005

Even Paris Hilton

would say  
"That's Hot!"

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By Stacey R. Smith

This year there are many new and exciting products that we are introducing into our product line for the 2005 Season. The 500gram items continue to be a huge seller so we've introduced the following items to our list: Secret Weapon, Playing with Fire, Get Lucky, Big Bad Ass, American Rhythm and Heavy Hitter just to name a few. These items will be packed with lots of noise, lots of color and some of the largest breaks you've ever seen!

We also are introducing a new "Terminator" line of items which are sure to be a big hit this season! Some of the items included are: Terminator 500Gram Fountain, Terminator 500Gram Repeater, and a 36-shot Terminator Artillery Shell Kit which will include 8 Tiger tail Shells, 8 Bouquet tail shells, 4 Snake tail shells, 4 Whistling shells and 12 1-inch shells with tail. See above diagram. Be sure and place your order early because these will be in HOT demand!

Here are a few more new items to check out also! Hard Fist (which is a roman candle assortment), Double C4 Stick (which is a huge firecracker similar to the pyro stick), Drive Me Crazy (which is a 360Gram repeater), Two Much (which is another 360Gram repeater), 2 new styles of Crackling Candle 10-ball, War Zone Fountain and 2 new 750shot Saturn Missiles. There are also many more items that are being produced and will be shipped to us for the 2005 season! Be sure to check out our website: [www.greatgrizzly.com](http://www.greatgrizzly.com) for a list of current and new products! We will be updating our site as new items arrive!



L: 30"  
W: 11-1/2"  
H: 4-3/4"

## Our Newest Seedling Yearning to Learn!

By Lori Y. Crespo

Hello! My name is Lori and I am new to the NCI staff as of late December. I also graduated from Ball State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing. December was a busy month!

Currently I am working on taking all the product pictures and gathering information to put onto our new website, which you can visit us at [www.greatgrizzly.com](http://www.greatgrizzly.com). Taking the pictures of the products is helping me to identify each item. However, the most challenging part of this project is getting the descriptions for each of our products, many of which I have never seen lit off! If anyone would like to assist me by emailing a description of your favorite product, that would help me out tremendously!

My other responsibilities include all the basic office tasks. You can find me answering phones, filing, receiving and faxing information, greeting people as they enter the office, etc.

Eventually I will be taking over the administrative duties for the IFDA and will more than likely be the first person that you all talk to, so please bear with me while I am learning! I am still very new to this industry and I will be very grateful for all your patience and understanding as we do business together. I look forward to getting to know all of you and I hope everyone has a great year!

Lori



## Recap of the APA Winter

**Conference** The annual APA Winter Conference was held in Las Vegas, Nevada February 22-26, 2005. Richard attended the week long conference and Stacey and Camille joined him later in the week. The staff went to a breakfast which featured speaker Jack Stack who shared his ideas on how to improve your business. Camille found his speech moving and inspiring and reported back that Mr. Stack spoke of the key issues to running a successful business and putting emphasis on teaching employees to take stock in the company by seeing the instant recognition. Both women attended the WIPP Committee meeting and Stacey appreciated the opportunity to share her experienced views with other women in the fireworks industry. They also completed the 8-hour Hazardous Materials Training Program and became certified to train our employees and monitor testing. This was a refresher course for veteran Stacey but was very educational for Camille as she completes her first year with the company. Overall, it was a great experience to socialize with our customers and brokers before the busy season begins. And of course there was gambling involved!

### If you can't pyro with the big dogs stay off our block!

North Central is proud to announce that we had the opportunity this winter to purchase a building located on the east side of our Washington Street offices and warehouse, adjacent to our dock doors and we jumped at the chance! This building was formerly a countertop manufacturing company who moved to another location in town and we couldn't pass up the offer to gain precious warehouse space. This building is 40,000 square feet and is ready for us to occupy. It also has 2-3 docks which we will be able to unload containers earlier especially since we have multiple ones come in at the same time. We may also store product there someday but not initially. The new building also gives us more parking around our site and we will be able to gate off the back of the properties and the adjoining street to keep them private and not allow public access. There will be more room to load customers as well since we will have the additional space and complete use of the street. Just another example of our continuing efforts to make North Central a leading innovator and benchmark of our industry.



Our new facility located at 1600 E. Washington St. Our dock doors to our regular warehouse are located just to the left in this picture. Photograph taken by Lori Crespo

Our philosophy is to give our customers the best information to make their ordering easier. One way we accomplish this is through our in-house product displays. At our office, we display **EVERY SINGLE ITEM** on our price list for our customers to see and touch. From our largest banner down to a 6 pack of smoke balls!

Pictured above is our assortment area where we display all of our trays, bags, and boxed kits and to the right is our three larger boxed assortments containing large fountains, larger aerial items or all shells. And below, is just a tiny glimpse of one well in our display room, where we house a sample of all of our sparklers, cones, fountains, rockets, repeaters, tubes, roman candles, and much more! We even show you each different label that is available on certain items. Now where can you get that kind of differentiation!

And that's just half of the room!

Photographs taken by Lori Crespo

## Coming to a town near you!

We have a new staff member this year - in fact a whole new position! Jesse Barrera who owns and operates Saturn Fireworks out of Chicago joined our staff in November as our National Sales Manager. His efforts include soliciting business in states where we would like to expand into. He has been traveling to different locations talking to potential clients, dropping off samples, and taking orders as well as establishing promotional packets that can be given to new clients. Jesse has lived in Chicago for 49 years and is married with two daughters and six lovely grandchildren. We feel very fortunate to have him with us at North Central and know that he is a crucial component to our growth and development as a national wholesaler. If you know of any locations, friends or family of yours, that you would like Jesse to visit please give him a call.

## Are You Insured?

**READ THIS!!!!** Insurance has changed for 2005! Drayton Insurance, operated under Admiral Insurance, remains our insurer for 2005, however, the policies we offer and the costs have changed. Please see our offerings below and if you have any questions please contact Camille Gruesbeck who will be handling all insurance for our company.

We will be offering the following PREMISE ("Trip & Fall") & PRODUCT (Misuse of product or product malfunction) policies:

- \$500,000 Premise - \$150 per month of coverage
- \$1,000,000 Premise - \$195 per month of coverage
- \$1,000,000 Product - 2% of sales, excluding promotional items, freight, insurance

If you or your organization are interested in larger coverage policies such as \$2,000,000 Premise, please call Camille and she can discuss that with you. Policies cannot be backdated so please call ahead. All other coverage needs such as fire protection, wind damage, natural disasters, and water damage are not covered under our policies.