

LIFEstyle

Paulette Wittenbrink, editor

Welcome to Brrrrr Ridge, Illinois Home of the Dove Bar

By TIM DAILEY

Burr Ridge usually conjures up images of large estates, hostile debates over zoning regulations and housing developments springing up overnight.

But how about ice cream?

Well, it should, because the village is home to the only two facilities that produce the Dove Bar, a large hunk of vanilla ice cream smothered in chocolate, considered by many to be one of the greatest ice cream treats invented.

Although Dove Bars are now distributed nationwide, they are all still made in Burr Ridge — one plant on the Cook County side and a larger facility on the DuPage County side.

A matter of pride

Dove Bars were invented in 1956 by Leo Stefanos, who lived on the south side of Chicago and operated a candy store. And it was mostly a matter of pride.

Stefanos was upset that his children would chase after ice cream trucks on hot summer afternoons for a cool treat instead of looking to his candy store.

"His pride was hurt. He ran a great candy store and felt he could make something as good as the ice cream men," said Mike Stefanos, son of the founder and co-president of the organization along with Louis Yaseen. "He wanted to make something that would keep us at

home, and he did."

And so the Dove Bar was born.

'A big treat'

Until the mid-1980s Dove Bars were made at the southside facility, all hand-dipped in chocolate.

"There were no short cuts, there was no way it was going to be done half right," said Stefanos. And anyone who has ever sampled a Dove Bar can attest to the fact that it is not "half" anything. It has the reputation of being large enough to feed a family, a reputation Stefanos cherishes.

"They were originally for the family, and you don't skimp with your family," Stefanos said. "Would you give your family a small piece of cake? No, you give them a large slice, and that's the way we still do it with Dove Bars."

The reputation of Dove Bars spread, reaching the point where individual bars were shipped via express mail to New York and Los Angeles.

"They were going for \$3 and \$4 each, and we couldn't send them fast enough," Stefanos said. "We knew we had to make more, but there just wasn't room."

Go west

So the company moved west, deciding on Burr Ridge because of easy access to the Tri-State Tollway and Stevenson Ex-

pressway.

They moved into the 12,500-square-foot building just east of County Line Road in March 1985.

And it was there that "big-time" production started — more than 24,000 Dove Bars per day, all of them hand-dipped the same way they were originally done. By the summer of 1985 production was up to 100,000 bars per day.

As demand increased, the company added the facility just west of County Line Road, moving in several months ago.

And the new plant is an ice cream lovers' dream.

Tanker trucks of ice cream

The ice cream mix is delivered to the plant by large tankers that look similar to gasoline tankers.

From there it is pumped to various spots in the plant via a complex piping system. Several 5,000 gallon tanks of chocolate also are present, holding the chocolate that will eventually cover the ice cream.

Workers line both sides of a chocolate tank, picking up the bars as they come along a conveyor belt and dunking them into the chocolate.

The bars are then returned to the belt and subjected to intense cold. They are packaged and whisked off to a deep freeze, kept at a brisk 20 below zero.

From there the ice cream is picked up, ready for trips to



LIFE photo by Steve Hooper

DIGGING INTO a Dove Bar on a hot afternoon is Sara Swanson of Woodridge. The bar, a super-size serving of

vanilla ice cream covered with chocolate, is considered by many to be one of the greatest ice cream treats invented.

stores across the nation.

Tight security

Access to the plant can only be gained through the front entrance, which is patrolled by a security guard.

No tours or cameras are al-

lowed in the facility because of fear that the production process will be copied.

The Dove Bar has now been modified somewhat with different flavors offered. Two other products, Forever Yours, smaller bars, and Rondos, bite-

size ice cream bits, have been added.

But the plain vanilla Dove Bar still remains the patriarch.

"It's something we'll never lose. It's important to remember your roots," Stefanos said.