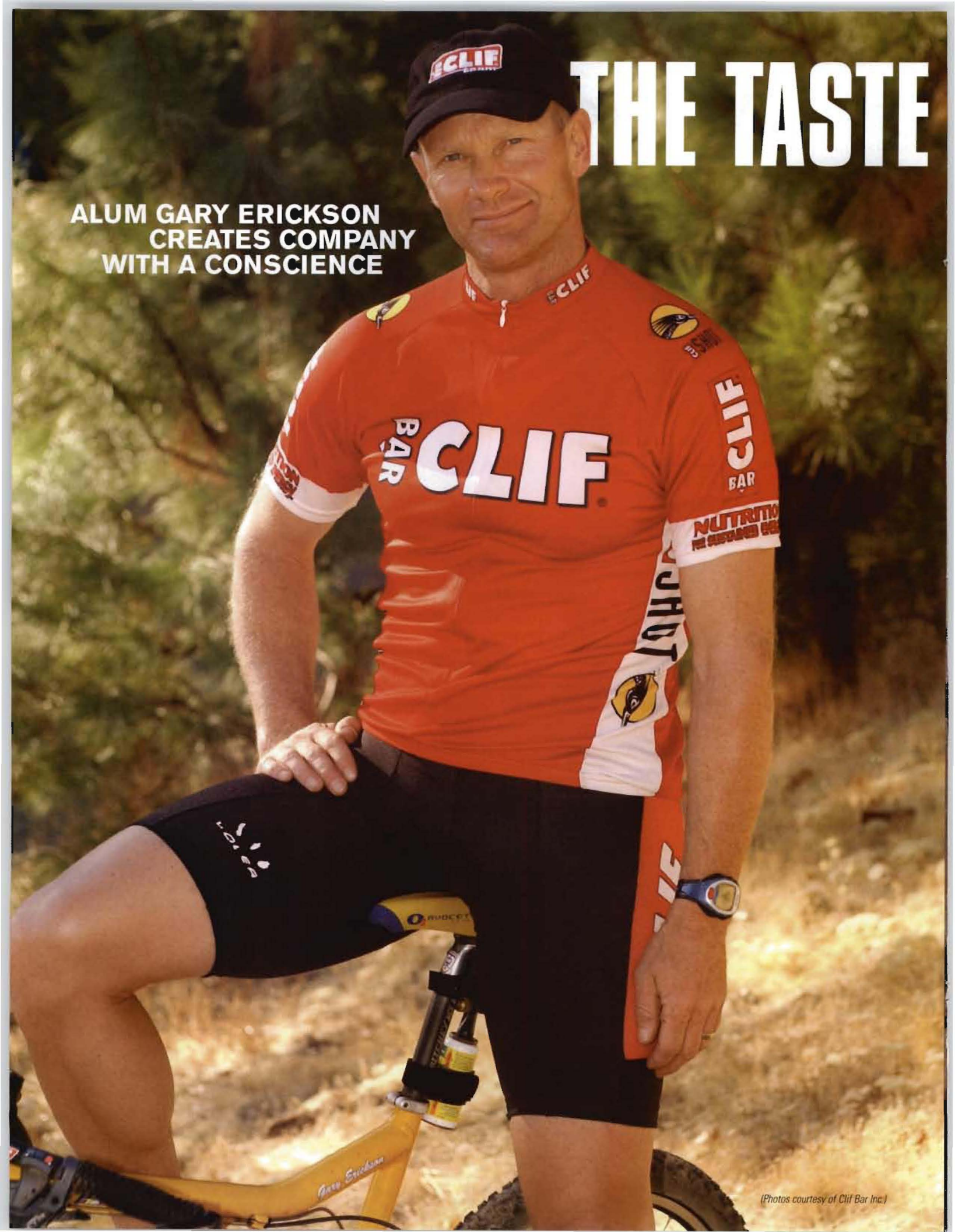


# THE TASTE

ALUM GARY ERICKSON  
CREATES COMPANY  
WITH A CONSCIENCE



(Photos courtesy of Clif Bar Inc.)



# OF SUCCESS >>

By Joanne Eglash

In our sleep-deprived, overworked, snack-happy nation, energy bars have become as essential to survival as a nonfat cappuccino with extra foam.

That's good news for entrepreneur and author **Gary Erickson (BUS '80)**, founder of Berkeley-based Clif Bar Inc., a multi-million-dollar enterprise that is as concerned about protecting the environment and giving back to the community as it is about making a quality product.

The self-styled "average student" says that many of the lessons he learned at Cal Poly were carried on his entrepreneurial journey. An avid cyclist, mountain climber and skier, Erickson wanted to

create a better-tasting energy bar. Coming up with the magic formula and competing in the market were just the first two steps on his path to success.

"Visualizing your business goal – whatever it may be – and having the guts to go for it is 90 percent of the task," he says. "The rest is bringing the vision alive. I know it may sound mythical, but that's how most entrepreneurs work."

Although Erickson always felt he would one day own his own business, he did not initially realize that it would be in the food industry. He does, however, recall learning as a young boy how to bake from his mom.

Those early cooking lessons really paid off. After successfully starting a baking company where he invented the energy-bar recipe, Erickson founded Clif Bar with the modest goal of capturing 20 percent or so of the leading energy-bar market

share, amounting at the time to \$1 million to \$1.5 million in annual sales.

"Who would have imagined that during the next 10 years we would grow to more than \$100 million in annual sales?" he asks.

The company produces a range of products, from the Luna bar for women to the energy gel Clif Shot. As for Erickson's own favorite, he "loves the

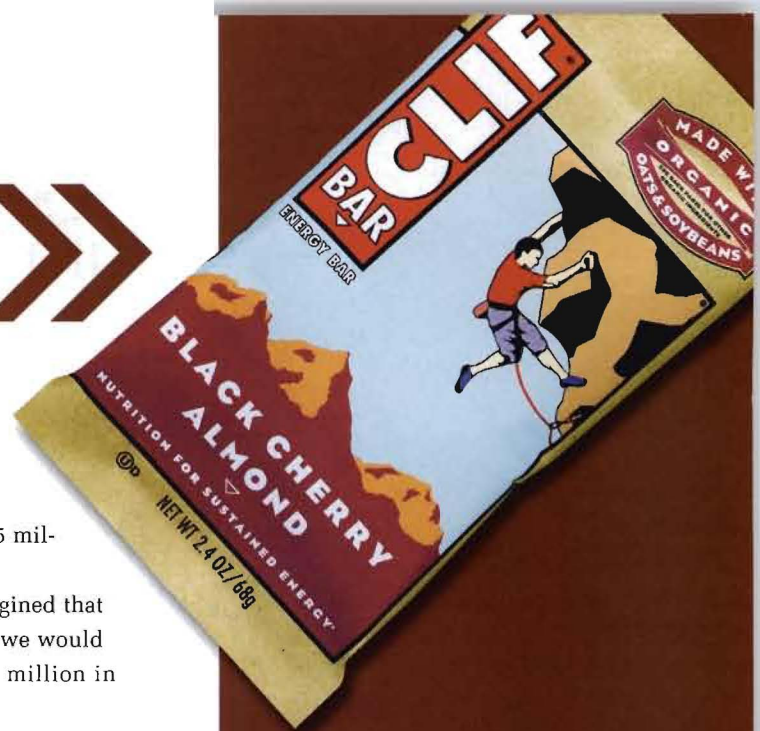
original Clif Bar, now a certified organic energy bar."

Erickson's recent book, *Raising the Bar: Integrity and Passion in Life and Business – The Story of Clif Bar Inc.*, chronicles his company's success and reveals his philosophy

on business and life. "Successful entrepreneurs take who they are and what they already know and create surprising combinations."

Erickson and his wife, Kit Crawford, are the only shareholders of the company. Their wish is to own a company that is defined by more than its bottom line. "Our return is about sustaining the business, as well as our brands, people, community and the planet," Erickson says.

To that end, Erickson and his company support causes that address environmental, social and cultural needs, both locally and globally. "We do business in a way that sustains natural resources and communities by using organic ingredients and adopting 'green' business practices," he says. He believes in putting values into action. He also believes in family values: both the company and Clif Bar are named after his father. ■



## CAL POLY STUDENTS ARE BEST, BAR NONE

The California Almond Board knows a good bar when it sees one. Snack bar, that is.

The organization recently sponsored a national product-development competition in which a team of Cal Poly food science and nutrition seniors took first place, winning \$2,500 in the snack-bar category. Students Patrice Coudray, Marion Cook and Anne Boin were the only all-undergraduate team to win. Their winning entry was for a prenatal snack bar they named Mizamonde.

The students set out to design a snack bar that would benefit women. "We targeted prenatal women, defined as any woman who is planning to conceive or who is pregnant. But our bar is also beneficial for post-menopausal women," Coudray said.

The winning snack bar incorporated almonds, oat flour, cranberries, honey, whey protein, powdered milk and prunes. "We designed our bar to be a good source of folic acid, calcium and iron – all essential for a healthy pregnancy and overall health for women." ■