

# Palay Display to move

■ Grand Forks headquarters will be relocated to Bloomington

**By Rona K. Johnson**  
Herald Staff Writer

**H**oward and Patti Palay are used to remarks people make when they come into their store on South Washington Street in Grand Forks. Seeing empty racks, most ask if they are starting, or closing, the business.

"We say 'No, we sell the racks,'" Howard said.

Palay Display Industries Inc. is a store fixture and supply business that's been a behind-the-scenes player in Grand Forks for nearly 60 years.

"We have accounts that are 30 years old that my father worked with and now, I work with," Howard said.

But in December, Palay Display headquarters will be moved from Grand Forks to Bloomington, Minn.

The Palays have been planning the move since their facility in Bloomington started outselling the Grand Forks location in the mid-90s. And they've been preparing their Grand Forks customers, so they won't be inconvenienced by the move.

"We haven't shipped anything out of Grand Forks for two years to get people here used to overnight delivery," Howard said.

## The history

Bob Palay, Howard's father, who started out painting signs and trimming store windows, founded Palay Display in 1945.

He gradually moved into the store fixture business. Business owners always were asking him if he could get them mannequins and display racks, Howard said.

Bob's brother, Morley, joined the business in the 1950s.

The first Palay Display store was in downtown Grand Forks. In 1960, Bob built a new facility and moved the business to 2307 S. Washington St. In 1973, he added a showroom in Minneapolis.

Howard joined the family business in 1975. In 1987, he became president. Bob Palay died in 1988.

In 1991, Howard heard about the soon



Cory Ryan, staff photographer

▲ Howard and Patti Palay, owners of Palay Display Industries, are closing their Grand Forks location. They have been in business in Grand Forks for about 60 years and are taking the company headquarters to Minneapolis.

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to be opening Mall of America in Bloomington, and he sent David Rerick, now vice president, to Edina, Minn., to open a new store.

"I sent him down there with not one account, a U-haul and a Yellow Pages," Howard said. "And I told him, 'Remember the movie 'Field of Dreams.' They will come.'"

The gamble paid off.

"We have expanded twice there, and in 2001, we opened a new facility in Bloomington," Howard said. "It's the largest store fixture company in the Twin Cities."

## Time to move on

Today, Palay Display is a multi-million dollar company with more than 10,000 accounts.

The company gets most of its displays from Taiwan and China, and it ships supplies to customers as far away as Japan and Mexico.

The 48-page, black and white catalogue his father started, now is full color and 112 pages.

In 1999, Palay Display added a division called Elements that specializes in layout and design. Palay Display also has a Web site at [www.palaydisplay.com](http://www.palaydisplay.com), and its strongest online customers are in Minnesota, Florida and California.

Because the Bloomington location has done so well and the city's growing so fast, the Palays decided to make the move.

But they wanted to wait until their children were out of high school in Grand Forks. The Palays have two sons in college in the Twin Cities and a daughter who is a junior at Red River High School.

"It may be bad for Grand Forks that we're leaving, but we have stayed here for the

children, and that's a good thing," said Patti, who plans to stay in Grand Forks with her daughter until she graduates.

Even though they won't have a store here, Palay's presence still will be felt in Grand Forks because they'll continue to have customers here.

"We want people to know that we're still here and we're stronger than ever," Howard said. "It's just evolution."

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