



ISA developed *True Professionals*, a communications program, to specifically help members better relate to their customers, promote their services, and educate their communities. *Arborist News* is featuring the next *True Professionals of Arboriculture Award* recipients who serve as examples to all members.

You may read about all the award winners by visiting the *True Professionals* section of the members-only PR and Marketing toolbox on the ISA website ([www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com)).



### What Can We Learn From Don Picker?

- **Define and perfect your skills, then become an expert.** Figure out what area best suits your interests and abilities, then work hard to develop your skills and knowledge base. Staying current with best practices in the industry and becoming confident in your own abilities will help prepare you for teaching these skills to others where language and cultural differences may exist.
- **Learn the language.** While becoming fluent in a foreign language takes time, develop some language skills before you travel to a country where you plan to introduce arboriculture. Not only will the people you work with be more receptive to what you have to offer them, verbal communication is fundamental to teaching and understanding new concepts.
- **Learn the culture.** Since cultures differ dramatically around the world, don't plan to just "fit in" once you enter a country or region. Study the culture before you go. Learn what the people believe, how they interact, and which customs are important to them. When you get there, immerse yourself in the culture and take part in social activities. Encourage the people you are working with to teach you about who they are.

## Don Picker: A Profile in Professionalism

By Janet Huber

Implementation of a successful training program for tree workers is an achievement that can be attributed to many True Professionals of Arboriculture, but it's not nearly as common to achieve the dream of teaching modern arboriculture to workers on the opposite side of the world from the United States. Don Picker, currently of Hong Kong, China (HK), has done just that. But it didn't happen overnight. Don's journey toward the establishment of Asia Tree Preservation, 美亞樹藝服務有限公司, the company he founded in HK with his son, Jonathan, took time and perseverance.

### Setting the Path of an Arboriculture Pioneer

Don's interest in plants began during childhood, and his first job was with a tree nursery at age 13. After high school, Don constructed high-tension power lines in northern Illinois,

where he developed climbing skills as well as a respect for the dangers associated with high angle climbing and high-voltage electrical lines. He later went to college and continued to gain practical experience and knowledge about trees by working summers at a family nursery in Minnesota.

After college, Don worked in utility line clearance in Minneapolis, MN, and then returned to Illinois where he performed contract vegetation management for a utility company as a journeyman climber and crew leader. He developed a specialty in handling emergency tree hazards involving direct contact with utility lines, thereby gaining knowledge of structural failure and tree risk assessment.

The more knowledge and experience Don acquired, the more he aspired to establish his own business. In 1984, Don founded Picker Tree Experts, Ltd., which he and his family operated for the next five years. Don and his wife, Lynne, were also developing a special interest in some of the lesser-known cultures located in the remote mountain regions of Southeast Asia. They were particularly interested in the people known as the Yao, 瑤族. The Yao are a nomadic people known for clearing and