



A BETTER CLIMATE

JEROME BROUSSARD

FOUND BUSINESS SUCCESS AND PERSONAL
FULFILLMENT IN BIG SKY COUNTRY

NESTLED IN MONTANA'S FLATHEAD VALLEY, ABOUT
60 MILES SOUTH OF THE CANADIAN BORDER, THE CITY
OF WHITEFISH MAY BE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL TOWN
IN AMERICA YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF.

During the summer, towering Ponderosa pines and jagged glacial mountains offer a magnificent backdrop for hiking, camping, boating, fishing and golf. During the winter, a soft blanket of snow covers the valley and the action shifts to Big Mountain Resort, which boasts 3,000 acres of skiable terrain. Deer, moose, elk and black bear roam the forests that surround Whitefish, and nearby Glacier National Park—the Crown of the Continent—provides spectacular alpine vistas year round.

It's a geographically diverse, breathtakingly beautiful environment, and one as far removed from Southwest Louisiana as you can get.

"I've spent time elsewhere, but I've always been drawn back to the mountains," says

BY MARK MIESTER PHOTOGRAPH BY CHUCK HANEY

Jerome Broussard (MBA '71). "Whitefish is a fabulous little community. People who choose to live here are good people who have basic beliefs and values, so it makes for a very comfortable living environment."

Broussard has called the Flathead Valley home since 1985, when he became president and co-owner of Columbia Falls Aluminum Co., a primary aluminum smelting plant located 10 miles from Whitefish. The plant, built by the Anaconda Co. in 1955 to take advantage of the region's inexpensive hydroelectric power, was the largest



Broussard, with daughter Sarah, left, and wife Rebecca, on the grounds of Rebecca Farm, the 150-acre equestrian park he recently built in Kalispell, Mont.

employer in the valley, but by the mid-1980s it was losing money and in danger of closing. Implementing an innovative strategy that emphasized tolling—custom processing of aluminum by long-term contract—Broussard turned the company around and transformed Columbia Falls Aluminum Co. into a money-making machine.

In 1992, after seven years with the company, Broussard stepped down as president and resigned from the board, fulfilling a pledge he'd made to himself to get out before the business took over his life. At the age of 52, he was officially retired.

SPRAWLED IN AN EASY CHAIR in his office, one of two Frank Lloyd Wright buildings in Whitefish, it's hard to imagine the calm, soft-spoken Broussard as the chain-smoking, highly motivated Type-A personality he claims to have been. Dressed casually in blue jeans and a flannel shirt, a beard hiding his ruddy complexion, he looks more like blue-collar worker than one of the town's most successful businessmen. Broussard may have come to Whitefish to turn around a company, but in the process he went through a transformation as well.

"I'm in better shape than I was 10 years ago," he says. "I used to work long, very stressful hours and get very little exercise. Now, I work out virtually every day, don't smoke and do a lot of de-stressing things, like fishing. So I've got a pretty comfortable life."

Broussard was born in 1941 in St. Martinville, La., a picturesque Cajun community southeast of Lafayette. He spent his youth hunting and fishing on the banks of Bayou Teche. His father, an attorney who did land work for oil companies, instilled in his son a love of the outdoors, a love that continues to this day.

In high school, Broussard developed an interest in math and science, an interest that led him first to Illinois Institute of Technology with the intention of becoming a physicist. A year in Chicago, however, proved to Broussard that physics was not his calling. On the recommendation of an uncle, Broussard traveled to Golden, Colo., to visit Colorado School of Mines, a small public institution dedicated to earth sciences. It was Broussard's first time out west, and the experience had a lasting impact. "It was an instant love affair," he says.

Broussard went on to earn a degree in metallurgical engineering from the School of Mines in 1963. Following his graduation, he worked for Kennecott in Hayden, Ariz., for a short time before, in 1965, taking a job as engineer/supervisor at the Anaconda Aluminum Co.'s primary aluminum smelting plant in Columbia Falls, the same



plant he would purchase 20 years later. "I loved the area," Broussard says of his first residency in the Flathead Valley, "but the job wasn't quite as fulfilling as what I expected."

Dissatisfied with his role in the company, in 1969 Broussard took a leave of absence from Anaconda to get an MBA. He chose Tulane not out of regional loyalty but because of the program itself, which differed from many MBA curricula of the time. "I enjoyed the math side of things," he says. "Instead of all case study, there was a fair amount of the analytical side to it and that was very attractive to me. It was a great experience."

Broussard, who by then had married the former Rebecca Chaney of New Iberia, La., and had a young daughter, was welcomed back to the Anaconda Co. with open arms following his graduation from the Freeman School in 1971. Anaconda had built a new reduction plant in Henderson, Ky., and the

"LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT PROCESS. LET'S TALK ABOUT END RESULTS AND WHAT WE HAVE TO GET DONE."

company appointed Broussard production manager. When that plant's manager was transferred, Broussard for a period managed both a \$100-million expansion of the plant and the plant itself. "That was a lot of fun actually," he says. "It was a lot of work, but I was younger then and more of a Type-A personality than I am today. I was really driven by my work. It pretty much occupied my life."

Broussard characterizes his management

Above, Rebecca Farm hosts U.S. Equestrian Association Gold Cup Series, World Cup and Olympic-qualifying equestrian events.

*IN THE YEAR PRECEDING
BROUSSARD & DUKER'S ACQUISITION,
COLUMBIA FALLS ALUMINUM CO.
HAD LOST \$100 MILLION.*

style as results oriented. He set definite goals for himself and his organization and put his all into achieving them. "That was typically my style," Broussard says. "Let's not talk about process, let's not talk about problems. Let's talk about end results and what we have to get done and then we'll figure out how we're going to get it done."

In 1980, Atlantic Richfield Co., which had acquired Anaconda in 1977, promoted Broussard to its corporate office as director of operations. Two years later, Broussard was offered the opportunity to manage the Alpart refinery, a joint venture between ARCO, Kaiser and Reynolds in Jamaica. He jumped at the chance. "It was getting back into the kind of world that I liked,

which was heading up a plant," Broussard says. "At the same time, it was something totally new for me. I had been on the smelting side and this was a mining and refining operation in a foreign country. So it was a very different atmosphere than what I'd been accustomed to."

Managing a multinational joint venture in a foreign country might sound daunting, but Broussard approached the assignment like any other. One of the first things he did was sequester his staff at a resort on the north coast of Jamaica to talk about operations. What he discovered was that the plant had an ineffective, cost-heavy organizational structure in which expatriates and Jamaicans essentially mirrored each other's jobs.

"They didn't need the expats, most of whom worked for Kaiser and Reynolds," Broussard says. "So I was able to reduce the expat staff, and that alone cut the cost dramatically because expats are very expensive."

Another problem was electricity. Ambitious production goals were taxing the plant's power supply to the point that there were frequent outages. Broussard directed his managers to determine a more reasonable production level and to let him worry about dealing with the plant's operating committee. The result was, with downtime eliminated, the plant ended up exceeding its full-capacity production volume running at just two-thirds capacity. "It wasn't me telling them what to do," Broussard explains. "It was me asking them what can we do and what can we achieve."

Broussard had managed the plant in Jamaica for three years when he learned that a former ARCO executive, Brack Duker, was looking for a partner in his purchase of the former Anaconda Aluminum Co. refinery in Columbia Falls. The pair began negotiations to buy the plant in June 1985. By September, the deal was done. Broussard was president and co-owner of Columbia Falls Aluminum Co., and for the first time in his career, the success or failure of a venture was completely in his hands.

Columbia Falls Aluminum Co. was in dire straits when Broussard and Duker acquired it. Costs were skyrocketing and the price of aluminum had dropped to an all-time low. In the year preceding their purchase, the company had lost \$100 million.

"Costs were way out of line," Broussard says. "We had to establish goals and figure out how to get to them, because if we didn't, this plant was going to close."

At the time, tolling was a new, untried concept. No smelting plant had previously tried to operate on the principle of long-term tolling agreements, but the benefits were clear. The company would have no inventory costs and no receivables for the sale of aluminum. The customers, meanwhile, would provide the cash for the plant's operation.

With Duker handling contracts from his office in Los Angeles, Broussard was charged with revamping the plant's operations. He



began by participating in negotiating a more favorable electricity rate with the Bonneville Power Administration, which was as interested as he and Duker in seeing the plant succeed. Next came restructuring labor. When Broussard arrived, the plant had more than 1,000 employees. When he was finished restructuring, it had 650. "All I had to do was go around and say, 'You want to trust your future to me?'" Broussard laughs. "Some did and some didn't, but that allowed me to do a large reduction of the force without any layoff-type impact."

In addition to getting workers to agree to a 15 percent pay cut in exchange for a share of the profits, Broussard also negotiated longer-term payables to raw materials suppliers, which also helped finance the operation.

"The concept I had was that we have to get through the hard times, maybe not make any money but at least with a cash flow,"

Broussard says. "Our focus was to have a cost structure where we could break even in that low-priced environment."

Broussard and Duker's efforts paid off. The company finished 1986 in the black despite aluminum prices that hovered around 40 cents per pound.

And then the price of aluminum started to rise. And rise. Fueled by low inventories and increased worldwide demand, aluminum doubled and then almost tripled in price in the span of two years.

"When you make a million pounds of aluminum a day and the price goes up 50 cents, your cost structure doesn't change much but that's half a million dollars a day more income," Broussard says. "So the plant made a lot of money. More than I ever dreamed of."

That success turned out to be a double-edged sword. Broussard and Duker became involved in class-action lawsuit over the

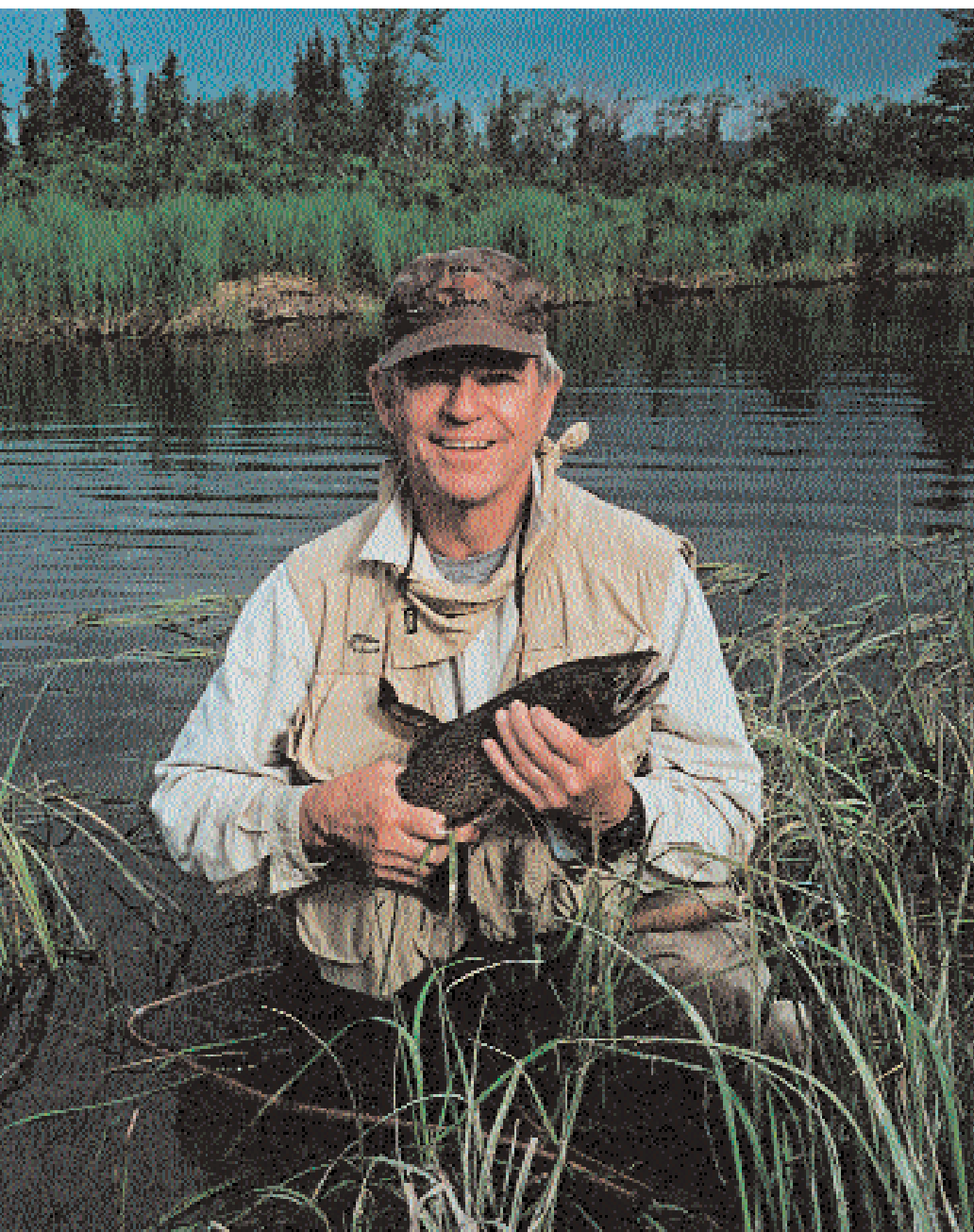
company's profit-sharing plant. The suit was settled in 1997. In 1999, Broussard and Duker sold the company to Glencore AG, a Swiss metals and minerals, energy products and agricultural products company.

WHEN BROUSSARD RETIRED from Columbia Falls Aluminum Co., he did so with the intention of moving on to a new business. "I thought I would have to have a job," Broussard says. "I found out I didn't. I found that managing my life and interfacing more with my family and friends became more important to me than any kind of achievement I might be able to create outside that environment."

Since that discovery, Broussard has devoted himself not to business planning but

to planning fishing trips and family vacations. He organizes six weeklong fishing trips each year with a group of friends to the Caribbean, Alaska and elsewhere. Each August, his extended family gathers at the family home in Whitefish for two weeks of fun on the lake. In the winter, the family gathers at his home on St. George Island in Florida. When he's not fishing or doting on his three grandchildren, Broussard skis, plays golf, hunts and otherwise enjoys himself. "Certain things that happen change people," he says of his newfound serenity. "I've seen people who can't get out and I feel sorry for them. I was fearful when I was in my 40s that that might be me and that's why I set that goal of getting out. We could have sold the company with the

Broussard shows off a catch on a recent fishing expedition.



proviso that I move up into the organization, but the more I thought about that, it was the last thing I ever wanted to do."

BROUSSARD'S MOST RECENT accomplishment proves he's not letting his organizational skills go to waste. He recently oversaw the construction of Rebecca Farm, a multimillion-dollar 150-acre equestrian park in Kalispell, Mont. Named in honor of his wife, the park hosts United States Equestrian Association Gold Cup Series, World Cup and Olympic-qualifying equestrian events, including the annual Event at Rebecca Farm, the Northwest's premiere equestrian meet.

A lifelong horse lover, Rebecca Broussard began riding when the couple lived in Kentucky, and that hobby soon grew into a passion, one that was taken up by the Broussards' youngest daughter, Sarah, a competitive rider who in 1994 was ranked the No. 3 Young Rider in the United States. Sarah Broussard specialized in the equestrian sport of eventing, a three-day competition that involves dressage, show jumping and cross-country jumping.

Three years ago, Rebecca, who serves on the board of the United States Eventing Association, convinced her husband of the need for a world-class equestrian venue in the region. Applying the same results-oriented approach he employed in his professional career, Broussard formed a non-profit corporation, purchased 600 acres of land in Kalispell and began planning an equestrian park to rival any in the nation. Rebecca Farm features arenas for dressage and show jumping, courses for cross country and steeple chase, and miles of riding trails throughout. The grounds also feature facilities for stabling horses, a trade fair area and a horse pavilion. The park is fully irrigated and Broussard recently finished a catering facility as well as a fully furnished reception hall for judges and officials.

The course itself was designed by Capt. Mark Phillips, coach of the U.S. equestrian team, but virtually every other aspect of the

project was personally overseen by Broussard, who clearly enjoyed dedicating himself to this labor of love. "We had less than a year to get everything built out there," he says. "The day the first rider went off on the cross-country course, I broke down in tears. We had been working right up to that moment to get the thing finished."

While Rebecca Farm required an extraordinary amount of work on his part, it's also been extraordinarily satisfying for Broussard, who thinks the Event at Rebecca Farm has the potential to spur tourism and economic development in the Flathead Valley. In that respect, Broussard sees Rebecca Farm as simply a particularly gratifying form of philanthropy, in the same spirit as other philanthropic interests of his such as Flathead Valley Community College, the Colorado School of Mines and the Freeman School, for which Broussard recently endowed a computer classroom in Goldring/Woldenberg Hall II. In 2003, Broussard was honored with the Freeman School's Outstanding Alumnus Award.

ACLOSE FRIEND OF Broussard's is an attorney whom Broussard used to chide about his long hours. "One of these days," Broussard recalls telling him, "you're going to be driving to one of those malpractice conferences in Helena and you're going to look up to see a logging truck coming straight at you. And you know what? Your last thought is not going to be billable hours. It's going to be, 'You know what? I should have fished a lot more.' Well, we started fishing together about that time and his life has changed. He's spending a lot more time away from work and a lot more time enjoying life.

"I truly believe you've got to live the moment," Broussard concludes. "Enjoy what you're doing when you're doing it and don't worry about what you're doing tomorrow. And I thoroughly enjoy what I'm doing now—or not doing. To the fullest."



"I USED TO WORK LONG, VERY STRESSFUL HOURS AND GET VERY LITTLE EXERCISE. NOW I WORK OUT VIRTUALLY EVERY DAY. I'M IN BETTER SHAPE THAN I WAS 10 YEARS AGO."