



A Hat and a Hammer

Bud Brewster's Tourism Legacy in the Canadian Rockies

By Tracey Feist

When John Brewster came to “Siding 29” in 1886 to start a dairy, little did he know the profound impact his family would have on Banff becoming a world-class tourist destination. And it would be one salient great-grandson who would step forward to continue building his family’s legacy in order to keep backcountry hikers, horseback riders and guest ranch aficionados coming back to Canada’s oldest national park.

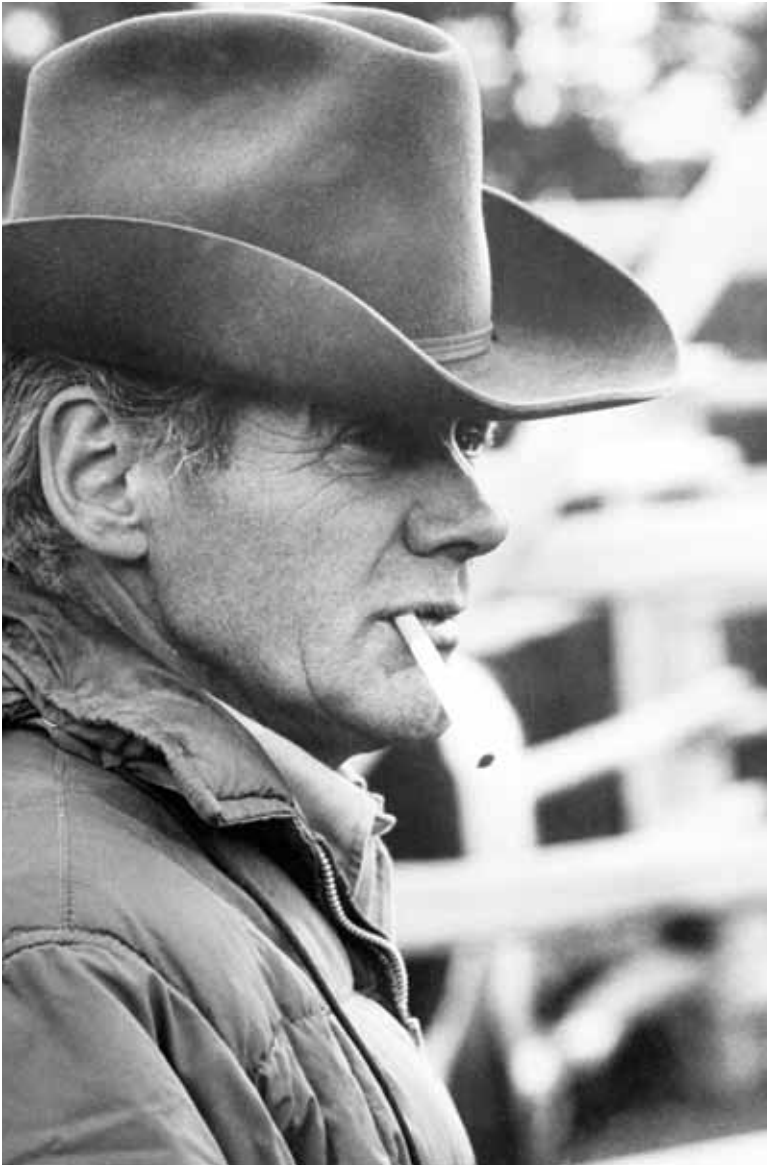
Bud Brewster did not take his family name for granted, but rather, took the foundation his father and grandfather had begun and simply began building. Brewster saw himself as a carpenter first, and while building businesses, he built stables, houses, cabins,

picnic tables and even an 18-hole golf course.

For over 65 years, Brewster expanded the family tourism business and created profitable entities such as Brewster Mountain Pack Trains, Kananaskis Guest Ranch, Shadow Lake Cabins, MountView

Barbecue and Catering, Lake Louise Stables and Dance Barn, Brewster Mountain Lodge and the recently completed 18-hole Kananaskis Ranch Golf Course.

The youngest son of Claude and Ruth Brewster, born in April, 1928, Brewster would spend the first six months of his life without a registered name. He was nicknamed “Buddie” by his grandmother Missy; but it wouldn’t take long before he started making a name for himself. Cutting wood and trapping fur provided a young Buddie with his earliest paychecks and stoked a life-long entrepreneurial fire. While his



Forty years later, Brewster officially received the green light to develop in 1990. Although the environmental sensitivity of the area proved challenging, it didn't faze Brewster.

"Again the builder went in, actually riding a bike at times," says Annette of the area that is 15 km from the Trans-Canada Highway.

"When I built Shadow Lake I renovated the original cabin, and we flew in 95,000 pounds of stuff by helicopter," Brewster says. "Some (material) we packed in by horses and some we went via winter by skidooring." By the end of 1991 there were six cabins in the meadow beneath Mount Ball. Today Shadow Lake has 12 cabins.

Ron Warner of Warner Guiding and Outfitting of Banff says that Brewster's legacy was the creation of the BBQ business in Banff.

"When Bud took over from his dad he saw the potential to not only increase the size of the family business but to also provide a wonderful product for the Park and for Canadian tourism," says Warner. "Today the Brewster BBQ is a 'must do' for many conventions and groups looking for a unique experience."

Brewster's father created a canvas Do-nut tent for use in the backcountry. But Bud would perfect it by building permanent Do-nut structures for their MountView Barbecue and Catering business.

Opposite Page

This photo of a young Bud Brewster was taken at Lake Louise by famed Canadian Pacific Railway photographer Nicholas Morant in the early 1960s.

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Although he's hesitant to pick one of his favourite areas in Banff National Park, Mount Assiniboine is near the top. Brewster says, "We were in every d*** part of the park—all by hike or horseback."

first pack trip into the mountains was as an eight-year-old with his parents, he took over both the horse pack trips and hike trips when he was 16, often taking 75 guests and 100 horses at a time.

"He always had an entrepreneurial spirit," says Annette, his wife of 51 years, who worked right alongside Bud in the business. "He'd get one project going but this thing up here (pointing to her head) was always working too," she says of his uncanny ability to think ahead.

A tenacious drive also helped Brewster when it came to dealing with Parks Canada.

Development is decided in Ottawa and Park permits are highly regulated. Brewster first bought Shadow Lake from his Uncle Jim of Brewster

He liked diversification — “not all your eggs in one basket” was always his phrase!

Transport in 1950. The property had a 1929 Canadian Pacific Railway cabin and was only accessible by hiking or cross country skiing.

"I didn't have a lot of problems dealing with Parks (Canada), but it took me time," Brewster explains.

Brewster also had two other dream projects he would not give up on: a hotel and a golf course. After buying out the other Brewster family shareholders, Bud would acquire the Brewster Block off of main street in Banff in 1974.



Top
Brewster's teepee camp at Mt. Assiniboine, Banff National Park

Bottom
Writer Tracey Feist taking notes during her interview with Bud Brewster

“One of the things I wanted to build more so than a golf course was a hotel. It took me 25 years to get a permit to build a hotel,” says Bud. “Twenty-five god d*** years, but I never gave up! I kept working on it and working on it.” In 1996, Brewster Mountain Lodge opened to its first guests.

“The accountants we had in Calgary wanted us to amalgamate everything and get it under one

umbrella. That was never Bud’s idea because each enterprise had to stand on its own,” says Annette. “That way at the end of the year he could take a look at it and say ‘OK this needs to be changed, this needs to be helped.’ He liked diversification—‘not all your eggs in one basket’ was always his phrase!”

That diversification was recently recognized by the Alberta Business Family Institute’s (ABFI) for the

family’s enduring business legacy in the Canadian Rockies. ABFI says statistically, 70 per cent of family businesses fail before they’re passed on to the second generation; 97 per cent never make it to the fourth generation.

Bud and Annette’s daughters—the fifth generation of Brewster’s: Janet, Corinne and Alison—have been carrying on the family business successfully for the past 25 years.

From backcountry pack trips to BBQs, the Brewster name that has been synonymous with Banff for 125 years has had help from one man who simply sought to build. And be assured, even today at 83, there are two things Bud Brewster is never without: a hat and a hammer. *C



Tracey Feist, a fourth-generation ranch girl from the Cochrane area, has fond memories of Banff thanks to her Uncle Bud and Auntie Annette. Feist is an award-winning writer who lives with her family near a small cowboy town south of Denver, Colorado.

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