

From Bayous to Board Rooms

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Press release from: [BCT](#)



Award winning innovator and business leader Robert Breville stays true to his Louisiana Creole roots

Some obstacles and adversities in life are a godsend. Growing up in impoverished Louisiana, BCT Board Member Robert Breville faced discrimination, poverty, natural disasters, and a broken home. He overcame these obstacles to become one of the youngest executives in a Fortune 500 company, a successful CEO, a highly sought-after advisor and board member, and an internationally acclaimed innovator and business leader.

Robert was recently named a Top 100 Innovator by Redwood Media Group and The Top 100 Magazine (www.thetop100magazine.com/robert-breville). He will be featured in their Q3 magazine this year. Prior to this recognition, he was ranked a Top 10 Silicon Valley Angel Investor and his accelerator received a Top 10 national ranking by Forbes and MIT. A diverse group of organizations including NASA, Ducks Unlimited, IEEE, the Dallas Opera, US Army

Special Operations Command, the Italian Government, Southern Methodist University, Aeronautical Systems Center, Chinese Institute of Engineers, and the US Department of Defense has bestowed awards upon him for accomplishments ranging from conservation leadership to life-critical innovations.

These are not the typical organizations or awards you would associate with someone from the rural towns of Leesville and Marksville, Louisiana. Surrounded by property owned by a lumber mill, Robert's childhood home was on a narrow dirt road that was prone to flooding. He grew up without internet, cable television, or basic services other kids his age took for granted such as city water and garbage collection.

"We lived in the country. We had a well for water and burnt our trash," said Robert. "I used to have to crawl in the well tank to remove the algae buildup. We burnt trash weekly. When the road flooded, you couldn't really leave. If it was a school day, we had to walk through the mud to a distant, alternative bus stop. When the road flooded, our house usually flooded. We always seemed to be drying out rugs and furniture. For fun, we hunted, fished, went to the library, and played outdoors. Looking back, it was a wonderful childhood that I wouldn't trade for anything. Those obstacles made me a hard worker, problem solver, and independent."

A product of public education in the 48th worst-ranked state for education, it is astonishing that Robert attended college.

"I will always remember what my college advisor said to me. He couldn't understand why the admissions office accepted this kid from Leesville High School with the funny accent," said Robert. "You see, my advisor was from Brooklyn but spent time in Leesville as a young man serving at the local military base, Fort Polk. He regularly inquired if my hometown still had wooden sidewalks and if they ever got a dentist. Then, as he dwelled on Louisiana's near-last-place ranking in public education, he commented thank God for Mississippi and Arkansas. Those states trailed Louisiana in 49th and 50th place."

Apparently, public education nor their lackluster rankings have much bearing on ambitious students. Robert was one of the most highly recruited students in the country before he graduated high school. Successful college alumni, faculty, and state governors contacted the 16-year-old to persuade him to attend their alma mater. He was offered full scholarships to dozens of universities across the country. Scholarships that covered all of his tuition, fees, books, room, and board. To stave off distractions that may affect his studies and research, the scholarship committees and university provided him with additional perks such as a generous monthly tax-free stipend, computers, and cars. This didn't stop Robert. He worked as a programmer at a dot-com, a university tutor, and security at Chicago Bulls, Bears, and Blackhawk games.

"The university and scholarship programs took very good care of me. I did not need to work, but I was in Chicago. I wanted to experience everything, including interesting jobs in the Windy City," said Robert. "I worked at my first startup during the dot-com boom and experienced a special time in history when the workplace and startup culture will never be the same. I was paid to watch the Bulls win 3 championships and had total access to the United Center and Soldier Field as a security usher. I was able to meet accomplished and inspiring people such as Nobel laureates, presidents of universities and companies, artists and writers, and professional NBA and NFL players at a very impressionable time in my life. For a small-town southern kid, those 4 years were truly defining."

Robert worked on projects funded by the National Science Foundation, Pritzker Institute, Rush University Medical College, and Illinois Institute of Technology Research Institute (www.iitri.org). While such projects were typically reserved for graduate and doctoral students, Robert a 3rd-year student was selected. He was simultaneously an undergraduate and graduate student due to taking record-setting credits each semester. His course load exceeded 22 credit hours per semester, which is nearly double the 12 per semester defined as full-time by the Department of Education.

The bachelor's and master's degrees in computer science and engineering are by design a 7.5 year program. Robert graduated with both in a

blistering, record-setting 4 years. Possibly more impressive is that he was on the dean's list, graduated summa cum laude, conducted research, published papers at international conferences, and squeezed in 2 minors: business and military science. Did we mention he is a member of Mensa (www.mensa.org) and the International High IQ Society (www.ihiqs.org)?

"Why waste such a wonderful opportunity," said Robert. "I was at one of the best research universities in the country in one of the greatest cities on Earth. I worked between classes, partied 2-3 nights per week, chased girls daily, and had the time of my life. The department chair and dean had to sign off on my registration each semester because I exceeded the university's maximum course load. One semester, the President of the university wanted to meet me for this reason. Lew was an incredible, accomplished business leader and university administrator. He invited me to his home...a penthouse in a ritzy part of the city. There I was, this kid from nowhere bayou mingling with Nobel laureates, inventors, and captains of industry. The faculty and staff were always supportive. I am forever grateful that they challenged me and afforded me the latitude to challenge myself. I believe I still hold the record for the number of credit hours taken in a semester for graduate and undergraduate."

Starting his sophomore year, several large firms started to recruit Robert, who was still in his teens. Texas Instruments, Motorola, Bell Labs, Cisco, and Boeing would regularly meet with him and take him to dinner and social events. Robert received gifts such as laptops. Upon graduation, he started his career as a Senior Engineer. Within a few years, he was a vice president. Before turning 30, he was an executive in a Fortune 500 company speaking with analysts on Wall Street. By 35, he was the President of a large, multinational company. By 37, he was a board member of a large publicly traded international company. By 40, he was serving on multiple boards with an office wallpapered with degrees, certifications, awards, and news articles.

Robert has been a regular feature in Yahoo Finance News, business journals, and trade publications in the US, UK, Canada, France, Italy, New Zealand, Indonesia, and Japan.

But, he never really left the bayou. He vehemently clings to his roots. He owns ranches in Texas and Louisiana and has maintained incredibly close ties to the community. Like every good Creole, he mud boats the Atchafalaya, fishes Grand Isle and Toledo Bend, overlands Kistachie, cooks gumbo in the summertime, never misses a cochon de lait, dances to zydeco, and vacations in exotic New Orleans. He is an active member of the Adai Caddo Indian Nation, LHS Alumni Association, and VFW Post 3106 frequently donating to the Canteen.

"I am fortunate to have a loving family and lifelong friends in Louisiana," said Robert. "Its like I never left. We are as close as we have ever been. We pick up right where we left off and always pass a good time."

Robert is as comfortable in a leather button-tufted Chesterfield boardroom chair as he is on the unassuming seat of a simple jon boat floating down the bayou. Laissez les bons temps rouler!

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BCT is a land and cultural heritage conservancy chartered to protect, in perpetuity, the diverse fish and wildlife habitat, as well as, cultural heritage sites for the Caddo Indians, early French explorers, and Creoles. BCT was formed by the merging of the La Louisiane Land Trust and the Evangeline Conservancy. It has grown to include a community of ecologists, wildlife biologists, silviculturists, engineers, environmentalists, archeologists, farmers, ranchers, professors, and historians. With offices in New Orleans, Dallas, and Hong Kong, BCT delivers economically and environmentally sustainable conservation programs.

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