



In Memoriam
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ABiz

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EB Brooks
takes helm at
Horse Farm
nonprofit
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TURK FILE



Kevin Blanchard leaves
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THE FLAVOR OF HOME

Entrepreneur of the Year Butch Darce's Taylors International is a real meat-and-potatoes business.

By Walter Pierce

The measure of a business in the oil patch isn't so much how it does when oil is \$100 a barrel as it is how it performs when it's \$50.

Taylors International Services Chairman/CEO Butch Darce, this

year's ABiz Entrepreneur of the Year, calls 2015 "a normal year." Considering the company, which focuses — but not exclusively — on providing catering services to offshore companies

SEE DARCE ON PG. 17



Blondes Have More Fun

Cathi Pavy, ABiz's inaugural Jillian Johnson Award winner, is fiercely loyal to the Lafayette brand.

By Christiaan Mader

Sitting at a wired-up desk, the room lit by a wall-sized projection screen, Cathi Pavy occupies a swivel chair sporting West-coast ergonomics. Through the glass wall behind her, the life-sized counterpoint of her husband Francis Pavy's paintings provides a backdrop equally at home in Silicon Valley.

SEE PAVY ON PG. 20

Robideaux taps Picard Group's Michot for transition chief

Corey Meaux, another Picard Group employee, serving as transition coordinator.

By Leslie Turk

State Rep. Joel Robideaux, who defeated Lafayette Consolidated Government Chief Administrative Officer Dee Stanley in the Oct. 24 primary to replace term-limited City-Parish President Joey Durel, says former state Sen. Mike Michot will lead his transition team. Michot, Robideaux's longtime friend and confidant, is senior director of

state affairs for The Picard Group, a lobbying and governmental affairs entity.

Attorney Corey Meaux, a junior associate at The Picard Group who worked for the Acadiana Legislative Delegation from July 2013 to June of this year, according to his LinkedIn profile, is serving as transition coordinator.

"I'm pleased to name my transition

SEE MICHOT ON PG. 3



Entrepreneur of the Year



THE FLAVOR OF HOME

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The measure of a business in the oil patch isn't so much how it does when oil is \$100 a barrel as it is how it performs when it's \$50.

Taylors International Services Chairman/CEO Butch Darce, this year's ABiz Entrepreneur of the Year, calls 2015 "a normal year." Considering the company, which focuses — but not exclusively — on providing catering services to offshore companies and employs 1,500, grew 110 percent in 2014 and leapt to No. 15 on ABiz's Top 50 Private Companies list, "normal" will need to be re-calibrated. So here goes: In a \$50-per-barrel market, normal is phenomenal.

"I didn't want to go that far but yeah, you're right," Darce concedes. "We should come out close to what we did last year or a few [million dollars] above." The company had 2014 revenues of \$132 million.

The blow to the Lafayette, Acadiana and Louisiana economies from low oil prices is only beginning to be felt — in plummeting sales tax revenue, which means less for money for roads and infrastructure, and in a general contraction within the oil patch: companies are consolidating, jettisoning employees, selling off non-essential assets, etc. It's not as bad as the 1986 price collapse and lean years that followed and probably won't be because Lafayette diversified, creating robust health care, service and tourism sectors. Taylors did the same, creating satellite companies that offer safety and environmental services and inspection/ maintenance that isn't exclusive to mineral extraction. And Taylors has gotten into "indirect government contracting" in the Middle East, although Darce cites legal issues in declining to offer details about that work.

But at the center of Taylors International's plate is meat and potatoes, and Darce is most animated and proud talking about the company's approach to offshore catering, which focuses, as he puts it, on "the flavor of home."

"It's placing the right cook or chef on location who can cater to people from his own region," Darce explains. "In other words, if I have a crew from South Louisiana, I'm definitely going to put a Cajun-Creole-Louisiana-Southern person out there. Or if I have a crew from Texas I'm going to try to pair that Texas cook with that crew, whether it's a West Texas, North Texas, South Texas crew; a Mississippi crew I'm going to pair up a cook that's east Louisiana, South Mississippi, east Mississippi, Jacksonville-Hattiesburg-type cook. It's about matching the chef with the people who are on that job."

Darce clearly eats this stuff up. If he weren't in the offshore catering biz he'd probably be a chef, or an ethnographer.

"Louisiana boys like both white and brown gravy; Mississippi boys like white gravy; Texas boys like white gravy with a little touch of brown mixed into it — it's still got to be kind of that dirty beige coloring," he continues. "It's all about trying to match a menu for the person that you're catering for."

"We have a crew of Texas boys working on a rig in the Congo in West Africa, and we have a chef that's attuned to making Texas-style foods in West Africa. Now, we're buying products out of West Africa so sometimes it's hard to get Sonny's Bar-Be-Que Sauce or something like that, but we come up with recipes that come close to that type of sauce."

Darce started the company — it adopted the name Taylors per an agreement with the eponymous British company that helped with start-up financing — on a shoestring in 1996 after employment with two companies in the same line of work dating back to the early '80s. And like ABiz's 2014 Entrepreneur of the Year, LHC Group Chairman/CEO Keith Myers who cited his wife Ginger as a driving force in his success, Darce's first and most loyal partner starting the business was his wife of 48 years, Dot Darce.

"I would've never achieved this honor without the help of Dot, my wife, who helped me in the very beginning," he says.

"It was a long journey working seven days a week, 16 to 18 hours a day in the beginning before we could hire anyone to help, and it's very gratifying to see that when you work hard it does pay off," Dot Darce says.



“My experience with Butch is, he’s a bulldog,” says Chris Burch, founder of Coastal Food Service, Taylors International’s first food supplier. Burch and Darce started together in the O/G catering business: “Butch was literally my first customer. We sat at his desk — he had put out feelers — waiting for his phone to ring because I knew once he had a customer that I had a customer.”

That business relationship grew into a friendship, says Burch, who quickly grew to admire Darce for his work ethic.

“He’s very intelligent, very aggressive but in a mild-mannered way — he’s not an aggressive person by nature, but when it comes to the business he goes after it and he gets it,” Burch adds. “I don’t think he’s met any business that he’s afraid of.”

And like many successful executives, Butch Darce is quick to point to the contributions of others in his success: “To be successful, it’s not about the individual — it’s about the people who surround that individual. It’s about the dedication and the hard work of the people who are behind you,” he says.

“He takes care of his people,” Burch observes. “If you work for him he treats you very, very well, not only from a financial standpoint, but he allows his people to do their job. If he appoints you to a position, it’s your job — Butch won’t do it for you. He doesn’t get in the way, he doesn’t micromanage; he’s surrounded by some very, very intelligent people, and to me that’s the mark of a good manager: surrounding yourself with good people.”

In Darce’s Taylors International office in Lafayette, a Lalique glass leopard given to him by top executives — René Jules Lalique was a turn-of-the-20th-century French art glass designer and, as with American counterpart Louis Comfort Tiffany, his baubles are très expensive — reminds

Darce of one of the qualities that has sustained him in his business career: “The comment they used was, I’m always like a leopard, ready to pounce on something to make it happen,” he explains. “It’s like being on the prowl, looking for the hunt. The kill is always about the hunt. I tell that to my sales team all the time, you have to have something in your crosshairs.”

Earlier this year in a short company profile for ABiz’s Top 50 issue, Darce told this business journal that the best advice he got was from his grandfather: “He told me to be persistent, respectful, ethical and honor all promises.

He told me to sell what you believe in. My grandfather told me if you believe in your product, you can persuade others to share your belief.”

When asked what advice he would give to a rising young executive, Darce doesn’t venture far from his grandfather’s home cooking: “Be fair, be honest, be straight, treat your vendors and your customers the same, don’t try to take advantage of a vendor, don’t try to take advantage of a customer, try to work with the customer to let them realize that what they’re paying for they’re getting.”



ABiz Scene: ABiz's 2015 Entrepreneur of the Year 5

ABiz's 2015 Entrepreneur of the Year symposium was held in early November at the Cajundome Convention Center. The second annual symposium honored **Butch Darce**, chairman and CEO of Taylors International Services, as the ABiz Entrepreneur of the Year for 2015. Cathi Pavy, partner and creative director for BBR Creative, received the first ever Jillian

Johnson Award for Entrepreneurship in the Creative Economy. Darce and Pavy were joined on stage for the discussion by Seenu Kasturi, CEO of Lafayette based Blue Victory Holdings. The event was moderated by The Opportunity Machine's Zachary Barker. Regions Insurance and Regions Bank are presenting cosponsors of the event, and Andrus Boudreaux Complete Title is sustaining sponsor.



Front row: Jamie Tarpley, Taylor Foster, Trista Abshire, Dorothy Darce, Butch Darce, Jorge Cosenza, Ramona Moore Back row: Tarik K. Masri, Barry Johnson, Terry Aucoin and Kim Broussard

