

Melvin F. Pervais was born in 1939 on the Fort William First Nation Reserve near Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. His life is an amazing journey from Northwestern Ontario where he cut pulpwood as a boy to a self made businessman of international stature, who retired at the age of 45.

The eldest son of 10 children, he left a one room schoolhouse at age 11 to attend Garnier Indian Residential school 500 miles away from his home, in Spanish, Ontario. Unlike many who have attended residential schools, Mr. Pervais is quick to assert that his time at the Garnier school was not a bad experience, and was, in fact, instrumental in helping to shape the man he became. Discipline and a solid work ethic, instilled early on in Mel's home life, were continued at the school.

At 15 he began his apprenticeship as an instrument technician with Noranda Mines in Cutler, Ontario. During the next 18 years Mr. Pervais worked for various companies including Mahon Electric in Fort William, H.A. Simons Limited in Vancouver, and Mercury Company in Massachusetts. He became project manager at Johnson Controls in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1973. Not one to allow a lack of formal higher education deter him, throughout this time Mel continued to educate himself, even as he worked long hours to support his growing family. By reading books on subjects that held value to his interests and goals, and purchasing volumes he could continue to refer to, such as those on "Applied Mathematics", his knowledge grew.

In 1976, with \$10,000 and a fierce determination to start his own business, Mel founded Cataract Incorporated, a company that provided startup engineering services to nuclear power plants. When he sold the firm in 1984, it had 500 engineers on staff and reported annual sales of \$50 million.

In 1982, Pervais was invited by President Ronald Reagan to serve on a private sector task force that encouraged support of community projects. Pervais and Reagan formed a friendship which lasted the remainder of the president's life.

In 1987 Mr. Pervais bought the historic 1,400 acre Chief Joseph Ranch near Darby, Montana. When he purchased the ranch it was quite run down and in serious disrepair. Over the next several years he restored it to it's original glory, while also raising paint horses, and beef cattle, on the land. His efforts to restore the property were recognized by Architectural Digest with a feature article in the magazine in June of 1994.

In 1991, Mel briefly came out of retirement and founded Rhodium 2001, a company that reclaimed precious materials from scrap catalytic converters through a proprietary new process. He ran the business from one of the 3 large barns at the ranch, which he had converted into a laboratory. Mel closed the operation after a few years, to enjoy his retirement and travel.

Mr. Pervais sold the ranch in 2004. The TV series "Yellowstone", starring Kevin Costner, is currently being filmed, in part, at Chief Joseph Ranch, with the main house being featured as the fictional Dutton family home.

Mel is very proud of his Native roots, and throughout the years he frequently took time to speak about his entrepreneurial beliefs and the importance of his Ojibwe heritage, especially to young people. As encouragement to others, he often proclaimed of his accomplishments, "Not bad for a kid fresh off the reservation!" His message invariably centered on self sufficiency, and 'never giving up.' He sincerely believes that if he could do it, anyone can.

Mr. Pervais is a former member of the United Indian Development Association, as well as a former member of the council of trustees with United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc. He has received honorary Doctorates of Engineering from Montana State University (1995) and from Lakehead University in Ontario, Canada (1996).

Mel Pervais is the proud father of seven children. He currently resides in the mountains of northwestern Georgia with his life partner Robin and their 2 cats.