

# ARIOUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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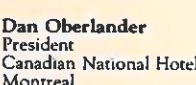
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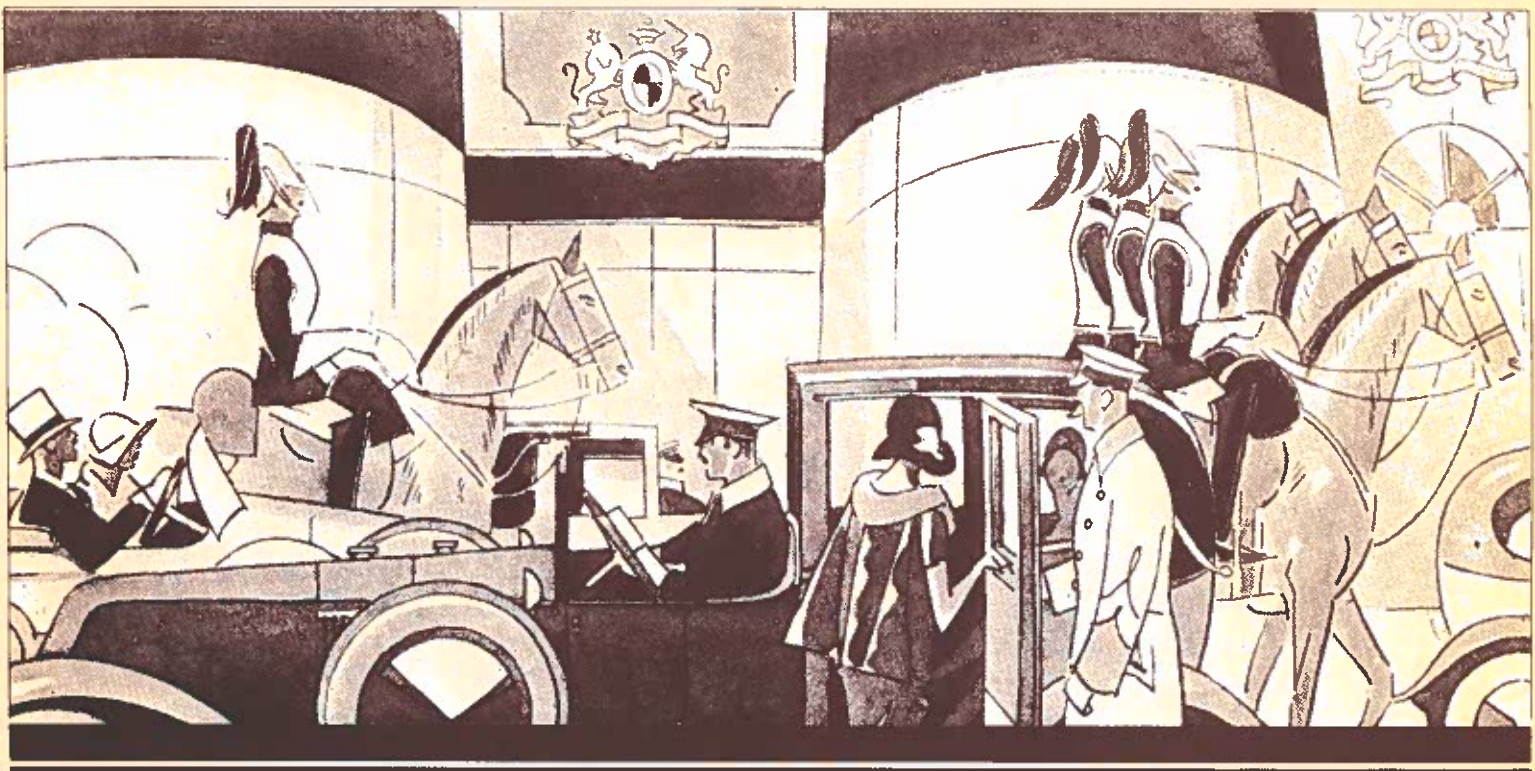
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# LUXURY

## Overused Definition of Quality



For the past 12 years, we have received a vast number of resumes from hoteliers who claim to have worked in the category of deluxe, luxury, 5-star, world class, best hotel and so on. Can there really be this many world class deluxe luxury hotels? Perhaps the problem in defining "world class deluxe hotel" is that there has never been a truly acceptable definition of luxury. What really constitutes a WORLD CLASS DELUXE HOTEL?

Perhaps no one has ever dared to disqualify hotels that wrongfully claim to be luxurious because of one's concern for his or her reputation, the fear of losing future business or simply the fear of losing a friend. One critic even suggested "it was fear for (his) life which kept (him) from cutting some hotels out of the 'luxury' class". As a result, luxury has not been properly defined and the ambience related to luxury has not been properly qualified — UNTIL NOW.

My worldwide travels over this past year have taken me to more than 100 hotels. During these travels, I have continuously asked the same question: "What is luxury?" The thoughts expressed in this article address this question and come from many sources, including comments from some of the most recognized consultants in our industry, as well as observations from solicited articles and interviews from many of the foremost innkeepers and hoteliers in the world.

We have divided our definition of luxury into two areas. One is the actual brass and marble: without this, the guest could not be provided with suitable accommodation, amenities and services in an international deluxe fashion. The second, and some would suggest more important, area is the human aspect of the luxury hotel.

In months of careful preparation for this article, we have recognized it is unfair to compare hotels within a city or a country. The criteria for excellence must be objective and worldwide. There may be several hotels within a city that are rated deluxe. The worst hotel in your city may be infinitely better than the best hotel in another city. Even if your hotel does not meet the prerequisites of this article, it still may be the finest in your community.

As a last note, no hotel has been rated the "top hotel of the world", for two reasons: participants are constantly changing and because this is an era of unceasing new products which are thrust daily onto the market.

We are now prepared to tell what we believe to be a TRULY ACCEPTABLE DEFINITION OF LUXURY.





**Camino Real Hotel, Mexico City**

JOHN A. BERTHELOT, Executive Vice-President of Camino Real Hotel believes luxury is a challenge and that guests' expectations must always be anticipated. "This has become our way of life. We strive to maintain and improve our traditional standards of quality by delivering the best service at all times." As most of the management team has been with the hotel since it opened it has "created a family-like working atmosphere for the employees, resulting in a smaller staff turnover. This reflects in a very high percentage of repeat guests for they enjoy being recognized, greeted with a smile, and in other words being *welcome*."



**Arizona Inn, Tucson**

VIRGINIA GRAHAM, Executive Director of Marketing, Arizona Inn, states: "Luxury is simple. A homelike hotel complete in its luxury and convenience of services and built with the desire to give its guests total *privacy, quiet and sunshine*. Maintaining these priorities for the guest is number one and is the secret." Graham also believes in giving the staff the privilege of making decisions for their own departments. No job descriptions, and no time clocks to punch, benefit the guests. When asked what types of amenities she might add to our list of luxury necessities, she responded, "I wish every room could have a fireplace."

### Claridge's, London

**Claridges, London**

In the words of the latest edition of *300 Best Hotels in the World* (McMillan) it says the London, England Claridge's is one of the most deluxe hotels in the world because "no one ever forgets anything", and even if your particular eccentricity is eating fish and chips out of newspaper, Claridge's will provide an old copy of *The Daily Mirror*. Claridge's has been described as one of the most deluxe hotels in the world because "a sense of belonging is cultivated from the moment you enter the front hall and ascend the main stairway". What about the little extras Claridge's adds to its deluxe reputation? How about a thermometer in your bath so you can select the right temperature for the water?



**Kona Village Resort, Kona**

FRED DUERR, General Manager, Kona Village Resort, when asked if there can be such a thing

as a deluxe resort, replied: "A quality resort as a quality city centre hotel can be judged by the staff, service, amenities and value received for its charges. *You cannot fool today's guest* in the luxury market. Our guests travel a great deal and have sampled some of the finest resorts in the world."

On people making a luxury hotel, he added: "There have been superior properties that have failed because their people did not measure up to the property. We have all witnessed properties which, not having the physical advantage of their competitors, have outperformed these same properties because of their superior staff."



**Peninsula Hotel, Hong Kong**

URS AEBY, General Manager of Peninsula Hotel, is a firm believer in guest services which, he states, are "attended to 24 hours a day. Any request within reason is met, and once asked, that request is *not forgotten* and is applied when the guest returns again on another visit." Some of the services retained at the Peninsula, which established its reputation 55 years ago for excellent accommodation, location and service (and is still maintained today, with its claim as one of the top luxury hotels in the world), are personal room attendants who perform duties of maids and valets, and, if the guest wishes, an attendant to pack or unpack luggage, run a bath or perform other personal services as required.



**Hotel Meurice, Paris**

Great cuisine is synonymous with France. Even the word "cuisine" is of French origin. But, when a great French hotel thinks of service, it thinks of the British Innkeeper's tradition, according to JEAN GILLET, General Manager of Hotel Meurice.

The Hotel Meurice might be able to rely on its own history to be considered among the world's great hostels. After all, it is located on the site of the proclamation of the first French Republic, and has been the meeting place of world kings and queens since the walls went up.

But, it is more than this, according to M. Gillet. A deluxe hotel is "one of the last bastions of *present-day humanism*". The staff can get to know the habits of each guest and that is true luxury service."



**Sheraton Roma Hotel, Rome**

GIORGIO G. MANENTI, Vice President, Area Manager of Sheraton Hotels, is a classicist in his discussions of a deluxe hotel. He believes a deluxe hotel has a staff of carefully selected professionals, devoting their time to each guest's comfort and giving them the same warm, discreet and personalized service as made famous by classic deluxe European hotels of past decades. He believes in addition to the marble and stone, there must also be modern amenities and gourmet food. A gourmet restaurant is especially

important in the deluxe hotel. And, he firmly believes in homestyle cooking in his hotels. Menus include items from 19 of Italy's regions prepared by 120 impeccable waiters and cooks.



**Ritz Carlton, Montreal**

Stability is the key, according to FERNAND ROBERGE, General Manager of the Ritz Carlton. "Today, many Montrealers have particularly warm feelings towards a hotel which has witnessed their childhood and from there on the major events of their lives." He believes cost is no reason for compromising quality, while noting that employees must have a genuine interest in their work, and be proud of their hotel. Some of the little touches his hotel adds to maintain the Ritz Carlton reputation are room service served *course by course*, VIPs offered a tour of the city in a Rolls Royce and, as well, functional marble fireplaces in suites.



**The Pierre, New York**

GEORGE D. SCHWAB, Vice President and Managing Director of The Pierre, says: "At The Pierre, courteous customer service has always, and will continue to be the top priority. Our concern is not merely with routine courtesy. We try to convey a sense of caring about the customer as an individual. The notion of the individual is stressed throughout our service policy. For example, we keep a handwritten profile on all guests which lists personal tastes and preferences." The Pierre has a notary public on staff, believing their responsibilities do not end with so-called basic amenities. They maintain a *standard of luxury service* that is not only *outstanding but steadfast* and necessary to a luxury hotel.



**Radisson Hotels**

When operating a chain of hotels, it must be seen as a collection of unique properties geared to *customer satisfaction*, rather than "a chain" of similar properties, according to JORGEN VILTOFT, President of Radisson Hotel Corporation, U.S. Each hotel's uniqueness must intrigue the traveller, he added. The key to success, however, is maintenance of quality. He sees service as the primary item. It is more difficult for a chain to produce a group of luxury hotels, as compared to one single property. Each hotel should be geared to the customer. Each luxury hotel must be unique so as to intrigue the traveller and convention planner while maintaining a consistent standard of excellence.



**Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, Hamburg**

GERT PRANTER, Director of Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, sees a luxury hotel as a reflection of the owner or manager who is the co-ordinator and diplomatic leader. "This job can be most effectively done if the manager or owner plays his role from a background position and promotes a total object other than himself." Summed up: "Luxury is a selection of single equally important, carefully proven details knitted together to make a complete and functional mosaic," said Pranter.



**Hotel Bayerischer Hof, Munich**

FALK VOLKHARDT, General Manager of Hotel Bayerischer Hof, says, about service, "We have emphasized exceptional, familiar and personal service." On entertaining, renovating and keeping luxury standards, he quotes from Adam Ritz's philosophy that "a hotel is like a beautiful woman. She has to be decorated with robes for every season. The decor of the many different kinds of hotel rooms harmonizes with the local ambience." An extra touch added by his hotel is 24-hour dry cleaning and pressing service.



**Hotel Beau-Rivage, Geneva**

Mr. J. MAYER, Manager of Hotel Beau-Rivage, believes location is very important to a luxury hotel. It should be close to banking and commercial centres as well as tourist attractions. The most important factor of a luxury hotel is maintenance of service and management. In fact, his Hotel Beau-Rivage was established in 1865 and remains in the control of the same family. At first, hotel luxury and comfort was a magnet for distinguished guests. This tradition has continued. He also believes a luxury hotel should be *where things happen* — i.e., the Hotel Beau-Rivage is one of the most enjoyable spots for a rendez-vous in Geneva.



**Hotel Excelsior, Firenze**

PAOLO BISCIONI, General Manager of Hotel Excelsior, was outspoken on what a deluxe hotel should be. He said there are over 1,000 so-called deluxe hotels in the world and that this figure is constantly on the increase. Biscioni believes a deluxe hotel must have

at least a 25-year history: only within this time can luxury be reflected in subtle ways. He believes in minimum staff turnover and job satisfaction. Staff achievement automatically leads to good client relationship. Arriving at a certain level of job satisfaction takes time and effort. Thus, roots should be allowed to develop. We debated his comment regarding size of a deluxe hotel when he stated that a deluxe hotel should be no larger than 300 rooms. Biscioni said this number of rooms was necessary to create a warm, personal atmosphere, but he also stated that we mustn't forget business and that this sized hotel is necessary to make a profit, but small enough to maintain exclusivity.



**Hotel Intercontinental, New York**

FRED G. PEELLEN, Vice President and General Manager of Hotel Intercontinental, noted a North American movement toward creating the most lavish, most sumptuous and most glittering hotels, but warned there is a danger of losing the essential ingredient of top hotels: "services the modern traveller has come to expect." He said, "The best is provided as a matter of course, even though some of the demands may seem to require the *working of small miracles*."

"If the traveller won't be able to obtain a translation of a document into Japanese, or send a telex to Geneva at 4 a.m., or hold an emergency board meeting with gourmet luncheon at short notice, then he knows he hasn't found the right hotel."



**Hotel Intercontinental, Geneva**

When your nickname is "the dormitory of the United Nations", you have to run as quickly as you can to keep up with your reputation. HERBERT SCHOTT, General Manager of Hotel Intercontinental, uses two things to keep in the race: the constant upgrading of equipment, decor and facilities pertaining to the everchanging market; and, clear-cut objectives to have the entire staff participating in the hotel life. He used the word "participating" in a way that left no doubt about the sincerity of its meaning.



**Jebel Ali Hotel, Dubai**

"Greatness comes with a flair in management skills, and a strong belief in the hotel and a dedication to it," said MICHEL J. KHALIFE, former General Manager of Jebel Ali Hotel. He indicated the hotel was created after their owner said, "I want the best. Build it." The Jebel Ali is where the desert meets the sea, and soil for its gardens had to be trucked in. Marble for the hotel and restaurant was cut in a single block so the veins would match when placed on the walls.





**The Copley Plaza, Boston**

When ALAN TREMAIN, Managing Director of The Copley Plaza was asked what is a deluxe hotel, he commented it depends upon whose interpretation. "It may be the ultimate in modern facilities to one, and to another, fine architecture and antiques. Personally, I feel that a hotel is like a woman. Some men approach hotels like philanderers, they love them and leave them and move on to the next. Others cherish them for their grace and elegance. Some men are as proud to be seen in good hotels as they are to escort a beautiful woman to a public function." He added that the basic requirement of a deluxe hotel is "careful blending of the old, the fashionable, and the new."

"I also personally feel that managing a hotel is like producing a play. First of all you build the scenery, and this again depends on what you think you can sell best and what the audience will appreciate. You then create the actors, who are your employees and who are, and should be, as well trained as a good Shakespearean actor, whether he or she be a waiter, bellman, or on the front desk, etc. Your customers will then automatically become your audience and if the show is good they will come back to see it time and time again." Tremain feels attention to detail is one of the major requirements of a deluxe hotel. "My father used to have a gardener that tended to his lawns and shrubs. The lawns were magnificent and when people used to drive by and ask the gardener why the lawns were so magnificent, he replied, 'They have been groomed for one hundred years'. A world class hotel needs the same immaculate attention."



**Mandarin Hong Kong**

You don't have to have a Picasso in the lobby or gold temple carvings in the lobby to be a truly deluxe hotel, but such trappings would be a good start, according to PETER J. FRENCH, General Manager of the Mandarin. The Mandarin has most of the marble and glass features we have discussed and a few little extras. All guests can register in their guest rooms, if they wish, rather than at the front desk. Fur coats can be kept in cold storage for long-staying guests. Along with the guest file, the Mandarin also lists the number of pillows and blankets preferred, twin or double beds, like or dislike for fruit, preferred drinks, birthday noted and remembered, national or religious food requirements, and extra furniture or rearrangement of furniture. But, it is even said, if a guest is to sit on his bed to change his socks and leave the room, when he returns the bed will be completely made over with fresh sheets. French also feels a larger amount of suites than in a regular hotel must be available in a luxury hotel.

French concluded by saying a good start towards becoming a luxury hotel is: (1) excellent decoration (2) a well-designed building in the right part of the city. "Excellent service and a long list of *personal touches* means that the status has been earned."



**The Dubai International, Dubai**

HENK BOSCH, General Manager of The Dubai International, says: "To be ranked among the world's luxury hotels, the hotel must start with first-class appearance and facilities. It must also have a *distinctive personality that lifts it above the rest*. Creating this personality is the responsibility of management. I, and my managers, are always correctly dressed for every occasion, always friendly and efficient. The staff emulate us: they smile and greet every guest as he passes anywhere in the hotel; staff memorize the guest's name and use it whenever they see them." Bosch believes a luxury hotel must also have correct marketing as an essential ingredient of the mix. "We take great care to target to the right segment so that guests will feel at home among their own kind."



**Omni Dunfey Hotels**

JON CANAS, President and Chief Executive Officer of Omni Dunfey Hotels, when asked about a luxury hotel, said, "Beyond the physical product, a luxury hotel symbolizes an attitude — *consistency of thoughtfulness and service delivered with style and flair*."



**Boca Raton Hotel and Club, Boca Raton**

BERT STEPHENS, President and Chief Executive Officer, Boca Raton Hotel and Club, when asked about luxury hotels and those who manage them, said: "We hotel men are the last of the royalty. We command castles and armies of uniformed subjects. We lead crusades for the good life and the well-being of our guests. If we succeed we survive, and by making a profit from our virtue to become revered and renowned as one of the best."



**Royal Sonesta Hotel, Boston**

There can be no gap between guest's expectations and what the guest receives and perceives, according to MICHAEL M. SCHWEIGER, General and Vice President of the Royal Sonesta Hotel. He also told the *Renard Report* his hotel's secret for excellence lies in identifying and servicing the market, which, in turn, must be well defined. "And of course you have to *refuse to compromise* on one's own standards."



**The Regent Sydney, Sydney**

W. TED WRIGHT, General Manager of the Regent Sydney, is also a solid believer in luxury: "Every effort is made to communicate with staff at all levels. We would like to believe that we are all employees and we are all responsible for guests' satisfaction. We must stress the fact that every person has a responsibility and they realize that the roles we play are those of actors and actresses, stage or screen." Wright mentions an important point when discussing a luxury hotel: "We are constantly concerned about *market sensitivities*. Change in attitudes and expectations are constantly being monitored in the respective marketplaces with particular emphasis on consistency in service, flexibility in attitudes." *Luxury*, he feels, is constantly changing with the times. Even if you're a beautiful old building surrounded by gardens, or a modern marble hotel with all the amenities, you still must monitor changing attitudes of your guests.



**Shangri-la Hotel, Kuala Lumpur**

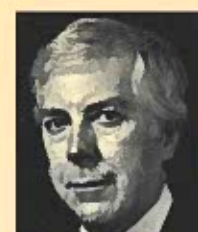
According to DARIO REGAZZONE, General Manager of the Shangri-la Hotel in Kuala Lumpur (former General Manager of Peninsula Bangkok), "A luxury hotel is a landmark in the city which always employs the art and artistry that is reflected in the local culture." Although Mr. Regazzone is rightfully proud of the decor and setting of his hotel, he recognizes "the *unique warmth of the people* is perhaps the most essential and integral part of the hotel's atmosphere. Every guest is considered a VIP."

He adds that "the essence of a deluxe hotel is not easily imparted by glossy brochures and promotional photographs. It is a quality more subtly experienced by the guests. The beautiful grounds and building of a hotel, its excellent cuisine and the attentive and thoughtful manner of the staff create an ambience of luxury and friendliness. But, the real success and charm of a luxury hotel lies in the perfect blending of all these elements." When asked what little touches a luxury hotel should have, he mentioned that each guest must, on arrival, be escorted to his or her room by a guest relations staff, then left with their personal room steward who is there to offer them fruit, a welcome drink, unpack their baggage, deliver their newspapers, etc.



**Oriental Hotel, Bangkok**

KURT WACHTVEITL, General Manager, Oriental Bangkok, a consistent winner in the world's top hotel poll, says, "Luxury is *bringing history into daily life* at the Oriental." The Oriental is more than a hundred years old and has an atmosphere besides the nostalgia other hotels can't match. The Oriental Hotel has 400 rooms and 1,000 employees: many from families who have worked at the Oriental for generations. Wachtveitl has been General Manager for more than 16 years.



**Regent Hotels**

ROBERT H. BURNS, President of Regent Hotels, defines luxury accommodation as "home-away-from-home comfort". He believes firmly that location is a key to a luxury hotel, "whether that means proximity to business and entertainment districts or a situation at a prime resort area making the most of the scenic splendour". On the human touch Burns says, "The bottom line in a great hotel is its people: motivated people, skilled people, *concerned people* with one thing in mind — satisfied guests. Just as a lack of confidence can easily be spotted in hotels facing crisis after crisis, employees at top hotels reflect a sense of *understandable pride*, knowing that whatever their job — laundry service, cashier, food and beverage — they are doing it well and are part of a team that realizes their importance. In short, cutting corners in expertise can only result in cutting down on effectiveness and enthusiasm of guests."



**Hyatt Corporation**

Another of America's leading hoteliers, J. PATRICK FOLEY, President of Hyatt Corporation, discounted the "glass and brass" reputation of the chain's newer hotels in saying, "You continue to hire the best and the brightest in the industry and provide them the environment to help them. We spend a great deal of time, especially our general managers and department heads, cultivating our people — and I don't just mean technical training. Like everyone, we make mistakes — people make mistakes. But we teach our people that a hotel can make mistakes without crumbling. The most important thing for them to know is to respond to mistakes quickly and effectively." With everybody trying to reach the deluxe market, Foley believes "you *beat the competition by out-executing them*."



**Westin Hotels**

Providing the *management with autonomy* creates a hotel with personality as distinctive as the city it surrounds, according to DWIGHT CALL, Executive Vice President of Westin Hotels. The repeat visit is a main goal of the chain, and consistent product and people excellence is how this should be achieved. Call feels recollections of seemingly small but important guest services will linger with the guests, and that the chain strives to achieve this through such mechanisms as its Culinary Institute for its chefs. "The goal is to make *excellence a tangible reality*," he concluded.

Robert McCauley, Vice President, Westin Hotels Canada, bluntly said a luxury hotel is where "quality *supercedes quantity*," and that is the philosophy upon which luxury and selectivity is based.



**Atlantic Hotel Kempinski, Hamburg**

KARL WALTERSPIEL, General Manager, Atlantic Hotel Kempinski, comments: "The Atlantic Hotel Kempinski was opened in 1909, only a short time after the opening of the famous Plaza Hotel in New York. Both hotels have one thing in common — they were designed to accommodate the deluxe passengers of the transatlantic lines of those days which cruised between the old and the new world. The basic design and beauty of the hotel was, in those days, created in such a timeless manner that the grandchildren of the first generation of the guests still consider the Atlantic Hotel in Hamburg to be one of the most outstanding hotels of the world."

Walterspiel believes a luxury hotel should concentrate all efforts in securing the utmost in service and atmosphere on one side, and the best in modern hotel management and administration on the other. "This means that we operate the hotel in different profit centres. Responsibilities and lines of authority are clearly established, budgets are made, goals are set and results are analyzed."

He also believes that it must be a privilege to work at a luxury hotel. Another seemingly unimportant, but critical, factor is staff loyalty and morale; without it you cannot produce a luxury hotel. Forty percent of Karl's employees have been with him five years or longer. Staff facilities must be of the highest quality. The reason: if the staff knows what luxury is they can definitely offer it to the guests. "The operating philosophy must be clear to all members of the staff. Tradition and the successful past must be used to solve the problems of today and to set the goals for a successful future," said Walterspiel.



**Sheraton Corporation, Canada**

KAI HERBRANSON, Senior Vice President and Area Manager of Sheraton Corporation, notes that many travellers seeking a luxury hotel may be handicapped. He feels it is the obligation of the luxury hotel innkeeper to provide handicapped travellers with accommodation in the very same luxury standard as received by any other visitor including special phones, menus, furniture requirements, procedures and special equipment.

Herbranson also believes staff is the key factor in a deluxe hotel's program, and that a "world class hotel must stress *training and educational* programs for all staff, to maintain good morale and reduce staff turnover. Training gives individuals a sense of pride and self-worth, as well as identifying them to the corporate philosophy and identity. Internal training directors responsible for orientation, safety procedures, dictating of standards and job function description also help to give people a sense of how an individual fits into the entire scheme of the hotel. The key words are *communication to and from* all levels of staff. Communication encourages individuals to express innovative ideas and try unique projects. The staff members tend to express genuine concern and interest in the hotel's guests, helping to create that luxury experience." Herbranson concluded by saying, "Luxury is a constant search for excellence. It is a continual challenge to meet the ever-changing marketplace directly, honestly and to the best of our abilities."



**Ritz Carlton Hotels**

Developing one luxury hotel is a challenge in itself, but developing a group of hotels under the Ritz Carlton name is an even more challenge. When COLGATE HOLMES, President of Ritz Carlton Hotels, was asked about this difficult job, he said: "We are committed to the creation of a new American hotels. We feel a deep respect to preserve and maintain the Ritz Carlton reputation. We've been committed of quality from the outset and we 1 projects will bring some exciting new and scope to the Ritz Carlton name."

Obviously, Holmes believes in *brilliant life and vitality* to luxury hotels across the country. Holmes' success is based on an *entrepreneurial approach* to bringing friendly, personalized service and a welcome, and comfortable, relaxing luxury, to Holmes, is that of an in operational techniques and human programs. This is how the new U.S. Hotel chain will earn a reputation: a good share of the top markets it



**Hotel Plaza Athens, Paris**

A full day of relaxed entertainment in a guest house with the ambience of the "happy few". These are used by FRANCO COZZO, General Manager of Hotel Plaza Athens. He also notes the hotel's Louis XV and Louis XVI style only for the jet set, but for members of high society as well.



**Costa Cruises**

When asked how to compare a cruise to a luxury hotel, HOWARD FINI, Chief Executive Officer of Costa Cruises, answered: "There is no such thing as a 1,000-room truly deluxe hotel. Cruising 1,000 or more passengers deliver the individualized services that hotel guests require. Also, a cruise cannot take for granted the customer services just because they are a captain. Therefore, cruise ships try even to maintain high standards of quality design, furnishings and staff." Fine creativity is paramount in a luxury more so in a cruise ship, where variety or will be quickly bored. This in a luxury operation is the management. "Management must supervise, orchestrate the talents and services of varied persons to ensure that the product blends harmoniously and guest to return along with his friends and colleagues."