

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Saturnia, Mt. Washington and Lago Mar

The last ten years after I left the Diplomat Resort and Country Club, I was still in the hotel business and still an accountant and upgrading hotel computers.

The Diplomat gave me a six-month severance arrangement and I still had the company Lincoln Town Car. They gave me an office up at the Presidential Towers Apartment building and had me working part-time. Each day, I would have lunch at the Diplomat Inn which the family still owned and operated. Jay Rosen was their Manager. We hired a new controller; set up books on PC's to keep this division going. This kept me somewhat busy but allowed time to look for another position.

I flew up for an interview at the New York City Essex House, owned by Japanese Airlines. Then, I flew over to Nassau to see about an assistant's position at Atlantis, Paradise Island. The most interesting trip was to fly to Phoenix and back to Ft. Lauderdale on the same day, 3000 miles. The interview was with a Japanese accountant, representing a new hotel under construction in Guam. None of these leads panned out.

Then, a headhunter sent me on an interview again to New York City. The property was a GTE Training Facility in Greenwich, Conn. I stayed there three days, visited with the Director, a most interesting woman but still no offer. Back in Hollywood, after the six months deal with the Diplomat ended, I took my unemployment check and worked around the house.

Then, I got a call to go back to New York to meet with another GTE executive. While there, I kept getting calls from Marilyn that my contact at Horwath & Horwath had a job offer in Miami and

would I call him. I felt that since I was in NYC, it would not be fair, to play one against the other. I waited there at the Training Facilities for five days in Greenwich and still no offer.

Before I returned to Florida, the Headhunter called me to ask that I stop in Times Square to meet her. We had up to this time not met. I took the train into Grand Central Station and walked over to Times Square. When I arrived at her office, they gave me a telephone message to call Carol Management up on Madison Avenue. We had a quick meeting, at which time still nothing happened.

Taking a cab up to the Madison Ave. office which I knew to be the Head Offices of the Doral Hotel Chain, I was greeted by the personal CPA of the Kaskel Family. *"Am I glad to see you"* was his greeting. *"You are the best thing that has happened to me today. Please go back to Miami, where they will hire you for the position of Controller of the Doral Saturnia."* The Saturnia Spa is part of the Doral Country Club off 36th Street, Miami.

The next day, I received two phone job offers, first the Saturnia and an hour later, the headhunter called with the position at GTE in Greenwich. My answer, *"I'm sorry but I accepted a position in Miami an hour ago."* The Saturnia offer met the high salary of the GTE offer, so I was happy to be working again and still living in Hollywood.



The Saturnia Spa Resort

The Doral Saturnia Spa Resort was a \$40,000,000 project by the very wealthy owners of the eleven-property hotel chain - Doral Hotels. They had the newest resort on Miami Beach and a well-established large golf resort, way out on 36th Street in Miami. It had been built right after the Diplomat was built. They had three golf courses and successful with both golf and convention business. I had been there many times for hotel meetings. For years, I had been one of the management trustees representing the Diplomat for the union pension fund. The Doral was also one of the members, so meetings would rotate between the Fontainebleau, the Doral and the Diplomat. The Doral owners - The Kaskels, created Doral from 'dor' from Doris and 'al' from Al Kaskel. They decided to build this spa on the country club property.

The Saturnia had been built a year earlier, 48 very deluxe suites, Spa program, 3 meals American Plan - spa food at \$1000 a day for two guests.

The first thing I had to do was to arrange the office space. Then, I had to hire most of my staff. I prided myself in having a *"United Nations staff."* Tony, my assistant, was Jamaican, Maria part Cuban, Renee an American Black and Jimmie studied economics and came from Colombia. We had a great team. Tony in the picture is holding the placque awarding the Five Diamond Rating from AAA for the Saturnia Spa Resort, one of only a dozen resorts in Florida with this rating.



Maria, Roger, Sr., Tony, Renee and Jimmie

It was 1989, I was hired as their third Controller since they opened. We used a terminal off the old computer system from the country club. When I got there, they were in an accounting mess. The Spa was less than a year old. I had to set up new accounting records, put in desktop computers and shortly thereafter install a new on-line computer system, the same as we had at the Diplomat. They sent me to computer school again in California.

Being a top of the line Resort, the Executive Committee had many privileges. The special guest cocktail parties, a trip with Marilyn to see Liza, Sammy and Frank perform in Miami and a late dinner afterwards at the Grand Bay Hotel. Limo rides to a luncheon as guest of Mrs. Kaskel, V.P. of the Saturnia twice a year for the Executives. I enjoyed the assignment.



Lady Lyons, Offer Nussbaum, Mgr, Lord Lyons

One of our special long staying guests, Lord and Lady Lyons from England, on one of their visits, had a birthday party off property for Lady Lyons. They invited several of the executives as we all at times felt like family.

Once, every three-months, Marilyn and I moved in for the weekend. I was the *manager on duty*. There was never much to do, except to enjoy the spa food and see the special entertainments they had for the guests.

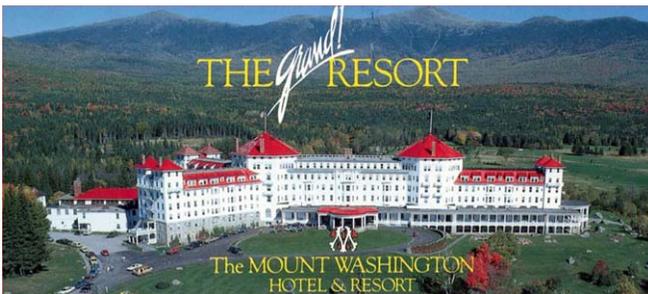
We received a bonus each quarter, based on the success of the whole operation. I was there almost three years. I lost the job

based on a trumped up story that they were going to consolidate the accounting with the club staff. My age was almost 65 and of course they wished to get rid of me due to age. It is against the law but what are you going to do! So, I found myself out looking for work again.



Roger, Sr. at the party 1991

Through my Hotel Accountants Association, I received a call to go up north for an interview. This time to the famous Mt. Washington Resort in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. They paid for a plane ticket and had a car meet me in Boston at the Airport for the hundred mile ride to the hotel. The manager took me out on the Golf Course and while he played golf, he offered me the Controller's position, room & board and a satisfactory salary. I agreed to start immediately as the previous Controller had already left.



The Mt. Washington Resort

Over the weekend, I met the Paymaster on Sunday. He was a local fellow and was quick to tell me the history of the current owners of the Resort. It seems that the previous owners had a mortgage insured by a savings & loan. Therefore the FDIC had taken over the property and put it up for auction. Now they were just waiting for the closing before the new owners, a local group took it over. The previous controller had jumped ship to take a new job.

So, here I was with a good salary, room & board, nice newly refurbished colonial bedroom in one of their adjacent facilities. A good office, computers, free long distance calls and if I were to go back to Hollywood, still be out of work. I called Marilyn and said I might as well stay the two or three months and enjoy the experience of a summer up north.

I enjoyed the assignment, the people were nice and the food was great. Since, I knew this would be only a temporary assignment, I negotiated *First Officer* privileges (meals from the guest menu in the restaurants and main dining room), free laundry, 5 1/2 day work week. Not a bad deal. It was early July in New England. I had not lived in the north for forty years.

I soon learned, the food in the zoo (the hotel expression for a company cafeteria) was ok. So, for breakfast and lunch I ate with my small staff. Each evening when the main dining room opened, I had a small table just inside the main entrance. I dined off the guest menu. Great food and a glass of wine with dinner. The hotel band would start about a half an hour later for dance music. *What a life!* I called home almost every night on their WATS line.

On Sundays, the manager would lend me his straight stick, VW bug to visit in town or go sightseeing. One time, I drove up to Canada for the day and another time east to Maine for an hour of sightseeing.

I stayed until the last day of August. When the resort was

sold, they gave us all a small vacation settlement, a ride to Boston and I used my original return ticket which they had sent me for the trip back to Florida.

Back home, I started my unemployment checks again. The next week, I received a call from the representative of the Unions who now owned the old Diplomat Hotel. The main hotel had been closed and the contents sold off. The four-story building across the street on the west was being operated as a transient hotel; rooms daily or by the week. They were also operating the Diplomat Country Club Golf Course. Since the hotel had been closed, all the computers had been turned off. Two of the girls from my staff; Anna who had been my Office Manager and Helen, the accounts payable girl, were set up in an office on the first floor of the west building. They had no computers and were paying bills by hand and doing the payroll with ADP.



The Diplomat West Four Story Building

I was offered a temporary assignment by the Union Owners as a consultant to run the accounting, set up PC computers and books. I was to work part-time, hours of my choosing for \$500 a week. Since I was still looking for a permanent job, this kept me busy. I did, as usual, an excellent job for them. We found several of our old IBM PC computers still in storage. I set up books and trained the ladies. This arrangement lasted several months.

One day, I received a call from the Manager of a resort property in Ft. Lauderdale. He formerly worked in Sales at the old Diplomat

but after I had gone, so, I did not know him. He had heard of me and the hotel was looking for a new controller. They had hired a young lady who was not working out, to replace the previous Controller who I had known for years but who had passed away.

I was invited to come in on Sunday for an interview with the Owner, Mr. Walter Banks and the Manager, Dan Sladen. We had Sunday Brunch in the Dining Room and adjourned to Mr. Banks' Office. I had known Mr. Banks' father but never met Walter Banks before. He proceeded to dig into my background. After three hours together, he turned to me and said, *“Roger, I have known about you for twenty-five years. You are known as the Dean of Hotel Accountants.”* The next day, Dan Sladen called and hired me over the telephone. That started a ten-year happy relationship with the Lago Mar Resort and Beach Club.



The Lago Mar Resort & Beach Club

They had very old computers, so, I prevailed on Mr. Banks to let me do a RFP (Request for Proposal). I selected ten suppliers starting with IBM and sent out the RFP. From the results, I selected the top two, IBM and a German System - Fidelity. We had the IBM people first demo their system to Mr. Banks. Second the Fidelity System was presented. Although they were new to the States, they were the largest Property Management System in Europe and Worldwide. Both Mr. Banks & I felt they would be the best for the Lago Mar.

Starting in May of the following year, the owners had most of

the old hotel demolished and rebuilt in place; new lobbies, restaurants and new deluxe suites. They planned ahead to add two additional stories within a few years. After the second addition, the hotel became the best resort on Fort Lauderdale Beach.

My years at the Lago Mar went by quickly. One of the time goals was to get past year 2000. This was when all the computers in the world were going to fail on New Years Eve when their clocks were not going to handle the change of the century. I worked that night till past midnight. But nothing happened.

Like the Saturnia Spa, the Lago Mar did not have any desktop PC's. I brought in mine from home, ordered new computers for everyone in the office and set up a small network. A few months later, I installed the new property management computer system. This system was upgraded twice while I was there.

My title was now MIS/Controller. MIS means *Manager of Information Systems* and I spent 2/3 of my time on keeping the computers running. While I was there, we had three managers and the owner, who pretty much ran everything himself. The last two years, Mr. Banks stepped aside and let the last manager take over. He was quite young and came with chain hotel background. He made many changes and improvements to the property.

I was now 75 years young. The new manager was trying to improve the image of the resort and thought the staff should all be young people, so, I felt like it was time to retire.

Mr. Walter Banks was very kind and recognized the fine service I had given him these many years. He arranged to keep me on as a *computer consultant* at half salary for a year. He bought me a cell phone, so I could be on call. I would attend all computer meetings with vendors as the property was ready again to install a new system. For the first three or four months, I would stop in to see my replacement and answer any questions he might have. We would have lunch at the Owners table as usual too. It was March 2002 when I retired.



Roger deWardt Lane

aka - TheDimeMan

web - www.dewardt.net

email - dewardt@bellsouth.net