



WESTIN HOTELS

OCTOBER 1984

# FRONT

The Westin  
Bellevue Stratford —  
for 80 years, a  
Philadelphia tradition

(Story page 6)

# NEWSFRONT

## Moving on Moving up

**Fred Beck**, controller, The Westin Chosun, Seoul to controller The Westin Ilikai.

**John Marker**, director of convention services, The Westin Hotel, Seattle to senior assistant manager, The Westin Oaks, Houston.

**Michael Micketti**, director of marketing, The Westin Bonaventure, Los Angeles to director of marketing, The Westin Hotel, Renaissance Center Detroit.

**Iлона Milz**, director of housekeeping, The Carlton, to assistant director of housekeeping, The Plaza.

*COVER: The French Renaissance style facade of The Westin Bellevue Stratford has been a warmly regarded familiar landmark to generations of Philadelphians. Its unique architecture was a criterion for its being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Built in 1904, in what is now the heart of Philadelphia's cultural, business and shopping districts, The Westin Bellevue Stratford continues to firmly maintain its hold as the city's premier grand hotel. This year it celebrates its 80th anniversary. Highlights of that historic occasion and an update on the hotel is featured on page 6.*

## FRONT

A monthly publication by and for employees of **Westin Hotels**

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## Previn's piano is Palm Court's pride

**P**ittsburghers are rightly proud of their nationally famed symphony. And they are especially fond of its former conductor, the world-renowned pianist, Andre Previn.

Recently Previn took a new position as conductor for the Los Angeles Symphony. But the memory of his musical artistry lingers on — at the Palm Court of The Westin William Penn.

Learning that Previn was selling his concert grand upon his transfer to the West Coast, the hotel purchased the piano for use in the Palm Court lobby replacing the one being used. (Evening piano entertainment from 5 pm to 1 am has long been a popular Palm Court tradition.)

Its purchase sparked considerable attention with the citizens of this music-loving city. A number of radio stations, newspapers and two major TV stations covered the piano's transfer from Heinz Hall to The Westin William Penn. One local television news-magazine program even filmed the transaction in a lengthy segment that was later aired nationally by the network's affiliates.

A press party celebrating the piano's installation also drew considerable media response. A fun twist to that event was a hotel sponsored "Chopsticks Contest." Media people were challenged to demonstrate their talents on the piano with a bottle of champagne awarded for the best performance.



*With a grand flourish, Bob Hawes, general manager, unveils Previn's piano in its new home at the Palm Court.*

After the installation, patrons of the Palm Court were invited to compete in yet another contest. That was, the person who guessed closest as to how many concerts in which the piano was actually used received season's tickets to the Pittsburgh Symphony. (With a few visiting performer exceptions, the concert grand was used exclusively by Previn.)

Now permanently ensconced, Previn's piano has

become the pride of the Palm Court. And lest anyone forget its origin, there is a subtle reminder in each evening's performance. Palm Court pianists (there are at least two each evening) follow a tradition of playing Previn's "Like Young" just before a break. Also, each performer's repertoire includes one rendition of Previn's popular ballad "You're Gonna' Hear From Me."

# NEWSFRONT

## Marketing Task Force reports on progress

Westin's six-member Marketing Task Force, formed in early May, reports on-target progress towards their goal of developing a new Five-Year Marketing Plan for the company.

Comprising the group are Bill Newman, senior vice president, Marketing; Jim Treadway, former general manager, The Westin Hotel, Seattle; Chris Baum, director of sales, Westin Sales Office, Houston; Creighton Casper, director of marketing, The Westin St. Francis; John Gimbel, director of business plans and operations analysis, United Airlines; Don Tatzin, consultant, Arthur D. Little, Inc., management consultants.

In early September, the group had completed their planned hotel research visitations. Approximately half of Westin's hotels worldwide were visited by two-member Task



*Task Force members Bill Newman (left) and John Gimbel review questionnaire data received from the hotels.*

Force team members.

Teams met with the managing director/general manager and director of marketing/sales at each hotel. A discussion session with the hotel's sales staff, a tour of the hotel and wrap-up sessions with the hotel managers and sales managers concluded each visit. Team members also toured the facilities of the major competitors in the cities visited.

In those cities with a Westin Sales Office, the teams met with the director of sales, as well as

the sales staffs, to solicit their input on key issues.

While not all hotels were visited by the Task Force teams, all were given the opportunity to contribute their input. Early on, all Westin hotels and sales offices had been requested to complete an extensive in-depth questionnaire covering all aspects of their marketing-related activities.

Concurrent with the group's travels, individual members were assigned specific outside research projects. These includ-

ed conducting interviews with various travel and hospitality related industries, meeting with outside consulting firms that had been selected to assist in some of the customer and competition research projects, and coordinating research efforts.

For the remainder of 1984, the group will be in Seattle reviewing and analyzing the massive data that has been collected. They will also meet with the Task Force Steering Committee (Harry Mullikin, Dwight Call and Chris Marker of Westin and John Zeeman of United Airlines) before writing the final recommended course of action for the company's future marketing direction.

A report on the group's activities and recommendations will be presented at the 1985 Management Conference that will be held at the Camino Real, Mexico City in early January.

While the Marketing Task Force group will formally disband at year's end, they will continue to meet on occasion to monitor Marketing Plan direction as it is implemented.

## MSU students big on Westin sales blitzes

“Join the Hotel Sales and Marketing Association and see a Westin” could well be the recruiting slogan for students of Michigan State University's School of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management.

During the 1983-84 school year, the University boasted a 180-student membership in their HSMA student chapter. Some 75 of them have participated in sales blitzes along with

the hotel sales staffs at four different Westin properties.

This included 20 students on a two-day blitz at The Westin Hotel, Cincinnati; a 20-student two-day blitz at The Westin Bellevue Stratford; a 20-student two-day pre-opening blitz for The Westin Hotel, O'Hare, and a 15-student week-long blitz with The Westin Hotel, Renaissance Center Detroit.

To the benefit of each of the four hotels, the student-assisted blitzes helped greatly to increase Westin's exposure in the marketplace. And the students benefited by their exposure opportunity in the workplace.

## Management changes

These hotel management position changes were announced in September:

David King, executive assistant manager at The Westin South Coast Plaza, has been named resident manager of The Westin Hotel, Seattle.

King replaced Martin Astengo who had left Westin to accept the position as manager of Hyatt Regency in Orlando, Florida.

C. V. Healy, executive assistant manager at The Westin Hotel, Williams Center Tulsa, has been named resident manager for The Westin Stamford, Singapore.

Healy will report on site in Singapore on the first of the year following a three-month assignment with Technical Services and Development Divisions at the Seattle corporate offices.

# NEWSFRONT

## Culinary Olympics — getting it together in Dallas

For the culinary staff of The Westin Hotel, Galleria Dallas, it was an unforgettable and inspiring four days.

Working in their midst in the hotels' kitchens was the entire 12-member U.S. Culinary Olympic Team. They had gathered at the hotel in late August at the invitation of team member Victor Gielisse, executive chef. The occasion was the final practice and planning session before leaving for Frankfurt, West Germany to compete with top culinarians from 28 nations in the 16th International Culinary Competition or better known as the International Culinary Olympics.

The quadrennial event, considered by some critics as the world's most impressive collective display of culinary expertise, is being held this month, October 12-18, at its

traditional Frankfurt am Main exhibition site.

During the week-long contest, culinarians from all five continents compete individually

or in national teams vying for the gold, silver and bronze medals that symbolize culinary excellence.

The 12-member U.S. team is comprised of four national representatives, five regional representatives, and three pastry chefs.



From left: Executive Chefs Victor Gielisse, Marcus Bosiger, and Raimund Hofmeister.

Westin chefs are well represented in the U.S. group. In addition to Gielisse, the five-member regional group also includes member Raimund Hofmeister, executive chef at the Century Plaza. And Marcus Bosiger, executive chef at The Westin Galleria, Houston, is one of the four national representatives.

To make the U.S. Culinary Team, a chef has to compete in one of the three regional tryouts two years prior to the Olympics. For the 1984 Culinary Olympics, tryouts were held in Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Chicago. Judging and selecting was the responsibility of the American Culinary Federation and the National Restaurant Association, who are the sponsors of the team.

## WARE is where it's at with Westin retirees

Few people would knock retirement. But along with its leisure life-style rewards, retirement for many people holds one regret.

That is the inevitability of losing touch with those fellow employees one has worked with or has become so well acquainted with over the years. And especially so with one's contemporaries who have also retired or who are about to do so.

In recognition of that need to keep in touch — even if just occasionally — a small group

of retirees and former Westin members in the Seattle area have recently banded together to form a Westin retiree link.

The result was the Westin Association of Retired Employees or WARE for short.

The association instigator was Bob Graves, a former corporate office employee, who had consulted with a Seattle member of United Airlines Retired Employees Association (UAREA) in researching the mechanics of organizing a Westin group.

Graves contacted other local retirees from the corporate offices and from current and former Westin properties in the area to form an ad hoc organizing committee. Westin's corporate offices approved the formation of the group and permitted the release of an address

list of retirees to solicit membership interest.

The response was excellent, Graves said. "This encouraged us to go ahead and hold a no-host luncheon meeting early this year to which all who responded were invited to participate in setting up a formal organization."

As a result of that meeting, WARE was officially formed with the election of officers and committee heads. Membership dues were established at a minimal \$5.00 per year. Also established was that WARE would be a strictly social organization — a means of keeping in touch largely through some planned social activity scheduled every two or three months or so.

"We'd like to encourage retirees and those about to be retired from throughout the system to form local WARE chapters," says Graves. "It would be kind of neat to keep in touch through a company-wide retiree network since so many of us have worked with each other while we were at Westin."

Anyone interested in becoming a member of WARE or in starting a local chapter can write to: Westin Association of Retired Employees, Westin Building, Sixth Floor, 2001 Sixth Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98121.

# WESTIN PEOPLE

## Her tutoring is key to his wider world

Twice a week, Lynn Kirsch, personnel director at the Century Plaza, spends part of her evening hours at the West Los Angeles Library.

She isn't there to read books, however, but rather to teach a 30-year-old electrician how to read books. Or, more practically, how to read almost any material printed in the English language.

Kirsch is a volunteer teacher participating in a new federally-funded California Literacy Project for illiterate adults.

Her "pupil," the 30-year-old electrician, is one of an estimated half million English-speaking adults in the Los Angeles area (there are several million throughout the U.S.) who cannot read.

Contrary to the stereotypes, illiterate adults can be people who work hard and earn a healthy living. Somehow, especially if they are particularly bright, they manage to survive and even get pretty far in the world without knowing how to read or write. However, they usually go to elaborate lengths to hide their deficiency from family, friends and co-workers, while suffering inside from intense feelings of inadequacy, anguish and frustration.

On the part of the electrician, it was largely a frustration in not being able to advance in his job because of his handicap and not being able to help his young daughter with her homework that prompted his participation in the program.

The teaching process is one to one and begins with the

equivalent of first grade books. The program's goal is to bring the participants up to a fifth grade reading level within a six month period.

Kirsch feels that goal to be somewhat unrealistic. Speaking for her student, she put it into perspective with this comment, "As he has remarked to me, 'How could I learn in six months what the schools I went to couldn't do in 11 years?'"

Now into their fourth month, tutor Kirsch is enthusiastic about the results thus far, however. "By and large he's made terrific progress," she



*In her tutor role, Lynn Kirsch offers reading pointers.*

says. "And I see a marked difference in his confidence in reading from lesson to lesson."

She eagerly looks forward to each teaching session. "It's very exciting to see him react to this whole new world that is opening up for him. But I think it's even more satisfying for me because I get such a kick out of doing it."

Has Kirsch ever worked as a teacher before? "No," she admits, "but in my position as the hotel's director of personnel, I've conducted a lot of training classes. I guess I have a feel for it." Then, smiling, she added, "and I guess I have a lot of patience, also."



## Carlton's women managers

JOHANNESBURG—In recognition of The Carlton's progressive attitude with regard to career development and opportunities for its women employees the hotel was this year's proud recipient of the

1984 National Gold Award. The annual award is given by the South African Federation of Business and Professional Women. The Carlton is the first hotel to be so honored since the award's inception. Former

general manager, Pat Burton (now general manager of The Westin Hotel, Galleria Dallas) displays the award, surrounded by a group of the hotel's women managers.

# THE WESTIN BELLEVUE STRATFORD

Celebrating an 80-year tradition of excellence

1904-1984

Broad street was just a prairie when the Bellevue-Stratford opened.

It has been a lively, historic, raucous, unforgettable eighty years. And this indefatigable Philadelphia treasure has thrived and sustained as the most important that



Breakfast	
Order in Pilsner	25
Cookies	65
Ginger Cookies	50
Baked Apples with Cream	
Mince Pie	
Chowder	
\$1.75 per person	
Appetizers	
Blue Point Oysters	25
Relish Tray	65
Cream A La Carte Soup	50
Entrées	
Sweet Perch Saute Maitre	70
Filet Mignon Perigordine	1.25
Roast Young Lamb, Mint Sauce	1.00
Parfait of Baked Flageolet	.75
Capon with Oyster Stuffing	1.00
Vegetables	
Chasseur Sauce	25
New Potatoes	50
New String Beans	40
New Corn	40
Salads	
Kumquat	40
Tomato Andalous	40
Desserts	
Sorbet Bellefleur	35
Parfait Melba	40
Assorted Cakes	25
Cafe Noir	15
Cafe Special	20



▲ At anniversary cake-cutting ceremonies, a champagne toast. (From left:) Ronald Rubin, hotel ownership partner; Joe Garden, retired employee with 55 years service with the hotel; Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson Goode; Bart Moore, general manager.

◀ The Stratford Court, a cozy lobby bar, was opened when Westin took over management of the hotel.



The original menu from the hotel's archives listed such items as Blue Point Oysters at 25¢, Filet Mignon Perigordine at \$1.25 and Parfait Melba at 40¢.

The cover dated its origin. Inscribed in decorative script was the proud announcement, "The Bellevue Stratford Opening in Philadelphia Tuesday, September 20th, 1904."

Eighty years later, on Thursday, September 20, 1984, a similar menu listing most of the original selections made a brief one-day revival in each of the hotel's restaurants. And each item was listed with the original 1904 prices!

The occasion was the celebration of The Westin Bellevue Stratford's 80th anniversary—an appreciative "thank you" to hotel guests and especially to the city of Philadelphia who have made The Westin their favorite hotel over the past eight decades.

Further, since no birthday is complete without a cake, the hotel's chefs concocted a mam-

moth, multi-layered beauty. The official anniversary ceremonies were held in the hotel's lobby on noon of the 20th and were attended by the public and civic dignitaries. Among them was Philadelphia's Mayor W. Wilson Goode who was given the honor of cutting the first slice of cake.

Symbolically, Mayor Goode was cutting a slice of history

near and dear to the hearts of generations of Philadelphians.

Upon its opening, Philadelphians were quick to acclaim The Westin Bellevue Stratford as their city's grand hotel. It soon became the center of the city's political and social life. Debutantes come out annually at the Charity Ball, marriages were culminated, and the distinctive, balconied Grand Ballroom showcased the fanci-

est balls, the most lavish private parties. Its Hunt Room, a dining room and bar, became legendary as the favorite haunt of the city's politicians and newspeople.

Every American president since Theodore Roosevelt has made the hotel their headquarters when in Philadelphia. It was the chosen home away from home for royalty, nobility and heads of state from around the world.

Then, in the mid-70's, the grande dame began to tire and lose some of her sprightly luster. There was even talk of tearing it down. But there was too much of the city's history and too many fond memories contained inside its handsome French Renaissance facade to let go. A partnership of concerned Philadelphia businessmen was formed enabling the real estate development firm of Rubin Associates to purchase the hotel.

Along with the purchase, a sum in excess of \$25 million was allocated for the complete restoration of the hotel—to bring it back to its former glory.

What emerged fourteen months later in September 1979, was a totally revamped hotel, better, grander and more exciting than ever.

All of its 565 guest rooms were completely remodeled to reflect a modern, updated version of their original opulence. The Victorian grandeur of the hotel's lobby with its sparkling crystal chandeliers, lofty marble columns, gilded plaster detail and plush carpeting was totally refurbished or renewed. Public areas and meeting space was equally enhanced. Once again a new generation of Philadelphians could point with pride to their "new" grand hotel.

When Westin assumed management of the property in 1980, a number of other enhancements began to take place under the leadership of its general manager, Bart Moore. One of these was the opening of the Stratford Court, a cozy lobby bar that also features afternoon tea service. A pianist provides mood music throughout the afternoon and evening and during the cocktail

hour a seafood bar setup is added.

More recently, The Westin Bellevue Stratford opened its much-needed parking garage connecting to the hotel. The garage is reached from the lobby through the handsomely restored carriage entrance.

The hotel is the only one in Philadelphia—and one of the few in the country—to boast of theatrical productions on its premises. Performances which are billed to guests as "just an elevator ride away" are held in the Hunt Room. The current production, "Forbidden Broadway," a musical spoof of big Broadway hits and personalities, is now in its tenth month.

Under the direction of executive chef, Vince Alberici, the hotel continues to maintain its reputation for fine dining in Philadelphia. The elegant Versailles is among the city's top gourmet dining spots. The popular lunch-only Hunt Room continues to draw the city's politicians and other movers and shakers.

Popular with the sports crowd of this sports-loving city, is the new O'Briens Pub and Sporting Emporium with its walls displaying a gallery of local sports champion portraits. And it's here where sumptuous Sunday brunches have become the newest Philadelphia tradition.

Tradition, that's what The Westin Bellevue Stratford is all about. Eighty years of gracious hospitality tradition in Philadelphia as expressed by a warm, friendly and thoroughly professional staff. A tradition of excellence Westin Hotels-style with which Philadelphia's premier hotel will continue to welcome its guests for generations to come.

# PHOTO NEWS



## The Perrier run

TORONTO—Over 125 food and beverage servers from throughout Toronto participated in the annual Perrier Waiter's Run to raise money for the combined station CKFM and The Westin Hotel, Toronto Children's Fund in support of the Hospital for Sick Children. The Westin was the headquarters hotel for the 5K run which required a \$5 entry fee donation. Runners were required to run the course carry-

ing an open bottle of Perrier water on a tray. For the record, all the hotel's runners ran the course though not necessarily with their Perrier bottles intact.

The hotel runners (from left front row): Zoraida Van Ael and Victor Pinto of the Garden Court Restaurant. (Back row): Philippe Joye, catering director; Jim Hill, F&B director and Richard Kane-White, Randy Williams, Mike Freris and William Planner, all of the hotel's Trader Vic's restaurant.

## The "Beat The Bridge" run

SEATTLE—Annually, a Seattle department store sponsors its 10K "Beat the Bridge" run (part of the course includes crossing a drawbridge) to benefit the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. This year's event, held in early September, drew some 2,200

runners including this Westin corporate group of five four-runner teams, the largest corporate group entry in the run. Westin's showing: A first, fifth, sixth and eighth place in the mixed division (two men and two women teams) and a nineteenth place in the men's division.



## First Rooms Conference

MEXICO CITY—Attendees to the first Rooms Division Conference for Hoteles Camino Real gather for a group portrait on the pool deck of the Alameda hotel in Mexico City where the conference was held. Attendees included Rooms Division managers and executive housekeepers from the various Camino Real properties throughout Mexico. Emphasized throughout the two-day get-together were concepts of excellence and quality control systems and procedures. Conference organizer was Christina Flores, Corporate Hotel Services manager for the Mexico hotels, assisted by Alger Leon, professional trainer, and coordinated by Miguel Espejel, vice president, Corporate Hotel Services.

# PHOTO NEWS



## Incentive to smile

NEW YORK—Chalking up another business-stimulating success was incentive for the smiles on the faces of these Westin sales staffers pictured here at the corporate exhibit booth during the World Congress & Expo on Incentive Travel & Meetings Management which was held in New York in July. The group (from left): Jim Weiss, manager, Incentive & Travel Industry Sales; Carlos Reyes, director of sales, Galeria Plaza; Jose Gomez Collazo, director of sales, Camino Real, Cancun; Ulrich Schwartz, vice president, Incentive Sales; Sylvia Ratchford, sales manager, The Westin Peachtree Plaza; Kim Bradford, sales manager, Century Plaza; Frank Cangelosi, international sales manager, The Plaza and Maris Brenner, director of sales, The Westin South Coast Plaza.

Earlier, Westin Hotels had

hosted 230 incentive buyers attending the World Congress at a spectacular champagne brunch at The Plaza. In attendance were Harry Mullikin, chairman and CEO, and Dwight Call, president, who welcomed the arriving guests.



## Balloon trick

ATLANTA—The problem—how to deliver a “potted” bouquet of about 75 balloons to a guest on the 79th floor of The Westin Peachtree Plaza. (The balloons were ordered by a friend of the guest as a surprise.) The supplier, knowing the inflated balloons would not fit into the hotel’s elevators, called upon the hotel’s director of public

relations, Barkley Russell, for assistance. Russell’s solution was to have the deflated balloons brought in to an adjoining empty guest room where they were inflated. Then, in the guest’s absence, the surprise balloon bouquet was delivered to his room. Discussing the delivery strategy with the balloon supplier is Jan Cookerly (left), hotel assistant concierge.



## A taste of U.S. in Tokyo

TOKYO—Throughout the month of August, the Westin affiliated Akasaka Prince Hotel featured a “West Coast American Food Fair” acquainting an estimated 200,000 Japanese consumers with the cuisine, food products, art and lifestyles of the states of Washington, Oregon and California. Five of the hotel’s restaurants featured special American menus.

And to add an additional touch of “Americana” Westin-style to the event, six employees of Westin Hotels from the U.S. cooked and served food and drinks during the month-long fair.

Representing The Westin St. Francis were Kate Bennet, food server; Lauri Rock, beverage server and Tom Berning, Dutch Kitchen manager. The Westin Hotel, Seattle was represented by John Lind, banquet bartender; Harry Goldsmann, banquet server and executive chef, Reiner Gruebel.

Here, chef Gruebel (right) and William Clark, Jr., U.S. Embassy minister-counselor in Tokyo, cut the ribbon to officially open the West Coast American Food Fair.

# Convention Services

## After the sale, they make the dream come true

**“We** make their dreams come true. And make them look like heroes in the process!”

That's how John Marker, former convention services director at The Westin Hotel, Seattle, visualized the department's relationship with the hotel's meeting planner clients.

Before his recent promotion to senior assistant manager for The Westin Oaks in Houston, Marker had been “answering dreams” and “making heroes” out of dozens of meeting planners at the Seattle hotel, and previously with The Westin Crown Center, Kansas City.

Once a convention or other group meeting is booked by a sales person it is turned over to the hotel's convention services staff for follow-through . . . to make it all happen.

What the convention services member inherits from sales is the meeting's “framework.” That meeting could range in size from a small group function to a major convention hosting a thousand or more attendees. It is then up to convention services to work with the meeting planner to fill in the specifics to satisfy the group's accommodation, meeting, food and comfort needs.

With larger groups in particular, the challenges of these specifics could be monumental. It could include working out and costing the menus for each function from coffee breaks to banquets. Arranging for audio-visual equipment or other meeting session aids. Blocking and scheduling for guest rooms, suites, meeting rooms, hospitality rooms and exhibit space. Producing theme parties or arranging for outside entertainment. Arranging transportation for outside functions or activities for member

spouses. Any number of things.

With all these countless details to be worked out, months of planning may be required involving an increasingly constant communications contact—by phone, correspondence and on site—between the meeting planner and the convention services member.

Says Marker, “In the eyes of his group, the meeting planner is largely responsible for the convention and, naturally, they are very anxious that the event be a total success. Meeting planners look to us to make their dream of the perfect meeting experience that they've visualized come true. We, in turn, dedicate our efforts in working with them to produce that dream.

“When it all comes together as the perfect meeting experience, the meeting planner walks off a hero. His group is happy and he is happy with us. And, of course, we're very pleased. It makes all the hard work and long hours well worth it.”

Hard work and long hours are a convention services department given.

Asked about her workday schedule,

Jerre Riffle, convention services director at The Westin St. Francis, somewhat hesitantly volunteered, “I really hate to tell you what kind of hours I put in. It makes me look like I'm crazy.”

As an indication of those “crazy” hours demanded of the position, she described a typical convention schedule.

“Most conventions will start on a Monday,” she points out. “That usually means my being at the hotel on Sunday to see that everything is going well with arriving delegates and to check any last minute function preparations with the hotel staff.

“The meeting planner usually arrives the day before, Saturday, or maybe on Friday. I may spend parts of one or both of these days with him or her going over final details.

“Then, let's say that meeting starts around 8:30 on Monday morning. The meeting planner will usually require a run-through of all the meeting rooms with me to see if everything is in order about an hour earlier. Sometimes I'll get there about an hour earlier than that to do my own pre-meeting planner run-through. Then, that evening I may stay



**“You're right in the middle of it — the catalyst.”**

BOB FOX

late to see that the banquet or other planned social function gets off without a hitch."

And so it goes, day and night, throughout the duration of the meeting. Always at the beck and call of the meeting planner. Always there to make any last minute plan changes or to deal with the unexpected. And always ready to contact a hotel staffer to roll in an extra chalkboard needed in a meeting room or roll out the red carpet for a late arriving VIP convention guest.

Says Marker, "When a convention is in session, it can be a very emotional and stressful time for many of the people concerned—especially for the meeting planner. It's very important that you and the meeting planner establish a good working rapport and a mutual trust early on."

That working relationship may begin up to a year or more before the convention actually takes place.

Whenever a convention services member takes on the account, he or she is provided with the signed contract as secured by the sales person, and a history file on the group.

Later, beginning with the first of several on-site visits by the meeting planner, the meeting's framework begins to take shape.

**T**his is where the real expertise of the convention services person comes into play," says Bob Fox, convention services director for The Westin Hotel, Renaissance Center Detroit.

"You're right in the middle of it—the catalyst," Fox explains. "On the one hand, you represent the hotel to the client. They rely on you to provide them with all their requested needs for their group.

"On the other hand, you are representing the client to the hotel's staff. You rely on them to carry through on their individual responsibilities to assure that these needs are being met.

"There is a tremendous amount of communication and negotiation involved before it can all be successfully brought together to everyone's satisfaction."

All three directors strongly agree that clear and constant communication and an almost fanatic attention to detail are basic

**"I love it...  
it can be very  
rewarding."**

JERRE RIFFLE



ingredients for handling the position.

Usage of these ingredients begins with the very first contact with the meeting planner. And it continues as every bit of information possible relating to the function is gathered from exacting details on the installation of audio-visual equipment to limo arrangements for VIP participants or the quantity and types of wines that will be served at the banquet.

In turn, all these myriad details agreed upon by the meeting planner and convention services must be clearly communicated—verbally, in written form and through work orders—to all appropriate hotel departments for their information and follow through. They also agree that a thorough knowledge of the working of one's hotel, knowing what each department can and cannot do, and establishing a good rapport with each department manager, are essential.

"I can't think of a hotel department we don't work with," says Fox. "While our greatest contacts may be with catering and the front office areas, we also work, for instance, with engineering on technical needs, the chef for menu selections, housekeeping for specific room needs, guest services on delegate arrival details... well, just about everybody gets involved in one way or another."

**F**or the most part, the job of the convention services professional at Westin is life in the fast lane. The pace is hectic, the hours are long and the demands are great.

But as Jerre Riffle puts it, "I love it... it's never boring. And it can be very rewarding." Her greatest satisfaction comes "when I see people walk away satisfied and want to come back."

Both Fox and Marker echo that attitude. Says Fox, "Most satisfying to me is in knowing that you've played a major role in a convention's success and that your client has gotten everything promised way back when you first started working with him."

Looking back on his previous position, Marker noted, "I operated with two priorities. The first was to assure that each event was a profitable one for the hotel. And then to assure that the event is such a positive experience for the client that they will want to do it over again with us the next time around."

Over the years, various Westin hotels have won top accolades for conference handling excellence from a number of meeting and convention publications and other groups. As typified by the dedicated professionals featured in this article, those accolades are obviously well deserved.



## Don't Be a Name Dropper!

We've all done it — left out our company name when we could have just as easily included it.

We've referred to one of our hotels as "the Peachtree" or, perhaps it was "the Bayshore" or "the St. Francis" when speaking among ourselves. Or much worse — when talking to a guest or a business prospect.

It's easy to drop our all-important family name, Westin, when we get into the habit of using a verbal shorthand when referring to our hotels. It feels comfortable and in-the-know, as for instance when we refer to The Westin Bonaventure as "the Bonaventure," or just "the Bon."

### Let's all make Westin a habit.

But what's the big deal — what's so "all important" about using our family name?

Simply put, our business depends on people remembering our name. Our Westin family name.

Since we changed our name to Westin Hotels three years ago — becoming both the oldest operating hotel company in the U.S. and the newest — the company has spent a lot of money, time and effort promoting the Westin name familiarity among our key audiences like frequent business and pleasure travelers, travel agents, etc. around the world.

Today, because of our efforts, we are better known by our Westin Hotels

name than we ever were as Western International Hotels. But it's vital that we keep that name familiarity impact going and growing.

When our business depends on people remembering our name, it's crucial that we use it whenever we can.

Like when we speak or write to a customer or guest, it's: The Westin St. Francis. The Westin Peachtree Plaza. The Westin Bonaventure. The Westin Bayshore. The Westin . . .

Since we all need to be reminded of this proper family name usage, a "Don't Be a Name Dropper" campaign has been developed. No big production. Just some gentle reminders in the form of articles and cartoons in employee publications, posters and pay envelope messages urging all of us in Westin, from general managers to part-timers, and from officers to interns: **DON'T BE A NAME DROPPER.**