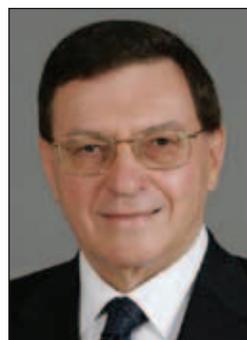


EDITORS' NOTE A graduate of the University of Madrid, Alberto del Hoyo managed major hotels around the world, including the Regent Beverly Wilshire, before assuming his current post in 1997.



Alberto del Hoyo

PROPERTY BRIEF The Beverly Hills Hotel and Bungalows was built in 1912 and is situated among 12 landscaped acres. The property features 210 guest rooms, suites, and private bungalows, and the celebrity favorite, The Polo Lounge. Long known as "The Pink Palace," the hotel (www.thebeverlyhillshotel.com) is a member of the Dorchester Collection.

When you look back over the past 24 months and the economic downturn, how much of an impact did you see for the Beverly Hills market and how did the Beverly Hills Hotel and Bungalows fare during this time?

We were impacted by the crisis, although not in our bungalow product, which is the most expensive; we were impacted in rooms. It's easier for us to sell a \$5,000 or \$6,000 Bungalow than a \$600 room.

Many hoteliers talked about the pressure on rates during a down cycle. How do you maintain some semblance of rate integrity when you have those pressures on occupancy?

We aspire to rate integrity, so we offer additional value in order to attract business. Our average rate has not gone down in these 24 months, but it has not gone up either.

You will be adding two new bungalows to your offering. Can you talk about the extension into those bungalows?

These two bungalows will be additional Presidential Bungalows. They are 5,500 square feet – the total area, indoor and outdoor; indoor will be about 3,400 square feet.

They both have three bedrooms; indoor/outdoor living rooms and indoor/outdoor dining rooms; and even indoor/outdoor showers. They are one of a kind. There is nothing in the city like them.

One of a Kind

**An Interview with Alberto del Hoyo,
Regional Director of West Coast USA, Dorchester Collection
and General Manager, The Beverly Hills Hotel and Bungalows**

Will they be of similar design and feel or individualized?

They will be similar, but different. Both are built in what used to be our tennis courts so the size of the real estate is the same and the configuration is the same, but they're different.

Both have swimming pools, both have their own fitness room, an office, two living rooms, and three bedrooms – they are mansions.

Is your bungalow offering a key differentiator for the property?

It's difficult to find 13 acres in the middle of the most prestigious real estate in the world. Those 13 acres with the bungalow will give a guest a tremendous amount of privacy, even to the point that you can enter directly from the street – you don't have to go through the lobby. It's like renting your own house in Beverly Hills.

Although many hotels in major cities talk about food and beverage being a challenging part of the business, you seem to have found the right niche with The Polo Lounge. How important has the community relationship been in keeping The Polo Lounge so strong?

With our food and beverage, we have not been challenged with the recession. We're doing as well as we always have done.

At The Polo Lounge, we do about 600 covers a day, one of the highest in the city.

Ninety percent of the people come from the outside, so it is a destination restaurant.

How critical has the La Prairie Spa offering been for your clientele?

They love it. That is another area where the economy has not impacted us.

For the Beverly Hills Hotel, there is a lack of turnover. How critical has that continuity, along with ongoing training, been to providing consistent service?

It's crucial. When you come to this hotel, you are recognized by the entire staff; it makes you feel like you're coming home. The low turnover gives you that automatically.

In regard to training, we spend a considerable amount of resources and time on always improving.

In regard to service, of over 2,000 hotels, we are one of the highest in the world, as proven by the different surveys we do.



How important has your relationship with the Dorchester Collection been and what does the Collection bring to the property?

What it brings to the property is an affiliation with equals. The benefit is that we now share clientele.

Since our brand is becoming a bit more known, people tend to stay with our brand. According to our statistics, we have more than doubled the number of clients that we share as referrals we get from other hotels.

Not only that, but in promoting the hotels and selling them, we now do that jointly, so we are selling as a brand. Our budgets go much further than before.

Is your role more business than hospitality today and is it tough to avoid losing that personal side of it?

It's a balance. Long ago, it was more hospitality than business. Right now, it's more business than hospitality.

In our case, we have the right balance. We want to be the best in every location that we're in, and at the same time, we want to be as profitable as we can be. And we are succeeding.

You are someone who hires top talent and gives them the power to make decisions, but you're there when they need you. Many find it hard not to be involved in every aspect. Is it your style to trust your people?

The success is in the hiring. You don't hire because of knowledge – you hire because of personality and attitude. Then you spend time with that person to teach them the way you want things to be done.

Once you feel that person is ready, you let them go on their own and as long as they recognize their mistakes, so be it. That instills confidence in the person and promotes initiative.

I'm there all along the way, but I want my people to do the best they can.

What is it about this property specifically that helps it stay so fresh?

This is the hotel where you have all the heads of state, personalities, movie stars, and Oscar parties – everything that is in the news.

Sometimes I know what is going to happen before the press so that makes it extremely interesting. ●

The Bungalow Gardens (left); The "Pink Palace" (right)