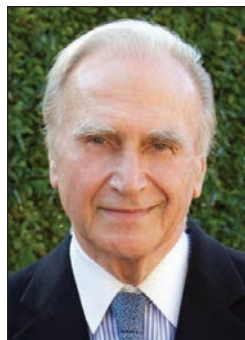


Hospitality

Luxury Top to Bottom

An Interview with Kerman Beriker,
Managing Director, The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe

EDITORS' NOTE Educated in Switzerland, Kerman Beriker has been a dedicated hotelier, manager, and consultant for 40 years within luxury hotels throughout the United States, Europe, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Beriker was Vice President of Operations of Rosewood Hotels in Dallas, Texas. He was the General Manager of the Hotel Bel-Air, and for 10 years, he was the Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of The Beverly Hills Hotel. Mayor Allan Alexander of the City of Beverly Hills proclaimed March 19th, 1996 'Kerman Beriker Day'. Beriker is a member of the International Wine and Food Society and the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs. A devoted member of the Beverly Hills and Rancho Santa Fe Rotary International, he was selected "Rotarian of the Year" in Rancho Santa Fe in 2005. In 2007, both he and The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe received the Bagnall Award for Excellence in Philanthropy.



Kerman Beriker

PROPERTY BRIEF The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe remains a historic landmark of beauty and hospitality with its Spanish and Mediterranean style décor and a 23-acre lush landscape. Winding cobblestone pathways connect private cottages of luxuriously appointed guest rooms and suites for unsurpassed deluxe accommodations. The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe (www.theinnatrsf.com) has played host to presidents, royalty, and Hollywood's elite, and is just four miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and 25 minutes north of San Diego. The Inn's award-winning dining room has been refurbished to offer a more modern atmosphere. The property offers active visitors everything from tennis and golf to lawn croquet on the manicured course.

How do you define the term "boutique hotel" and what is a boutique hotel experience?

The term "boutique hotel" can confuse the consumer. Many people like to use the word boutique attached to their hotel because it creates good marketing. Boutique hotels are independent and, typically, sophisticated clientele are attracted to boutique hotels and remain loyal customers for a long time. A true boutique hotel is not a 600-room hotel or 300-room hotel; it's much smaller in size. A boutique hotel is everything in your hotel that is unique, expensive, of the highest quality, and rare with



exceptional personalized service, from your architecture, furnishings, fixtures, chinaware, the size of your dining room, the type of cuisine, the management personalities – including your name Executive Chef – and uniform attire, to your napkins. If you combine these aspects, your operator should be recognized as an industry leader.

What makes a true luxury hotel today?

If you want to be called a luxury hotel, the physical condition must be expensive from the furnishings and chinaware to all the public areas and guest rooms, along with providing the highest quality of service and amenities. You need to be luxury from the bottom to the top.



There has been much debate over the role of the independent hotel and the benefits of being a part of a chain. What is the future for independent properties?

Independent hotels will continue to expand, because chain hotels and service levels will always be limited, as well as the physical condition and location of the hotel. If an independent hotel runs at a five-star level, they will not get the same benefit as if they were part of a chain but they will maintain their independent reputation.

You are known for consistent service standards. How have you been so successful at maintaining those standards, which ensures that guest experience?

Success comes with consistent training and emphasizing the importance of things like treating your co-workers in the same manner as you would treat your guests. You need to motivate



employees constantly, hire strong managers, and make sure everyone is hands-on, including yourself. Do not assume that your managers know what to do. Respect your co-workers and provide a pleasant and honest work environment for them. My goal is to see all co-workers arrive at the workplace with a positive attitude. And I always remember that, without our co-workers, we can never achieve the highest standards.

Are you happy with the product you offer today and do you have any changes scheduled for the property?

We constantly provide renovations and upgrade our services and will continue to do that in the years to come.

You have been a leading hotelier for many years. With all of the financial responsibility and asset management that hoteliers face today, has the role become more business and less hospitality?

Unfortunately, yes, especially with all the large hotel companies involved with Wall Street. Anytime stock prices take a dive, drastic measures need to be taken to increase the profit. However, if you are going to be successful over the long term, you need to take the good with the bad and continue to provide the highest service level that you have been offering to your guests. It is crucial to be consistent with guest services, so independent hotels approach things differently than Wall Street hotels in making more intelligent decisions.

What advice would you give to those who hope to grow into future leaders in this industry?

Unfortunately, every hotel school graduate has been told that he will be a General Manager when he completes his studies. But it is important, during early years, to be patient, to make your own strategy for growth, and to determine what type of hotels you would like to work with. Try to work in different hotels in order to gain solid experience and knowledge. If you want to work at a five-star hotel, find a job in one even if you have to work in a lower position. Be persistent, pay your dues, and work hard, and one day it will pay off and you will achieve your goals. ●

The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe entrance (top right); Bridal Suite (top left); Catalpa Cottage Boardroom (center)