



Christel DeHaan



Mario Rodriguez



Stephany Madsen

The Pioneers of Timesharing

Part II: Maturation and Globalization By Marge Lennon

Second of a two-part series.

In this issue, we continue our look at timeshare pioneers, this time focusing on developers outside the United States and individuals who made their mark in areas other than resort development.

Christel DeHaan/RCI. During the mid-'70s, campground site membership and lot sales were popular vacation alternatives. Then briefly owned by ALDA, Camp Coast to Coast tried to stabilize the campground business by offering a reciprocal use arrangement allowing members to exchange vacation sites. Gary Terry discussed the idea with Jon DeHaan and several ALDA members, who quickly applied the theory to resort condominiums. RCI was founded in 1974, and Jon and Christel, as a husband-and-wife team, developed vacation exchange as a viable and successful product. They initially created RCI to salvage failing resort and residential condominiums, particularly in Florida where condominiums dotted the countryside like herds of white elephants. The creation of RCI was one of the most important historical moments in the industry since it added great marketability to the timeshare product. Currently, RCI has more than 3,700 affiliated resorts in nearly 100 countries and provides services to 3 million member families worldwide.

In 1989, Christel bought out her former husband's interests in RCI for US\$68 million, and in 1996 sold the company for US\$825 million. Once again forging ahead in an

entrepreneurial mode, this most generous and giving woman decided that the next phase of her life would be devoted to helping impoverished children break the cycle of poverty, opening the first Christel House in 1998. Today the not-for-profit organization has five learning centers in Mexico, India, South Africa, Venezuela and the United States, with programs serving more than 3,000 students, their families and communities. Many timeshare companies and ARDA have adopted Christel House as their charity of choice.

Mario Rodriguez/Interval International. At about the same time Bob Burns was cranking out sales on the West Coast, in 1971 Mario Rodriguez (now deceased) was a land developer in the Florida Keys. In 1972 he formed Buy A Week, later renamed

first timeshare warranty deed and timeshare condominium documents, coining the phrase "interval ownership." At an ALDA conference in 1976, Mario announced the formation of Interval International, sealing his place in timeshare history. Now headed by Craig M. Nash, Interval has about 2,500 affiliated resorts in more than 75 countries with 2 million member families.

Stephany Madsen. Stephany Madsen is senior vice president of special projects for ARDA and led the association's state affairs office from 1990 to late 2005, when Jason Gamel took over management of that office. In the 1980s, when timeshare was looked upon with disdain, Stephany served as the industry's front line of defense, working with ARDA members, legislators and regulators, and managing to establish credibility on behalf

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Interval, Inc. and began developing a project in North Carolina. But a serious real estate depression in 1973-1974, triggered by an economic recession and oil embargo, caused plummeting land and condo sales. Several years later, the founders-to-be of Interval International, Mario Rodriguez and attorney Tom Davis, had become timeshare consultants and recognized the need for title insurance to convey a real estate deed to the consumer. They ultimately created the

of developers. She is a behind-the-scenes professional who has served as the catalyst for regulatory and legislative changes in more than 20 states, assisting ARDA in the monitoring of state taxation initiatives, and helping many resorts fight unfair taxation. After three decades with ALDA/ARDA, she remains an active participant in advocacy efforts and is held in high esteem by association members, state legislators and regulators.



Richard Ragatz



Frank Chapman



Jack Petchey

Richard Ragatz. Highly respected today as one of the timeshare and fractional industry's leading market researchers, in 1969 Dick Ragatz was completing his Ph.D. on the vacation housing industry, planning to become a college professor. After connecting with ALDA he founded Ragatz Associates in 1974, beginning his journey into the timeshare field. In 1977, he completed the first survey of resort timeshare owners for Christel and Jon DeHaan at RCI. This was done in conjunction with Carl Burlingame, (another true timeshare pioneer) who was just starting to write one of the industry's first newsletters, Vacation Ownership Review. This initial survey was followed by the first industry research sponsored by ALDA in 1978, involving consumer input and economic impact case studies. The widely publicized results of this survey – indicating high satisfaction levels among timeshare owners and positive contributions the resorts made to local communities – were instrumental in establishing a strong foundation for the industry then in its infancy.

During the past 35 years, Dick has since worked with nearly every major participant in the resort industry on a global basis, conducting more than 2,500 studies and consulting assignments for resort developments in 46 states and 70 countries. Since 1969, he has published more than 50 articles on resort development for academic journals and trade magazines and has delivered more than 250 speeches on resort development and tourism at conferences held throughout the world. Ragatz Associates currently specializes in providing feasibility studies and market research to the shared-ownership arena, which includes fractional and private residence clubs.

Beyond the United States

Today, vacation ownership is an international product, with resorts in over 100 countries. There are 1,312 resorts in Europe, including 145 in the United Kingdom and Ireland. This article would not be complete without the addition of two of Europe's most important timeshare pioneers.

Frank Chapman. In 1974, Frank Chapman purchased two Scottish hotels, which were initially open for only half of the year. He upgraded the properties and obtained permission to construct multi-ownership lodges, enabling him to keep them open year round. While he had not yet heard of timesharing at the time, he called the concept multi-ownership. In 1978, Frank built his third resort, this time in Wales. For the next

Jack Petchey. Veteran property entrepreneur Jack Petchey is known as the “father of timeshare in Europe” and has run his vast empire for five decades. His most famous leisure investment was the Clube Praia da Oura in Portugal's Algarve region. His Petchey Leisure Group has over 52,000 members utilizing a system similar to today's points. Over the past decade the prominent developer – now 84 – established the Jack Petchey Foundation, which has donated millions of pounds into schools and youth projects in his native England. 🇬🇧

Marge Lennon is also a timesharing “Old Timer” and has been a publicist for the industry since 1978. She would love to tell your story! Contact her at +239-482-3891 or via e-mail: Marge@LennonCommunications.com.

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several years, he continued to develop timeshare resorts in Scotland and Wales, selling his company in 1982 and remaining as managing director until 1988. By that time his former company (then Barratt Multi-Ownership and Hotels) was one of Europe's largest developers, with nine resorts and 23,000 owners. He was instrumental in the formation of the Timeshare Development Association and served as its first chairman. He has also been chairman of the Timeshare Council of the UK arm of RDO (then known as the Organization for Timeshare in Europe) since the early 1990s. Now 80 years old, Frank continues to work with RDO and is active with Sovereign Travel & Leisure Ltd. and Sovereign Travel and Leisure Group PLC.

“It was the early pioneers,” says Dick Ragatz, “who really ‘invented’ today's multi-billion dollar industry. They should not be forgotten but commended for their foresight, visionary skills and deep belief in their product and the great risks they all took. While the industry is also indebted to the hoteliers who ultimately joined our ranks, they didn't really create the product or stick their necks out to make payroll when sales were slow. It was the early pioneers, described in this article, who truly paved the way to the industry we know today.”