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55 YEARS

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**As we near the end of 2022 we are completing our second year of robust sales activity - by Earl Wason**

November 18, 2022 - Front Section



Earl Wason

As we near the end of 2022 we are completing our second year of robust sales activity. The market demand has centered on our niche in that destination resorts and destination cities have been very popular with hotel companies and resort inn buyers. By the year end we will have closed at least 18 transactions, a very successful year for a small company such as ours. My associates Joe Cardillo and Peter Annon, CPA have been instrumental in making this one of our best years ever.

As it is nearing the years-end all that has happened has allowed me to reflect on my career and the many clients who also have become my friends and there are many.

My first relatively large transaction was in 1990. I met Danny Lafayette at the Best Western in South Portland, Maine. The property was an REO asset and Danny who owned two hotels in the Bangor, Maine area was the perfect buyer. When we first met, he was driving an older two-door Toyota and was wearing his signature "chaffed at the shoe chinos" and plaid shirt. I learned then that he graduated from West Point and was a very intelligent man with a typical laid back Mainers approach. We negotiated the purchase and sale agreement at the bank that day. He executed the purchase agreement and the banker said "Great, I will get this to you tomorrow." Danny did not move, said "I would like it signed now." It was 5:30 and the banker had spent about 30 minutes finding someone still in the office to sign it. But Danny left with a fully executed agreement. Danny and Carla Lafayette now own about 30 properties, some Oceanfront, and I am happy to say that I have been involved a number of those hotels they purchased and have maintained a friendship for 30 years.

In 1992 I met Dilip Patel. At this time unfortunately, Indian hotel ownership did not have a good reputation. Often when passing hotels there would be signs that said, "American Owned." I think it was true that the first Indian owners had a lot to learn about hotel operations, however the following generations have become extremely sophisticated operators, many are my friends, and they are wonderful people. Dilip and a group of relatives were buying a hotel from me in Kittery Maine. Price was \$425,000 and Dilip borrowed \$18,000 on his credit card to close the sale. Today, Dilip's company owns around 80 hotels and operates under the banner of Jamsan Hotel Management. The management team includes COO Ashok Patel, Hitesh Patel and Kamlesh Patel and Nikul Patel. My wife Mary and I joined them in India for three weeks for Dilip's son's wedding which was attended by 3,000 people. We had a blast including a trip to the Taj Ma Hall.

I met George Tolley and his son Michael in 1996. George and his partner owned 35 Super 8 Motels and number 36 had just transferred title to George and Michael. They wanted to expand. Soon after that I negotiated a sale to them of the 80-room Green Granite in North Conway, NH. Soon after a four-acre commercial zoned parcel on the main road though town became available. I called George and told him, "You have to buy this for a new hotel." He did and built a Holiday Inn Express, the first franchise hotel in North Conway N.H., an immediate success.

During this time an Atlanta based hotel brokerage firm flew their private jet up to meet with George and his partner in Newburg, N.Y. The company told them they could get \$85 million for the portfolio. George called me and asked what I thought. I told him to give it a try, but felt that due to the

locations it would not likely be a portfolio sale. A few months after placing the portfolio on the market the brokerage company brought them a \$65 million offer and that was never going to happen. In 1999, George and I discussed the best process for selling the hotels. The Indian buyers were starting to get very aggressive at this point and I felt the best means to sell would be in one-off transactions. They gave me the right to sell the Super 8 on Brown Ave. in Manchester. I had a letter of intent in two weeks at the asking price of \$3.6 million. That opened the door and in 2000, I sold most of them. I used a spread sheet with the data and asked "which one do you want? The last sale was the Super 8 in Leominster Mass., purchased by Dilip Parel and Jamsan Management. The total selling price was in excess of \$85 million.

I have many more similar stories but will save for a later date.

Business was very good in 2022, but much of my reflection is influenced as Mary, my wife of 54 years, passed away on September 11, 2022. On May 21, 2018, she suffered a Subdural hematoma while driving in Florida on our return trip to N.H. She had emergency surgery and had not been able to come out of the hospitals or nursing homes since that date. The hematoma, from a fall, had advanced the dementia that my daughter and I had suspected.

Mary's last few months were just awful, the dementia was taking its toll and her lack of exercise was leading to deeper levels of heart disease. She still knew Sarah and I and occasionally maintained her sense of humor. As she was a science teacher, she even spent time teaching the staff the "periodic table of elements." One day when I was visiting an LRN came up to Mary and asked, "What is your favorite element?" without losing a beat she said "Gold." She always had a quick wit.

On September 9, 2022, I received a call that Mary was breathing rapidly and should go to the hospital. Sarah and I walked into the emergency room at the same time. Sarah grabbed her hand while I stood beside Sarah. Mary pointed to me to move to the other side and grab her hand. She then said, "I love you two a bazillion" and that was her last full sentence until she died on Sunday afternoon.

I miss her immensely.

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