



## A look back...

Insights from industry professionals—and our readers

To celebrate our 25th-anniversary issue, the editors at *Hotel Business* contacted industry leaders who appeared in the first few issues we published in 1992. While many have moved from one company to another—and, certainly, up the ladder—they are still in this business and have been part of our content right along with us for a quarter of a century. Who better to recall the headlines and happenings and reminisce about those times than those who lived it? Following are some of the memories of the last 25 years.

—Christina Trauthwein

**I've worked very few days** since starting in the hotel business in 1973. When you love what you do, surround yourself with good people and learn to empower them, it's not work. I've had more than my fair share of fun along the way.

From my perspective, that's the greatest thing about the hospitality business; you don't get anywhere without building relationships. I've done as many deals with a fishing rod in my hand or a pair of snow skis on top of a mountain as I have in a boardroom. That's my kind of business. That's the hospitality business.

Over the years, one of the most rewarding aspects of my career in hospitality has been the opportunity to involve so many of my close friends and family members in the business and observe them being successful. [Dennis] Brown and I, [Dennis] Bale and [Loren] Steele—we were all selling franchises and developing properties. In the '70s and '80s, we were calling everyone we knew to get in and develop a hotel (or motel as we called them). Plumbers, insurance salesman, bankers, lawyers, farmers, doctors; it didn't matter what they were doing at the time. One plumber, in particular, was ultimately responsible for 80-plus Super 8 Motel locations at the time we sold the chain in '93. He and I remain great friends to this day. That level of commitment by my people and the inclination to share the opportunity with everyone really embodies the spirit of hospitality.

If you ask me, I think the biggest

change in the hospitality industry over the past 20-30 years is the complexity of the product and operating platforms, and the often-disconnected nature of the franchise relationship has become a big barrier to entry. Now, in some cases, that's not all bad; some people just don't get hospitality. But, in many cases, the industry has lost focus on empowering the entrepreneurial-minded person to step in. During my period of growing the chain, many of the best Super 8s were owner-operated or under closely held management, and although the industry has changed, I bet that's still true among most, if not all, of the franchised brands out there.

So, after 20 years as a franchisor growing Super 8, and almost 20 years as a franchisee of many of the major brands, I'm back in the franchisor's seat with My Place Hotels of America, and I'm really enjoying it. Very few people have the opportunity to experience success like this twice in their life, and I've learned over the years that with a little luck and a lot of good people, the sky is the limit.

Plus, this time around, we know what we're doing.

So, as I look toward reaching that 100-property mark in 2018, project the 1,000-property mark in 2024 and the potential of my organization beyond that, success a second time around is an exciting reality.

—Ron Rivett, chairman  
*My Place Hotels of America LLC*  
(In 1992, he was chairman of Super 8.)



Ron Rivett