

Naples Beach Hotel And Golf Course Adds To Its Charm With \$5 Million Refurbishing

NAPLES, FLA — She has been described as a grand old lady filled with grace, charm and memories.

And among her admirers she has attracted such notables as Gary Cooper, Hedy Lmarr, Greta Garbo and Gertrude Lawrence.

In the past few years she has undergone a name change and today she has just concluded a "face lift" . . . a \$5 million glamorizing program to give her a smart, up-to-date look.

The "lady" in question is The Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club, a plush 315-room resort nestled on 135 acres of sun-drenched Gulf of Mexico beachfront in the city of Naples, the southernmost city on Florida's southwest coast. The comprehensive refurbishing program included

most guest areas at the resort, a direct descendent of the now-defunct three-story Naples Hotel, built in the 1880s.

The Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club — still the sun-kissed dowager of southwest Florida where she reigns in a class by herself — is both a deluxe stopover for the casual tourist and seasonal visitor, as well as a popular meeting place for state and national groups wishing to combine business with the amenities of gracious comfort, plus an 18-hole championship golf course, four Har-Tru tennis courts, three fine restaurants, a huge heated swimming pool and access to fishing, windsurfing and water sports and recreation of every variety, all in a setting offering miles of unblemished sandy beach and warm, gentle Gulf waters.



Insulated from the hectic pace of Florida's larger east coast cities by 100 miles of Everglades and snugly tucked away in a quiet, peaceful corner of a tropical paradise, the city of Naples remains a clean, thriving and attractive urban center of 20,000.

"What Naples has to offer is one of the best kept secrets of our time," explains Henry B. Watkins, Jr., president of The Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club, "and it is only in the last 20 years that people have begun to find that out."

But both the city and its illustrious hotel had humble beginnings.

The original Naples Beach Hotel had been constructed a century ago by General John Williams who apparently went quickly into bankruptcy and sold out to a Louisville, Ky., newspaperman named Walter Haldeman who was to become Naples founding father. The hotel changed hands



twice again, meanwhile catering to a gentleman-class hunting and fishing clientele that had to travel 40 miles by boat from Ft. Myers to reach the remote village.

Eventually the hotel was inherited by three sisters whose only interest was to sell it.

"That's when my father first saw it," said Watkins, who succeeded his father as president of the hotel company. "He had been in the toy manufacturing business in Ohio and during World War II had been a defense contractor for the Army. He wanted to sell out and move south into the sunshine. The hotel looked like a way to do it.

"But when he found that the hotel deed also included more than 20,000 acres — three-fourths of the platted City of Naples — he decided it was more prudent to also involve other investors. In 1946 he found his participants and the deal was made," Watkins said.

Meanwhile, an 18-hole golf course had been built, then abandoned, just a few blocks north of the hotel, and the senior Watkins immediately leased it from its owners, the Joslin family (Jergens lotion) and in 1946 restored the first nine holes for use by himself and his hotel guests. It was at that time the only course in that part of the state. Later he

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restored the back nine and, in 1950, he and his partners bought the property outright. He then moved his offices from the old Naples Hotel into the existing two-story clubhouse.

During the ensuing years, the partnership disposed of its extensive real estate holdings in Naples and Watkins bought sole ownership of the hotel and golf properties. Hen then started adding to the hotel complex, first by the construction of a two-story 35-room structure completed in 1953 that marked the start of the Naples Beach Club. For a time he operated both properties, but eventually all operations were transferred several blocks up the street to the new location and before long the 100-year-old original Naples Hotel was demolished.

Each couple of years saw a new section of the Naples Beach Club added until the complex reached its present make-up of six residential buildings, including the five-story tower, the two-story main wing, the two-level patio wing, the five-floor penthouse, two-level cabana wing and the nine-story Watkins wing, the newest addition.



The senior Watkins, who was active in the resort until 1978 when the role of president was passed on to Henry Junior, died in 1981 at the age of 92. A third-generation Watkins, Michael currently serves as general manager of the resort.

Today the property includes three restaurants to support the 315 rooms, plus six meeting and convention rooms. Its accommodations include 24 deluxe one-bedroom suites with a parlor, 32 one-bedroom standard suites with sitting rooms, 50 efficiencies and a combination of 209 deluxe and standard double-double guest rooms, all of which overlook either the Gulf of Mexico or the golf course.

The 18-hole, par-72 course is a comfortable 6,462 yards long. Redesigned in 1981 by golf architect Ron Garl, more than \$750,000 was spent enlarging the greens, adding traps and bunkers and installing an automatic irrigation system.

The course has been the home of the Southern Seniors Golf Association for 17 years and the Florida Senior Golf Association tournament for 15 years. It was the scene of the original Florida PGA tournament in 1963. Each October the Florida Seniors Open is played there and the

Florida State Womens Senior Golf Association Tournament has been held there for 25 years.

"It is not the toughest course in the world, but is a fun course," says Jim Duffy, head professional who has been on the pro staff at the course since 1958. "It has a good balance of three, four and five-par holes and is just the right test for a low handicapper or the week-end golfer. After all, our guests are here to enjoy themselves . . . and they do." ■

ME

You had better take good care of me. Perhaps you don't think much of me at times, but if you were to waken some morning and realize that you did not have me, you would start the day with an uneasy feeling.

From me you get food, clothing, shelter and such luxuries as you can enjoy.

If you want me badly enough, I will get you a 12-cylinder automobile and a home on Park Avenue.

But I am exacting..

I am a jealous mistress; yet sometimes you seem hardly to notice me at all.

In fact, you make slighting remarks about me at times and neglect me.

Considering the fact that you need me, not only for the material things of life but the spiritual as well, I wonder that you neglect me as you do.

Suppose that I should get away from you?

Your happiness would flee, for a time at least, your friends would worry and your bank account would dwindle.

So, after all, I'm pretty important to you.

Cherish me, take good care of me, and I promise that I will take good care of you.

I AM YOUR JOB.

PEOPLE LIKE TO WORK FOR A LEADER who is fair and square in every respect. It's a pleasure to work for someone you can trust, always a problem to work for someone you can't.

Leaders who want to enjoy this kind of reputation have to earn it. This first step is to make up your mind to show the same consideration for everyone whether they're weak or powerful, loudmouthed or mousey, a personal friend or someone you don't care much for. Run a fair ship without favorites.

And don't try to kid anybody. Call a spade a spade. Say what you mean and mean what you say. People don't like double-talk. They prefer a leader who gives them straight facts — even when they're not very pleasant. It's a lot better than a manager who tries to gloss things over and make black look white.

Be obvious, simple, straightforward. When people know for sure you're being fair with them, there's a good chance they'll be fair with you. ■