

# Passing the Torch: Next-Generation “Timeshare Kids” in the Business

by Marge Lennon

[Editor’s Note: This is a longer version of what appears in the September 2009 issue of *Developments* magazine.]

Following professionally in our parents’ footsteps has long been an American cultural and economic ideal, especially when the parent has been successful in his or her chosen endeavor. As one of the “old timers” of the timesharing industry, I have noticed more second- and even third-generation timesharing professionals joining our ranks each year. These are the children or grandchildren of the pioneers who started our industry in the 70’s and 80’s.

Many years ago, Ed McMullen Sr., used to say that ours was a “tar-baby” business: “Once you get your fingers stuck, you can’t get ‘em out!” For many second-generation timeshare professionals (including Ed’s two sons), this is exactly what happened. Consider, too, that the ultimate byproduct of what we build, sell, and manage is people having *fun* on their family vacations, fostering additional pride in what we do.

In addition to a list of “timeshare kids” and their parents, what follows is a detailed focus on a handful of families whose parents played a significant role in the growth of our industry. In many cases, the company they originally founded ultimately morphed into something much bigger. While there are many other pioneer families, we have specifically concentrated on those whose children are also in the business. Here are just a few of their fascinating stories.

## The Burns

*Bob*

In the early 50s, Bob Burns convinced five other families to jointly purchase and maintain an expensive but “tired” mountaineer ski cabin condominium in Washington State, which slept 25 people. For 10 years, the families worked together to restore the cabin and experience the benefits of shared use and cost, resulting in deepening friendships and special memories. Never forgetting the cabin or the shared use/cost concept, over a decade later in 1972, Bob sold one-bedroom Kauai beachfront condominiums by the month, initially priced at \$2,950 with a 40-year land lease program. He then acquired a defunct 72-unit motel, converting it to a 40-year right-to-use

with an initial price of \$1,250 for two weeks of use. (Because there were no existing timeshare laws or regulations, the partners sold use rights instead of a real estate interest.)

In 1974, Bob Burns formed Vacation Internationale (VI) in Seattle with Bob Riggerburg, who had enjoyed success with a vacation home exchange company. VI began to acquire property on four Hawaiian Islands, with sales conducted primarily via seminars requesting \$100 refundable deposits. Often 300 people would attend, closing as high as 50%. Because the buyers preferred widely divergent seasonal vacations, VI created the first actual point system 35 years ago, which has been widely replicated today by most major companies.

### *Michael*

With his dad as the ultimate teacher, Michael's industry experience resulted in an impressive timeshare pedigree. In 1985, he became a marketing manager on the first team that launched Marriott into the timeshare business. Later, at age of 32, Disney hired him to serve as VP and general manager of their new timeshare division.

"Timesharing was such a novel idea at the time and required unique creativity from a business perspective. I was motivated by the fact that I could have an opportunity to play a key role in the development of this new and fascinating business," recalled Michael. "I wanted to expand my father's concept to a national brand and help legitimize the concept. To overcome industry image issues, the challenge was to execute and approach it in an entirely different direction. I believe what we did in the early days of Disney helped set the pattern that followed for our industry."

Michael remained with Disney for eight years, returning to Vacation International in 1997. Two years later, he founded Private Residence Resorts, a company that develops, markets, sells, and manages small boutique fractional ownership properties.

### **The Ginsburgs & Servers**

The company that later became Shell Vacations LLC, was founded in 1963 and became involved in the timeshare business in 1978. With founder and CEO Sheldon H. Ginsburg at the helm, the company is nationally recognized as one of the leading and innovative independent timeshare developers, with 125,000 owners/members and 23 resorts in North America. Shelly's sons, Howard and Steven, have worked for the company for several years. Howard is president of Strategic Alliance Marketing in Scottsdale, and Steven is director of sales for Shell Vacations' Legacy Golf Resort in Phoenix. Jeffrey P. Server, the company's executive vice president of acquisitions, development & facilities, has been affiliated with Shell Vacations for over 25 years, and

now his son, Jason Server serves proudly as director of sales for the company's Southern California region.

## **The Grings**

### *Clay Sr.*

Clay Gring Sr., is widely respected as one of the early pioneers of the timeshare industry, beginning his 38-year career with Fairfield Resorts in 1971, when his publicly traded New York-based CPC computer company (partnering with George Donovan) merged with Fairfield Communities Land Company. His early role at Fairfield was to expand the company's land and homes sales. He returned to Fairfield during its bankruptcy period and installed the points-based system, merging fixed-week deeded products with pure points, which today still supports Wyndham's timeshare model. This innovative work was designed, developed, and implemented within a very large Chapter 11 reorganization. Since then, he has been a senior consultant to many of the major industry leaders, helping their companies find resolutions to complex problems.

### *Clay Jr. & Melanie*

With timesharing the talk around the family dinner table for many years, it was natural for son, Clayton, to follow into the business. Initially, he worked at Fairfield, designing and implementing systems that supported his dad's programs. With a solid background in database and affinity marketing, today, Clayton is chief operating officer for Spirit Incentives, one of the nation's premier incentive companies.

His wife, Melanie Gring, is now marketing director for Global Connections, as well as one of the original founders of Women in the Industry (WIN). Initially, her job at Fairfield was to implement the points program, enabling the company to create excitement within the points-based reservation system, where owners were offered vacation opportunities outside of the Fairfield and RCI locations using their points (this was before RCI could exchange points). This led to the opening of existing Fairfield inventory, so new point buyers could experience the reservation system with many choices, playing a major role in enabling the points program to work.

## **The Lindens/Springers**

Deborah Linden grew up in the family business of residential and commercial real estate development. When the recession hit in 1980, she and her father, Jack Springer, decided to move to Florida where the family owned a second home. They attended a timeshare conference and were intrigued by the little-known concept but clearly envisioned the future of Orlando, with Disney's EPCOT then under development.

They purchased a parcel of land a mile from Disney's main entrance and founded Island One Resorts in 1981. In 1993, Deb became the first (and only female thus far) to serve as ARDA Chairman. President of the company since its inception, Deborah took the helm in 1994 when Jack retired. Today, the company has nine resorts, 65,000 timeshare owners, and nearly 700 employees. With a consistent emphasis on family, it has been named an Orlando Sentinel "Top 100 Company For Working Families" annually since 2002.

There are several other second-generation Island One employees, including Sulyn Stumbras, RRP, president of Island One Resorts Hospitality Group and Club Navigo, daughter of Bruce Stumbras—Bruce holds the first ARDA RRP. Bruce started in the industry in the late 1970s at Lighthouse Cove in South Florida, meeting Jack and Deborah through RCI. He became project director for their first Orlando development, Orbit One. In-house Marketing Rep Charles Carlson is Jack Springer's grandson and Deborah's nephew. Senior VP Sales & Marketing Ken Campbell is the father of Marketing Admin Manager Jason Campbell.

"It is a testament to this industry's strong foundation and solid future that children are now following in their parents' footsteps, opting for a professional career in the vacation ownership industry," said Deb.

## **The McMullens**

### *Ed Sr.*

Following a career in real estate and other industries, Ed McMullen founded American Resorts in 1976, developing four timeshare resorts on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. He had heard about timesharing from his business involvement with Keith Trowbridge and Kenn Keim and was intrigued by the concept. In 1984, Marriott Corporation purchased American Resorts, forming the basis of MVCI. Ed continued as EVP of Marriott until 1990, when he resigned to pursue the formation of Grand Vacations—which ultimately became a joint venture between the McMullens and Al Ten Broek and Bob Taylor (principals of the Mariner Group).

In 1991, Hilton Hotels Corporation formed Hilton Grand Vacations Company (HGVC) as a joint venture between Grand Vacations Ltd. (GVL) and Hilton Hotels Corporation. In 1996, Hilton Hotels Corporation bought out the partner interests of GVL in HGVC. Between 1997 and 2003, Ed and his sons formed a joint venture with Shell Vacations; by 2004, the trio had become involved in the development of a luxury fractional ownership resort in Destin, Florida. "Senior" (as he is often called) treasures the closeness of working with his sons and has often said, "If you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life!"

### *Ed Jr. & Malcolm*

Since the early 90's, the McMullen sons have worked in a variety of positions within the industry, inside and outside of the family-owned businesses. They both consider it an honor to have been able to work together during this time. They now joke that Ed Sr. and Ed Jr. were positioned to make all the promises in the sales process, and Malcolm (a C.P.A.) had to figure out how to deliver them!

There was a time in the early 80's when the McMullen father-son pair and the Burns' father-son pair were not working well together in the family business. So, the two dads decided the best thing to do was to temporarily "trade sons," since both had ambitions within the industry. This gave both young men a chance to grow and gain experience, while eliminating any tensions. All offspring involved say today that this decision provided them a wonderful grooming opportunity.

## **The Myers**

In a Wyndham second-generation story, Jeff Myers, executive VP & chief sales & marketing officer for Wyndham Vacation Ownership (WVO), was in college in 1988, working part time as a bartender. His mom, Peggy Myers, had been in timeshare sales for five years, selling at a Shawnee resort (The Yachtsman Resort, Myrtle Beach, S.C.) It was "Take-Your-Kids-to-Work Day," and she invited Jeff to come to work with her. He went along begrudgingly. "Actually, she had to drag me by the ear," reminisces Jeff.

After the morning sales meeting, Peggy took Jeff on a few tours. Before the day was over, she had sold *three* sets of customers with Jeff tagging along. After all sales closed, Peggy asked Jeff if this was something he thought he could do. He decided to take a semester off and give it a try. In 1991, he started his career with Fairfield and never looked back—now, he leads the sales department for the biggest timeshare company in the world, WVO.

"Here we are more than 20 years later," he says, "and it has been an unbelievable journey. Thanks, Mom!"

## **The Ten Broeks**

### *Allen*

In close geographic proximity to Keith, developers Allen Ten Broek and Bob Taylor founded The Mariner Group in Florida in 1972, opening their first interval resort in 1976 and ultimately developing 16 Southwest Florida properties serving 20,000 owners. The company also built condominiums and residential communities and owned a real estate/construction company, a major furnishings retailer (Robb & Stucky), and the famed South Seas Plantation on Captiva Island. Recognizing the need to expand their timeshare market, in 1991, Al teamed up with Ed McMullen to form a

company that became Hilton Grand Vacations Company, selling their shares in 1996. Hilton joined Marriott and Disney as the third major brand name to enter the timeshare industry, generating much-needed credibility and positive exposure to the business. Since then, Al has helped develop a Caribbean property, Old Bahama Bay located on Grand Bahama Island.

### *Bryan*

"When I graduated from college, getting involved in the resort industry seemed like a natural fit, considering my upbringing," says Bryan Ten Broek. "The timeshare segment was of particular interest, since both my dad and sister were working with Hilton Grand Vacations at the time. I received some very good advice from my dad to seek out the major exchange companies and ultimately joined Interval International, where I've worked since 1995." Today, Bryan is VP of the Western Region for Interval International.

## **The Trowbridges**

### *Keith*

In 1974, Keith Trowbridge, Ph.D., developed what has been known as the first purpose built timeshare resort in North America, on the exclusive Sanibel Island in Florida. Selling his Captran properties "by the slice," with a logo that resembled a pie-shaped slice of a pizza, he became one of the first major timeshare developers. He later franchised his resorts to Canada and the Caribbean, selling some of the early properties for less than \$2,000 a week.

Before the company closed in 1984 and its interests sold to Captran alumni Kenn Keim and RDI (which later was sold to Bluegreen), there were 35 resorts flying the Captran banner. Today, Keith runs Executive Quest, Inc., an executive search company for the timeshare industry.

### *Mike & David*

While in their teens, Keith's sons, Mike and David, began their careers in timesharing as some of the first OPC professionals, regularly generating sales prospects using seashells placed in a zip-lock baggie as a "little piece of Sanibel" to take home. David jokingly said he initially got into the business because it was the only job available with a beach office. But the longer he remained, the more he recognized that it was rewarding helping serve an industry that provided families with quality, memorable vacations.

Mike became a timeshare professional because of his admiration for his dad and the industry's overall accomplishments. Today, Michael is VP of marketing for Wyndham Vacation Resorts, and David is president of Resort Marketing, a Naples, FL-based company sourcing condo-hotel inventory for vacation club fulfillment and timeshare rental programs.

## **The Wards**

### *Bill Sr. & Bill Jr.*

Bill Ward Sr., started Ward Financial Company in 1980 and was an early pioneer to obtain financing for timeshare projects and timeshare receivable financing. By the early 1990's, there were enough established timeshare companies and lenders that his two sons, Tom and Bill Jr., came aboard Ward Financial Company and have been there ever since. Bill Ward Sr., is no longer active with specific financing requests but remains involved on a daily basis, managing and administering Ward Financial Company, while the two sons maintain the developer client relationships and lender relationships.

## **The Welks**

### *Lawrence & Larry*

In 1964, television icon and orchestra leader Lawrence Welk purchased 900 acres in San Diego County that included a golf course, four motel units, and a mobile home park. Twenty years later, his son Larry Welk, CEO of The Welk Group, launched the 286-unit Escondido property into timesharing, selling the 286 fixed-week units from 1985-1991. Today, there are three resorts on the property.

### *Jon Fredricks*

Recognized as a third-generation "timeshare kid," Jon is the grandson of Lawrence and nephew of Larry Welk. He started in 1987 in the corporate offices of The Welk Group, which incorporates different businesses (music publishing, real estate, and resorts).

At the age of 27, he served as liaison between the corporate offices and the Escondido Resort. To have a better understanding of finance and real estate, he served four years as a commercial real estate loan officer, rejoining The Welk Group in 1994 to help develop their Branson resort. Now, he is president of the company's hospitality and timeshare division and has served in a variety of positions over the past 15 years. He also served as ARDA Chairman from 2007-2009. Jon says: "The Welk name is known for honesty, integrity, credibility, family values, and financial strength—these are all good images to convey to a prospective timeshare buyer. During the 80's, when some of the other brands were getting into the industry, they visited our property to see how we had executed our product and systems. We were perceived as an independent but also as a brand, and I believe to some extent this may have helped us establish a link to larger hospitality brands."

## **The Wilsons**

### *Kemmons*

Kemmons Wilson, now deceased, founded Holiday Inns in 1952. During his 27 years of leadership, his company amassed 1,759 inns in 50 countries, with Kemmons serving as CEO until his retirement in 1979.

But his retirement did not last long—in 1981, intrigued by the timesharing concept, the legendary hotelier acquired 357 acres of land to build Orange Lake Country Club near Orlando. It was the largest single-site resort in the world, with over 1400 acres available and planned for additional development. Some 27 years after Orange Lake's opening, the two brands that Kemmons originally created have come together to become Holiday Inn Club Vacations, which includes an affiliation with Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) and its key hotel brand, Holiday Inns.

### *Spence Sr. & Spence Jr.*

Around 1984, Spence Wilson Sr., the eldest son, assumed the operational responsibility for Orange Lake until the mid-1990s when the first non-family CEO took over. Today, Spence is chairman of Orange Lake Resorts and president of Kemmons Wilson, Inc., based in Memphis. Owned by Spence and his two brothers, Kemmons Wilson, Inc., provides management services to Orange Lake as it has done for the past 27 years.

"When we got into the business in 1982, timesharing did not enjoy a great image nationwide. Dad's entry as the founder of Holiday Inns brought enormous credibility to the industry by his major investment and endorsement of the timeshare business," recalls Spence Sr.

As a third-generation "timeshare kid," Spence Jr., is being groomed to become his dad's successor, having obtained extensive business management skills in other company-owned businesses. Like his dad and grandfather, he has a genuine passion about the business and its future and serves as VP of Kemmons Wilson, Inc. While Orange Lake has a seasoned management team in place, the company is still family-owned and has a strong influence over many aspects of the business.

*Marge Lennon is president of Lennon Communications Group, Inc.; her e-mail is [marge@lennoncommunications.com](mailto:marge@lennoncommunications.com). This is just a highlight of the many generations who have been attracted to the business. Contact the author if you'd like to relate your own story.*

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## **"Timeshare Kids" in the Business**

**Bert Blicher**  
President  
BlueWater Resort

**Ryan Blicher**  
Vice President  
Blue Water Resort

**Ann Barker RRP**  
President  
Barker & Associates

**Chad J. Barker, JD**  
Vice President  
Barker & Associates

**Carl Burlingame (Deceased)**  
Founder, *Vacation Ownership World*

**Scott Burlingame**  
Editor, *Vacation Ownership World*

**Lucian Dancaescu**  
Developer,  
The Island Empress Resort

**Olga Dancaescu**  
Project Coordinator,  
The Island Empress Resort

**Dale Goodman, CHA, RRP**  
President, Goodmanagement

**Madeline Goodman**  
Marketing, Williamsburg Plantation

### **Holiday Inn Club Vacations at Orange Lake Resort, Orlando – Parents/Children/Siblings**

*Shirley Bolin* – Wildlife Team/Staff Photographer

*Sheila Bolin* – Wildlife Team (twin sisters and 27-year employees!)

*Ritha Estil* – Sr. Manager, Housekeeping

*Moise John Estil* – Houseman Supervisor (Ritha's brother)

*Dennis Rivera Sr.* TSG – PC Technician (Father)

*Dennis Rivera Jr.* Business Center – Connections Supervisor (Son)

*Jason Rivera* – Golf Operations (Son)

*Joshua Rivera* – Golf Operations (Son)

*Karen Rivera* – Supervisor Contact Processing (Sister of Dennis Rivera Sr.)

*Mahesh Shanadi* – Housekeeping Manager (Brother to Jagadiesh, Married to Kalavathy)

*Kalavathy Shanadi* – Supervisor, Front Office (Married to Mahesh)

*Gokul Shanadi* – Control Clerk, Front Desk (Son to Mahesh)

*Jagadiesh Shanadi* – Housekeeping Manager (Brother to Mahesh, father of Karthik)

*Karthik Shanadi* – Pool Attendant (Son to Jagadeish)

**Ron Holliday, President**  
Meadow Lake Dev. Corp.

**Kevin Holliday, VP**  
Meadow Lake Dev. Corp.

**Joe Hutchings**  
Exec. VP, Sales & Marketing  
Shell Vacations LLC

**Brett Hutchings**  
Marketing/S&B Holdings

**Nancy Hutchings (Daughter-in-law)**  
In-house Director of Sales  
Hilton Grand Vacations Company

**Steve Kosmas, President**  
Brothers: **Paul & Nick Kosmas**, VPs  
  
Brother: **James Kosmas**, Co. Attorney  
Kosmas Group, Int.

**Nicole Kosmas**  
Marketing Manager, Interval  
International

**Mark LaMonaca**  
VP S&M, Bluegreen Resorts

**Michael La Monaca**  
Bluegreen Sales, Club 36

**Clive Lubner**  
CEO, Robb & Stucky Interiors  
Division

**Dan Lubner**  
President, Robb & Stucky Resorts

**Stephany A. Madsen, RRP**  
Senior VP - Special Projects  
ARDA State Affairs

**Ted Madsen**  
CEO, Quintessential Consulting Group

**Neil Meyers**  
Resort World/Star Island  
President/Owner

**Jared Meyers**  
CEO  
Celebrity Resorts

**Tom Mosser**  
President  
  
Amber Group, Inc.

**Daniel Mosser**  
**MBA Student & Admin Ast. to Amber  
Group CEO**  
Amber Group, Inc.

**Barbara Nelson**  
Founder in 1968 & President  
  
Sea & Ski

**Jennifer Miner, current President**  
**Lindsey Alexander** (B.Nelson's  
granddaughter)  
Director of Business Development

**David P. (Pat) Nobles, CPM**  
President/Broker in Charge  
The Noble Company of SC

**Shannon Fries, RRP**  
VP Development & Sales  
The Noble Company of SC

**Andrew Pearson**  
Founder & Chief Development Officer  
**Susan Pearson**  
Director & President  
Ariawest Resorts, Inc.

**Jim Pearson, CEO**  
**Lawrence Pearson, COO**  
Ariawest Resorts, Inc.

**Dave Pontius**  
President, Bluegreen Resorts

**Sam Pontius**  
Management Trainee, Planning &  
Development, Holiday Inn Club Vacations

**Dick Ragatz**  
President, Ragatz Associates

**Tracy Ragatz**  
VP of Consulting, Ragatz Associates

**Steve Weisz**  
President,  
Marriott Vacation Ownership Intl.

**Scott Weisz**  
Dir. Asset Management  
N. America & Caribbean Region

**Peter Watzka**  
EVP & COO  
Ritz Carlton Destination Clubs

**Justin Watzka**  
Dir. Owner Services  
Asia Pacific Region (Singapore)

**Lynn Weas**  
President & CEO  
Resort Advisory Group

**Toby Weas**  
General Counsel & VP Government  
Relations, Festiva Resorts

**William L. Ward, Sr.**  
President  
Ward Financial Company

**William E. Ward, Jr.**  
**Thomas E. Ward**  
Vice Presidents, Ward Financial Co.

**Jim Wilson (Deceased)**  
Developer,  
Numerous timeshare resorts

**Tim Wilson**  
Developer & Publisher, *Resort Trades*

**Michael Wilson**  
Realty & Operations Administration

**Matthew Wilson**  
Building & Construction (Tennessee)