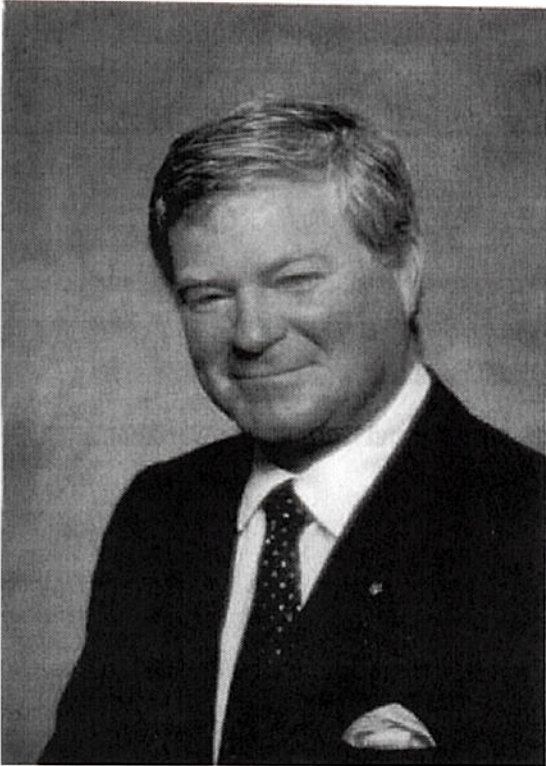


Tributes to 'humble and kind' hotelier



By Rebecca Zuill

George Wardman, described as a self-effacing, humble man who was responsible for bringing the global hotel business to Bermuda, died last Wednesday at 69 after a long illness.

Mr Wardman was one of the Island's leading hoteliers as the president and chief executive officer of Horizons Ltd, a four-property group.

His wife, Claudia Wardman, said: "He was not just a hotelier in Bermuda — he brought Bermuda into the global world in his incredible way."

She added that his involvement in Relais & Châteaux put the Island on the map.

"The most important thing about him are the hundreds of thousands of people around the world who he brought to Bermuda," she said.

The Relais & Châteaux is an association of the world's finest hoteliers, chefs and restaurateurs, which "set the standard for excellence in hospitality," according to its website.

George Wardman was praised for his sharp intellect and "incredibly kind" nature. He passed away last week at the age of 69 after a long illness

Mrs Wardman said: "He was able to bring two hotels into Relais & Châteaux," an accomplishment she described as unprecedented.

The group's Horizons and Cottages and Waterloo House were both member hotels.

Mr Wardman was also an active member of the Relais & Châteaux board for 25 years, and retired in 2008. "After his retirement, the board continued to contact him to seek his advice," said his wife.

She said her husband was an intelligent man, but also humble. "He was an amazing intellectual — but, he never acted like that — he was just terribly terribly kind, and that, to me, is an amazing gentleman.

"He was very funny and quite adored because he was so self effacing and so humble," she said.

Mrs Wardman also said about her husband: "He was intellectually curious — he always was so curious about everybody, and he would always say to young people: "Be curious — think about things.

"I can't imagine what the island will do without him."

A close family friend said: "There are people who have worked for the hotels for forty or fifty years," and added: "So many of his staff really admired him and loved him — and they are grieving at the moment."

Nik Bhola, the general manager of Coral Beach, said although he has only been working at the property for about seven months and had met Mr Wardman just twice: "His legacy at Coral Beach is something you encounter every day at the club, through staff members, through the membership, letters he has written — there are daily reminders of how important he has been to Coral Beach, and to Bermuda, over the years."

A letter to club members from chairman Rod O'Connor said: "Notwithstanding his contribution to Bermuda overall, and his influence in the community, George was a guiding force at the Coral Beach & Tennis Club throughout his entire life."

The Horizons Group included three properties in Paget: Coral Beach & Tennis Club — a prestigious member's-only club, Horizons and Cottages — a cottage colony with a golf course, and Newstead — a hotel which sat on Harbour Road. The property is now part of the Newstead Belmont Hills.

Waterloo House, in Hamilton, was the fourth member of the group. The site has been rebuilt with condominiums and offices.

Coral Beach & Tennis Club along with its sister property Horizons are in transition having been taken over by New York-based CBC 2013, a subsidiary of Three Wall Capital and ROC Group.

Alan Kenders, CEO of Three Wall Capital, said: "Both Bermuda and Coral Beach Club have been synonymous with luxury, service and hospitality for a number of years."

Mr Wardman also was on the executive of the US Tennis Association (USTA) until his death. He was an advisor to Bermuda's Masterworks Foundation, a longstanding trustee at the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS) and Eckerd College in the US, as well as Phillips Exeter Academy, a boarding school in New Hampshire, and Bishop's College School, a boarding school in Quebec, Canada.

A private funeral was held yesterday. Mrs Wardman said: "It was his wish to have a private burial because he was such a very private man. And so that is what we did.

"But we will, in the next couple of months, have a memorial for all the people who love him."

He leaves his wife, his mother Frida Chappell and his four children, George, Tiffany, John and Christopher Wardman.