

LEADERS

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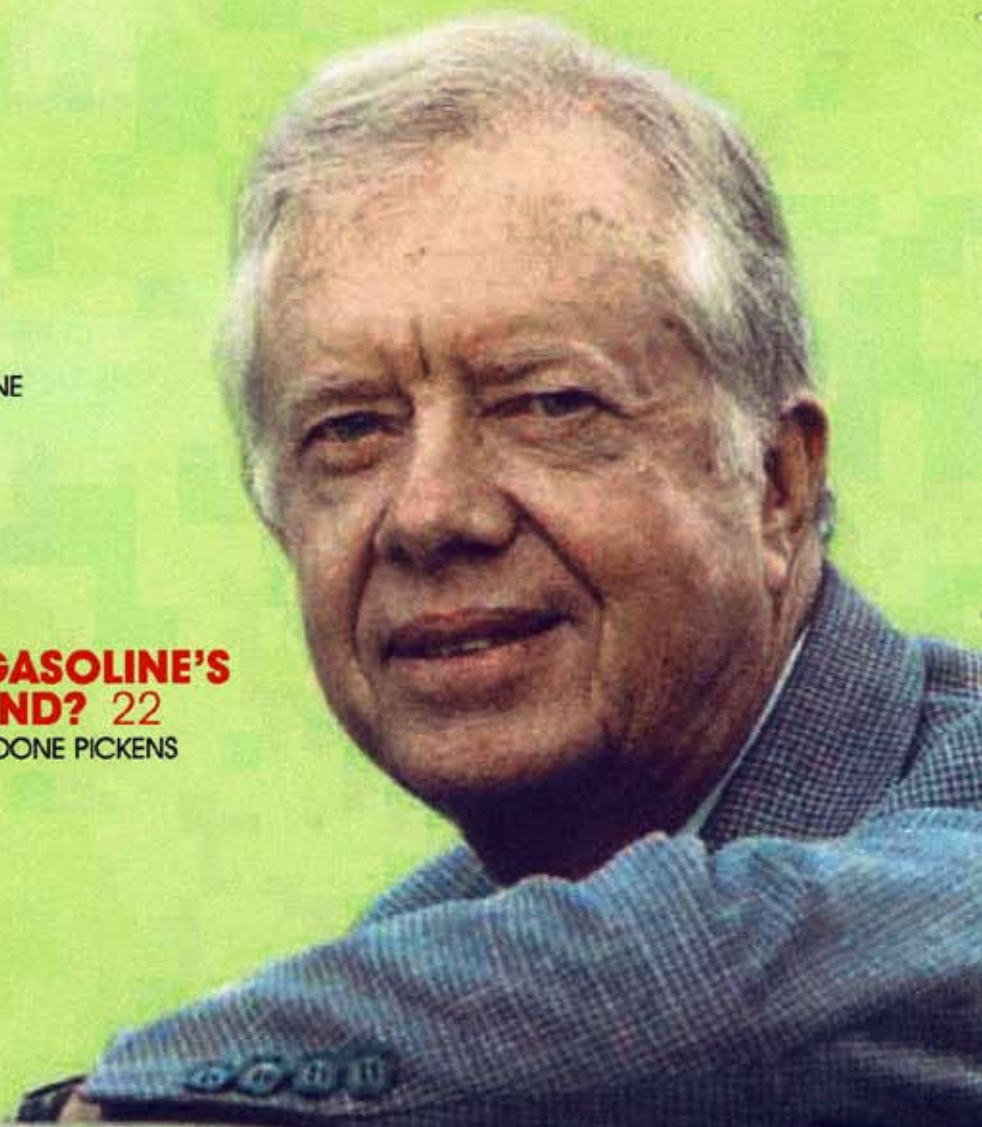
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Prepare to Be Wowed

An Interview with Fred W. Jackson Jr.,
President, Chief Executive Officer, and
Founder, Caribbean Clubs International, Inc., New York



EDITORS' NOTE During more than 25 years of corporate leadership, as both a principal and founder of dynamically growing companies, Fred Jackson has accrued the skills and expertise necessary for building a company that owns and manages high-end resorts. He has a long history of market positioning, creative strategizing, private and public financing, and developing profitable growth plans for companies such as IBM and Mercedes Benz.



Fred W. Jackson Jr.

COMPANY BRIEF Headquartered in New York, Caribbean Clubs International, Inc., owns and manages The Beach House in Barbuda, and is acquiring a portfolio of ultra-luxury resorts situated in premier island locations across the Caribbean. Each property occupies a pristine beachfront location and offers all of the luxuries, amenities, and comforts of a world-class resort, including private beaches, oversize guest rooms, and state-of-the-art fitness and spa facilities. The company is owned by the publicly traded holding company CCI Group, Inc.

How do your properties differ from other Caribbean resorts?

Our properties bear little resemblance to traditional hotels. For instance, they have no reception desks and guests don't sign any checks. The guest has a very intimate relationship with the resort, principally through one person, their personal "service ambassador." That person is responsible for the guests' stay – not only for their room and their food, but for every aspect of their entire stay. A service ambassador's only objective is to make sure that when guests enter a CCI hotel, they say, "Wow!" and when they check out, they say, "Wow!"

How much emphasis do you place on food-and-beverage service? Does it take on a local character?

Food is a very important part of what we offer. The Beach House in Barbuda offers Caribbean cuisine made from locally

caught seafood and other local ingredients. We have an extensive collection of premium Caribbean rums and Cuban cigars. And we look for chefs who are not only creative, but who also like to deal with people, because we want our guests to feel like they have their own personal chef. We have a new menu for lunch and another for dinner each day, and the chef will ask guests how they'd like their meal, or if they'd like something different. Guests are free to say, "I've had enough lobster. Can I have two fried eggs with some caviar on top?" So our food-and-beverage service is a totally interactive experience, and it's one way we personalize a guest's stay.

It seems as if your chefs and service ambassadors frequently go beyond the call of duty. Is it difficult to find and retain the exceptional people you need?

Instead of looking for hotel-industry experience, per se, we look for a certain attitude and personality. We can teach anybody to be a waiter or to make up a room. It's more difficult to teach someone how to be nice or how to apologize when they make a mistake. So recruitment takes a long time. In Barbuda, we interviewed about 300 people in order to hire 30.

Shuttle service must take on a new meaning when you're located on a remote island beach. What transportation services do you provide?

We offer chartered airplane and helicopter flights from other islands. We arrange for guests to be met at the steps of the airplane. Then we take them through immigration and get them on either a scheduled or chartered plane or helicopter, which is very convenient because it takes guests directly to the resort. When the helicopter lands, all the ambassadors come out with drinks and

other offerings, and it makes for a very nice arrival. We do the same thing but in a different way for guests who arrive at the hotel by car after a chartered airplane trip.

How have you balanced the personal touch with technology? Many of your clients must need to stay in contact with their associates even when they're on vacation.

We have available a very fast wireless Internet connection in the resort. We also give all of our guests a cellular phone as soon as they get here, so they can call the office and give people their own temporary number where they can be reached directly. That's how we keep people connected.

What entertainment options are available at your resorts?

We do not provide televisions in the rooms. There is a TV in one place where you can go if you cannot resist it. However, for those who may become tired of everything else, we do provide portable DVD players with a sizeable number of movies. We also have a nice library with quite a few books.

CCI properties tend to have relatively few rooms in comparison to other resorts. Do you have plans to expand the capacity of your hotels?

No. We never want to have more than 50 rooms in each property. And while I understand this limits our growth capacity, I think that intimate size best enables us to deliver our vision. It's like any choice based on quality. I do not know of any hotel with more than 100 rooms that can honestly claim to offer personalized service. I'm obsessed with making sure that Mr. Smith is Mr. Smith and not room 22. When Mr. Smith walks into the hotel, everybody will say, "Good morning or Good afternoon, Mr. Smith. Here is your drink, Mr. Smith, because we know just how you like it." ●



The Beach House interiors exude an ambience of airy openness.