

BW

BEVERLY WILSHIRE

Beverly Hills

A FOUR SEASONS HOTEL



Peter Humig

**Regional Vice President
General Manager Beverly Wilshire Hotel**

By Suzanne Takowsky

Definitely not a typical city translates into the Beverly Hills way of life needing special people to make our world spin. That couldn't be more true than when it comes to the most famous intersection in the world: Rodeo Drive and Wilshire Boulevard—home to the world renowned Beverly Wilshire Hotel. When I made an appointment to interview the General Manager of the hotel I wasn't sure what to expect. Maybe he'd be a little stiff and not too talkative... whatever I thought got tossed out the window the minute Peter Humig walked in, and we sat down to talk about what else—him and his famous hotel. The son of a renowned Swiss hotelier, Peter enjoyed an upbringing amid all the fanfare of a 5-Star ski resort in Switzerland. Peter said, "The business kind of fell in my lap. I never dreamed of becoming a pilot, never wanted to become a firefighter. I wanted to become the General Manager of the best hotel in the world. I realized at some point such a thing does not exist. However, there is the best company in the world to work for in luxury hospitality... The Four Seasons."

Some 20+years ago, Humig joined the Four Season and launched into traveling the world. Once he started the corporate climb up the ladder he never looked back, but he did look around—for a city to plant roots and call home for his wife and their children. Fate stepped in and brought him to Beverly Hills, and to one of the most luxurious hotels in the world. Wish granted!

ST: It's now just over the 'fiirst year' mark since you moved here, how does your family like life in the wild wide west?

PH: I met my wife in 1992 and proposed to her in 1998. We worked in San Diego for five years; my twins were born in La Jolla. I traveled to and from Beverly Hills on sales calls, and became very knowledgeable with the hotel, so I knew what I was getting into.

In fact, we pushed hard to come here. For eight years after we left California my wife was begging me, "When do we return?" When the opportunity was presented, we were on a plane the next day. There was no question.

ST: Is Beverly Hills all you thought it would be?

PH: Beverly Hills is like 5th Avenue in New York, like Mayfair in London... everyone knows it, everyone wants to be a part of it. It's a fascinating part of the world. I first came to Beverly Hills when I was 21-years old. It's the same city I remember, but working for the hotel, I've had the opportunity to meet many amazing people. It takes a while to get to know everyone—people take their time getting acquainted. I love the energy. People here are always working toward something, and being a part of the excitement is very rewarding.

ST: What is the day-to-day of your job?

PH: I'm a Regional Vice President, so in addition to Beverly Hills, I have four other hotels I travel between. One is a new development in Los Cabos, Mexico;

another in Santa Fe, New Mexico; a ski resort in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and a hotel in Whistler, British Columbia. It's a process.

ST: What's new at the Beverly Wilshire?

PH: We are one of the few iconic hotels in the world with such history. When it comes to remodeling we have to be careful we don't turn it into something modern and lose what has been acquired over the past 90 years that sets the hotel apart from many others.

ST: Are you thinking about making some changes?

PH: We are past thinking and are focused on our guest rooms at this point, and also on the spa. Our goal when it comes to making any changes is to take what we have now... what our guests from around the world depend on, and love about the hotel, and build on it. We have very meaningful conversations on how to make the hotel the most appealing to our customers. Certainly, we want it to be contemporary, but we know the importance of making certain everything stays in line with the feel and

appeal of the hotel. The renovations of our ballrooms have now been completed and look terrific, while maintaining the atmosphere which the hotel is known worldwide for. The Beverly Wilshire hotel remains historic, but the updates we have made accommodate the needs of today's business meetings so that our guests have all the technology they want and need. Our designers have done a remarkable job.

ST: Of course, there is NO way that I can possibly end this interview without asking the all important question on everyone's mind: What do you have to say about "Pretty Woman"?

PH: That is a bit of a double-edged sword. If you go to China or Russia, they adore, "Pretty Woman" as if it aired yesterday. In the U.S. it aired 25 years ago. So, we are proud of it certainly, but we are also trying to move forward. We are trying to embrace the next generation of guests. ■

