

**Nobody Asked Me, But... No. 18**  
**John Q. Hammons, Save the Belleview Biltmore, Chinese Tourism,**  
**CFLs, Ernie Byfield, Guestroom Entertainment in 1905.**

**By Stanley Turkel, MHS, ISHC**

1. Have you taken notice of the living hotel legend called “John Q”. He’s been on a unique and singular track for 87 years and, if you don’t know who he is, you’re missing one of the great hotelier/ developers of our time.

Of course, I’m referring to John Q. Hammons who will receive the prestigious ALIS Lifetime Achievement Award in Los Angeles, January 22-24, 2007. Over his 48 year career he has developed 175 hotel properties in 40 states. But the statistics hide the essence of Mr. Hammons special development techniques. With his senior Vice President Scott Tarwater, Hammons disdains the standard feasibility studies when assessing potential sites for hotel development. Instead, he and Tarwater rely on their own experience, knowledge and intuition.

Among many success stories, here’s a recent one that defines his techniques:

- In Charlotte- Concord, NC, Hammons is building a 308 suite Embassy Suites Hotel Resort and Spa with 55,000 sq. ft. of meeting space adjacent to the Concord Convention Center. He will manage the convention center and the adjacent 18 hole Rocky River Golf Club. Hammons has an exclusive marketing partnership with the Lowe’s Motor Speedway located a half-mile from the hotel. The Speedway hosts six NASCAR events a year and receives 1.7 million visitors annually in its 165,000 seat stadium.

As a long-time hotel consultant, I stand in awe of the Hammons organization which now operates 64 hotels located in secondary and tertiary markets. These were developed near demand generators, such as state capitals, airports, interstate highways, universities, golf-courses, corporate headquarters, state parks, and even on the top of a mountain on Table Rock Lake in Ozarks. If you visit Branson, Missouri (a \$1.7 billion tourist mecca) don’t miss the Chateau on the Lake, Hammon’s 301 room European-style hotel complete with a 46 foot tall tree

in the lobby. The fabulous story of its development and financing will appear in my book “Great Hoteliers: Pioneers of the Hotel Industry” scheduled for publication at the end of 2007.

2. Save the Belleview Biltmore Hotel – In response to the plea in my “Nobody Asked Me, But... No. 14” article, I received the following email from Diane Hein, president of Save the Biltmore Preservationists (at [www.SaveTheBiltmore.com](http://www.SaveTheBiltmore.com)):

“Save the Biltmore Preservationists, a nonprofit organization is look for investors to help purchase and save the beautiful and historic Belleview Biltmore Hotel in Bellaire, Florida. (Near Clearwater) The Biltmore, which opened in 1897, was built by noted railroad magnate, Henry B. Plant, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2005. This spectacular property includes 22 acres, an 18 hole 136 acre Donald Ross designed gold course, 200,000 gallon swimming pool with waterfall, 40,000 SF of meeting space, the 13,000 SF Tiffany Ballroom (the ceiling is made of Tiffany stained glass), 4,400 SF Starlight Ballroom, Bellaire Amphitheater, 14,000 SF Eclipse Day Spa, 4 clay tennis courts, new \$3 million clubhouse, 3500 SF Presidential Suite and the Beach Club on Sand Key. Guests who have enjoyed the ambiance of the Biltmore include British Royalty, Heads of State, Presidents, movie stars, celebrities and athletes. The hotel currently offers 247 guest rooms, with the possibility of 400+ total rooms upon opening the upper floors.

The historic Biltmore has been under threat of demolition for over a year now, so we need to find private investors or hoteliers to purchase it. We have found three investors so far and are looking for more. Our nonprofit organization has passed a historic preservation ordinance, and it protects both the exterior of the hotel and the public interior so that the hotel retains its historic Victorian charm and elegance. There are numerous tax advantages available for the Biltmore since it is a historic hotel.”

Please contact Diane Hein, president of Save the Biltmore Preservationists at [www.SaveTheBiltmore.com](http://www.SaveTheBiltmore.com) if you are interested in joining this group of investors.

3. The World Tourism Organization forecasts that China will become the world fourth-largest source of outbound tourists by 2020 with more than 100 million departures each year. Outbound travel from China jumped 50-fold in 20 years. In 1997, when the first batch of ADS destinations were approved including Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines and the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions, only 5.32 million trips were made. The number became 16.6 million in 2002, 20.22 million in 2003 despite the SARS epidemic, 28.85 million in 2004 and 31 million in 2005. It is expected that 2006 will still see 34 million overseas trips (10% increase). China has already replaced Japan as Asia number one outbound travel market.

4. Have you taken note of the improvements in compact fluorescents (CFLs)? They now look like incandescents but perform far better. There may be no easier way to save energy and reduce energy costs at the same time. In a full page ad in the New York Times (9/28/06), Starbucks says:

“If everyone who received this newspaper today switched one light bulb in their house to a compact fluorescent light, it would be like eliminating the emissions of approximately 89,000 cars for one year.”

5. Ernest Lessing (Ernie) Byfield, Chicago’s best known hotelkeeper in the 1930’s and 40’s operated the Hotel Sherman Co. (Ambassador East and West, Sherman, Fort Dearborn and the Drake Hotels; the Pump Room and the College Inn) described a hotel manager as follows:

“A hotelman must be a master of opposites. He needs to be a greeter and a bouncer, pious but ribald, an interior decorator and bartender; he must understand the arrangement of flowers and the disposal of garbage; he may be forced into the acquaintanceship with accouchment and embalming; he should appreciate swing music but encourage quiet, be noted as a connoisseur and competent as a plumber; he must walk with beauty, but only walk with it... Only a man of very loose moral character should accept the job.”

When the famous international chef Martial Noguier came to the Pump Room in the 1980's he was stuck by the "magical quality of the room". He was referring to a time when founder-hotelier Ernest Lessing Byfield presided over a dining room lit up every few minutes by a waiter in turban and Arabian garb, carrying flaming food on swords to guests' tables. Byfield was fond of saying, "we serve almost everything flambé in that room. It doesn't hurt the food much." This prompted humorist Robert Benchley to quip, "Any minute now they'll be bringing in the manager on a flaming sword."

#### 6. Guestroom Entertainment in 1905.

I've just acquired an old book with the words "Hotel Statler" embossed on the cover. It is entitled "Heart Throbs in Prose and Verse" published by the Chapple Publishing Company, Boston, 1905, While it contains 840 items of inspirational poems, anecdotes and stories, it is the frontispiece that caught my attention. Here it is verbatim:

"To the Guests of this Hotel: This book is part of the permanent room equipment and is for the pleasure and convenience of our guests. We believe you will enjoy reading it and hope you will find in it a favorite poem or bit of prose which will awaken pleasant memories.

If this book suggests further reading, visit the well-selected Library on the Mezzanine floor, as it may have just the volume you wish; or choose from the catalog in your room and the Librarian will gladly send books at your request.

Please do not take this book from the room. If you have enjoyed it enough to want a copy for your home or to send to a friend, it may be had (in this Deluxe binding) at the floor clerk's desk or at the news-stand for the special price of \$2.00- the list price is \$3.50."

E. M. Statler

Stanley Turkel, MHS, ISHC operates his hotel consulting office as a sole practitioner specializing in franchising issues, asset management and litigation support services. Turkel's clients are hotel owners and franchisees, investors and lending institutions. Turkel serves on the Board of Advisors and lectures at the NYU Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism and Sports Management. He is a member of the prestigious International Society of Hospitality Consultants. His provocative articles on various hotel subjects have been published in the Cornell Quarterly, Lodging Hospitality, Hotel Interactive, Hotel Online, AAHOA Lodging Business, Bottomline, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, etc. If you need help with a hotel operations or franchising problem such as encroachment/impact, termination/liquidated damages or litigation support, don't hesitate to call 917-628-8549 or email [stanturkel@aol.com](mailto:stanturkel@aol.com).