Marriott to be headed by a non-family member

By Michael S. Rosenwald, Washington Post

J.W. Marriott Jr., who built the company his parents started as a District root beer stand into a global lodging giant, is stepping down as chief executive, ending a storied 39-year run that ushered in a new standard of dependable, middle-class hospitality for travelers around the region, the country and then the world.

The word “Marriott,” in red letters on buildings from Bethesda to China, came to signify home for weary families making their way to Disney World, for traveling salesmen careening around the Midwest and lately for weary road jockeys keeping pace with globalization.

In the process of building the 3,600-hotel empire, including two properties in South Lake Tahoe, Marriott’s family became one of the richest and best-known in the region. The family and the firm donate millions every year to philanthropic efforts, particularly for people with disabilities.

The company employs 15,000 people locally, but its influence stretches beyond its hotels and its Bethesda headquarters. Many in the industry say Marriott was critical to seeding the region’s strength in hospitality. A host of former Marriott executives have run some of the largest hotel companies, including Hilton Worldwide, RLJ Lodging Trust, Choice Hotels and Host Hotels & Resorts — all of which are based in the area.

Throughout the growth of his family’s company and the industry, there was Mr. Marriott, as his devoutly loyal employees call him, espousing his family’s simple maxim that if you take care of your employees, your employees will take care of your customers, and your customers will come back.

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