

western hotelier

YOUR HOTEL MANAGEMENT MAGAZINE

MARCH/APRIL 2016 - \$8.95

www.westernhotelier.com



Ryan Pomeroy, president,
Pomeroy Lodging LP

All in the Family

POMEROY LODGING LP
*Takes Community Relations
and Success to New Levels*

+ FRANCHISE REPORT • PMS & POS • ALBERTA REPORT • APPLIANCES

PUBLISHED BY MERCURY PUBLICATIONS LTD., 1313 BORDER STREET UNIT 16, WINNIPEG MB R3H 0X4 CPM SALES AGREEMENT #40062509

By Robin Brunet

POMEROY LODGING LP TAKES COMMUNITY RELATIONS - AND SUCCESS - TO NEW LEVELS.

Ryan Pomeroy says when he was a boy in Grande Prairie, Alberta, it was normal for his hotelier father, Bob Pomeroy, to bring home suppliers for dinner. “He treated every stakeholder like family, and it was common to see him at the barbecue cooking for them and chatting about all sorts of things, just like neighbours would,” he recalls.

Aside from enjoying their company, Bob saw practical benefit in these after-hours congregations. “He not only gained a better understanding of his industry and his own business, he knew that a good network of people would support you when times got bad,” Ryan says.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. As president of Pomeroy Lodging LP, Ryan Pomeroy presides over a company that was literally created in the ashes of the 2008 recession, with 18 hotel properties and a total of 2,100 rooms across Alberta and British Columbia.

Bob’s uncle, Ralph Pomeroy, launched Pomeroy as a hotel brand in 1941, and under Bob’s subsequent leadership it became a secondary and tertiary hospitality mainstay in northwest Alberta and northeast British Columbia. Today, Bob’s son and a dedicated team of professionals develop and manage the Pomeroy Inn & Suites, Pomeroy Hotel, and Stonebridge brands as well as Hotello by Pomeroy (launched last year in Vegreville, Alberta); they also operate major franchises such as Holiday Inn Express, Ramada, and Motel 6.

With the recent acquisition of Delta Lodge at Kananaskis and an impending investment of \$26 million to transform this high-profile property into a four-star conference and destination resort, Pomeroy is maintaining an aggressive portfolio growth — which is remarkable, considering the Alberta hospitality sector has been hit hard by the oil and gas industry crash.

While extensive research, meticulous planning, and sound business principles play important roles in Pomeroy’s success, Ryan traces the key reason for his company’s enviable prominence all the way back to his family dinners with suppliers and other stakeholders. “Developing relationships is at the heart of everything we do, and it’s a core value I emphasized when I took over the business from my father seven years ago,” he says.



Ryan Pomeroy, president,
Pomeroy Lodging LP

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Pomeroy Lodging LP new office space in downtown Grande Prairie was renovated from an old cinema.



Indeed, it's impossible to talk to anyone in the Pomeroy organization without relationships soon being mentioned in connection with staff, guests, and especially the greater community. "Simply put, without the latter we wouldn't be where we are today," says Jeff Hyslop, Pomeroy's vice-president of development and real estate.

To which Jackie Clayton, Pomeroy's vice-president of public relations and partnerships adds, "When we look for new hotel opportunities, it's always with the intent to be an active part of the community, by way of participating in events and causes – instead of having the singular focus of identifying a busy market and deciding to build."

The claim of relationship building is common in the hospitality sector, and it usually occurs after a hotel is established and everything has been done to ensure its profitability. Surely Clayton isn't intimating that the decision to open new properties depends partly on to what extent Pomeroy can interact with the locals?

Hyslop replies, "That's exactly the case. Typically, our starting point for a new property is getting a phone call from a community leader expressing an interest in having the Pomeroy brand in their neigh-

bourhood. We do our due diligence, of course, but we very much take our cues from the local eyes and ears on the ground. Relationships are developed concurrent to the development of the hotel, instead of them being an add-on."

Evidence of Pomeroy's commitment to the markets it serves is omnipresent, from a curling tour it started years ago to its support of local hockey, soccer and base-

ball teams. It is the title sponsor for Pomeroy Sports Centre, an arena in Fort St. John, and it enjoys partnerships with organizations such as the United Way, Community Foundation, Relay for Life, Race Against Hunger, and Big Brothers and Sisters.

When asked if there are practical benefits arising from all this activity, Hyslop mentions the bottom dropping out of the oil and gas sector. "A good deal of our hotels — such as Dawson Creek — accommodate work crews, so we experienced a big slowdown last year," he says. "Fortunately, thanks to having developed an extensive network of relationships, we were able to keep our rooms occupied with other sources of business — sport events being one example."

Of course, none of this would mean much if the brand didn't meet and exceed hospitality expectations. When Ralph Pomeroy opened the Pomeroy Hotel in Fort St. John in 1941, it was with the intent of providing guests with all the comforts of home, and then some. Bob Pomeroy maintained this simple but effective objective, as has his son. Consequently, when Bob opened the first Pomeroy Inn & Suites in Grande Prairie in 2004, guests enjoyed top of the line amenities like oversized suites with fully equipped kitchens, pillow top mattresses by Hypnos, free high speed internet in all rooms, complimentary business and fitness centres, deluxe continental breakfast, pools with two storey waterslides, and a pet friendly policy regardless of location.

Pomeroy is equally devoted to the hotels it operates, the most recent of which is Delta Lodge at Kananaskis. The renovations to the facility, which begin this fall, will include upgrades to the conference rooms, spa, and guest rooms, as well as six food and beverage locations. Enhanced amenities will include indoor waterslides and a children's centre.

Moreover, Pomeroy will work with other tourism operators to create, improve, and increase visitation to Kananaskis Provincial Park and tourism events in the region.



The company currently has 18 hotel properties across Alberta and British Columbia.

Ryan and colleagues are confident that this massive overhaul will yield enormous gains. "With our low Canadian dollar, the Rockies are experiencing extremely strong summer traffic, plus lots of filming is happening in the region, a recent project being the Oscar winning film, *The Revenant*," says Hyslop.

Ryan adds, "Kananaskis will be a great hedge to our business. It will be most busy in Q2 and Q3 when our other properties are slow, and traffic there will slow when our other properties are gearing up for their busy seasons."

When Ryan is asked if it was inevitable that he would carry forward the values and standards established by two generations of family ownership, he laughs good-naturedly. "Put it this way: when I

stylus
contract furniture

Proud Supplier to
POMEROY LODGING

7885 Riverfront Gate, Burnaby, BC V5J 5L8
Tel 604.436.4100

www.styluscontract.com

Sadoo

Products: LED Lighted Mirror, Hotel Lighting, Hotel Furniture

Dependable Supplier of



www.surlightsourcing.net Email: sophy@sadoo.ca
China Tel: +86-18650120133 Toronto Tel: +1 (416) 887 4202
Toronto showroom: 233 Signet Dr. Toronto, ON M9L 1V3

montreal neon signs **m**

North America's sign company

4130 Desserte Sud, (A-440 West)
Laval, Quebec, Canada H7T 0H3
www.montrealneon.com | 1 (866) 672-4888

A proud supporter and technology provider for
Pomeroy Inn & Suites

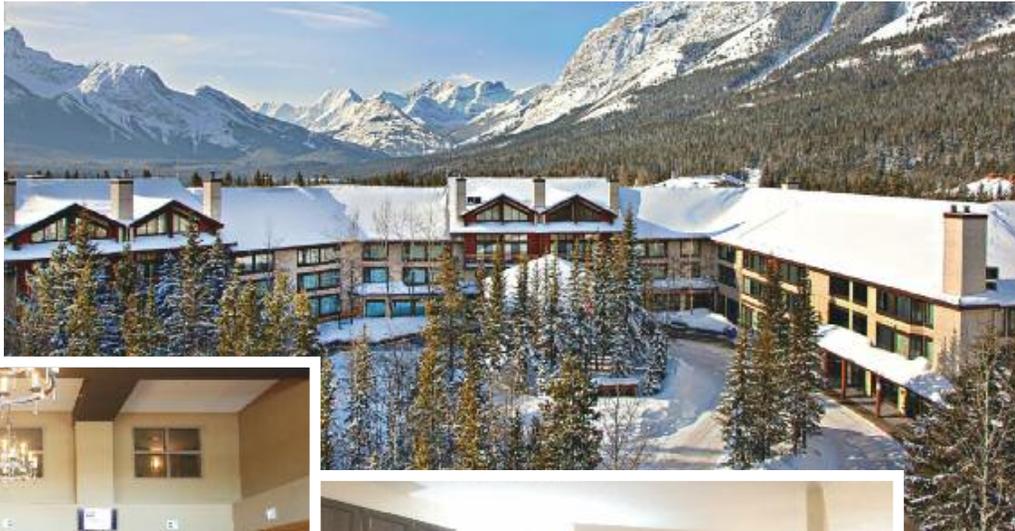
Hi tech
BUSINESS SYSTEMS

GUEST INTERNET SERVICE- PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS
BUSINESS CENTER SOLUTIONS & CONFERENCE EQUIPMENT
HARDWARE & SOFTWARE

1-800-491-4434 www.hitechgp.com

was growing up, I thought my dad was the coolest person on this planet next to my older brother, and before I was a teenager I knew I would follow in his footsteps." It was not uncommon to witness the eight-year-old helping out on weekends by serving brunch to guests, dressed in a tuxedo.

But it wasn't until 2004, after the athletically inclined Ryan pursued an international career as a Wolves Volleyball star, when he came into the fold — by which time the Pomeroy portfolio consisted of 10 hotels with two new ones under construction. "The next few years were pivotal to



(Top)
Kananaskis Lodge.



(Bottom and far left)
Pomeroy Inn & Suites at Olds College.



"Our goal was to take Pomeroy to the next level, and we were invigorated by the possibilities ahead."

the company," he says. "In 2005, we did a Manulife Capital transaction that enabled us to buy out our partners, and in 2007 — the year I took over as president — we completely started over by selling to Holloway."

Ryan is referring to Holloway Lodging

Real Estate Investment Trust, which acquired 11 hotel properties for \$215 million and agreed to join Pomeroy in development opportunities in Western Canada. "We were left with about 800 rooms in total," he says. "Our goal was to take

Pomeroy to the next level, and we were invigorated by the possibilities ahead. Unfortunately, the worldwide recession soon followed."

Determined not to have their dreams derailed, Ryan and colleagues restruc-

tured the company into a limited partnership, and they restructured their debt within the portfolio of hotels as well as strengthened their capital foundation. Pomeroy essentially became two sister companies: Pomeroy Lodging LP (the ownership firm) and Pomeroy Inn and Suites Inc. (which handles day-to-day management of the hotels).

Then, after the restructuring was complete, the team sat down to do something that had never been considered in Pomeroy's long history. "We thought about all the elements that had made us a success and distilled them into five core values: honesty, quality, winning, industry, and family," says Ryan. "As it turned out, the formal recognition of those values influenced everything, and it distinguished us to lenders and other business partners."

While conceding that the brand was able

to move ahead due to responsible business principles, Ryan stresses that "we are truly guided by our values, and these values also remind us of what we are not. For example, we're not fun or goofy. In fact, I would describe us as fairly intense. If you don't like competing, we're probably not a good fit as an employer."

If the recession galvanized Ryan and his colleagues to formally develop an operating ethos, it also compelled them to re-think certain business strategies. "For example, during the good times we would turn down sports teams and tell govern-

ments we didn't want their accounts," he says. "But that attitude hurt us when the recession hit, so we spent a lot of time and effort re-building relationships."

Although Pomeroy wasn't immune to the recession (and more recently the downturn of the oil sector), one of the company's unflinching hallmarks has been the time and effort spent nurturing its core asset: its people. "Once again, I acted on lessons learned by watching my father, who worked non-stop and whose marriage collapsed when I was 10," says Ryan. "Plus,



**PAMPERING
YOUR GUESTS
JUST GOT EASIER.**

The newly released Veritiv™ Lodging Product Guide encompasses everything you need to provide your guests with an enjoyable and comfortable stay. It offers an incomparable selection of brands and products for every room of your hotel. Available in both printed or digital formats.

Email Soula Mellios at soula.mellios@veritivcorp.com to order your digital or printed catalogue today.



© 2016 Veritiv Corporation. All rights reserved. Veritiv and the Veritiv logo are trademarks of Veritiv Corporation or its affiliates.

veritivcorp.com

HYPNOS
THE MOST COMFORTABLE BED IN THE WORLD
THE GOD OF SLEEP

info@araaminc.com araaminc.com hypnoscanada.com
T: 780.444.1388 F: 780.930.4295 Toll Free: 1.866.649.7667

araam
SLEEP PRODUCTS

becoming a father made me realize you need a good work-life balance if you're to survive over the long haul. So when I took over Pomeroy, I was determined that none of my staff would ever not want to come to work or feel resentful because they missed out on important family events."

Pomeroy's familial approach to staff is based on the belief that enormous potential lies within each individual, and that supporting career objectives kindles loyalty and productivity. In addition to extensive training and other benefits, the company gives out annual awards for top performers, and it stages team competitions and activities at each of its locations.

One such initiative is the Clean Team Award for Housekeeping. "This is an annual competition amongst our clean team (housekeeping, laundry, janitorial and maintenance teams) to see who can have the cleanest rooms and the least amount of deductions over a calendar year," explains Christy Doucette, director of brand integration. "At the end of the year, the winning Clean Team receives an award at our Annual Achievement Awards dinner plus a cash reward." This and other initiatives have contributed to Pomeroy



being recognized as one of the Top 50 best Employers in Canada.

Clayton uses the term "grass roots" to describe the daily interaction amongst staff. "Whether it's the 40 people in our

head office or the 1,000 people throughout our network, we all appreciate that we're down to earth. Everyone is open and accessible, and there's a huge sense of working towards common goals."



(L-R) Pomeroy Inn & Suites Vegreville, Stonebridge Hotel Grande Prairie, Pomeroy Hotel Grande Prairie

Incidentally, the head office Clayton refers to is another new element of the Pomeroy brand: a reconverted cinema in downtown Grande Prairie. "The lease on our old headquarters was coming up in 2014 and we needed room to expand, but we couldn't find the appropriate space until the cinema

feeling of having lined up his ducks in anticipation of big things to come. By all counts, Bob Pomeroy, who now spends half the year basking in the heat of Phoenix, Arizona, is proud of the direction the family business is taking.

But the amiable Ryan stresses that this is

"We've built a great platform, and we did it under adverse circumstances. We're looking forward to Kananaskis and other hotel openings, and ultimately we want to take our brand across the country."

came on the market," says Ryan, who as a youth spent many evenings watching movies on the 24,000 square foot facility's three screens. "We turned it into an open workspace with lots of glazing, but we kept one theatre and installed a blu-ray system for our own use and for community events."

As 2016 unfolds, Ryan is enjoying the

only the beginning. "Pomeroy is very much a work in progress," he says. "We've built a great platform, and we did it under adverse circumstances. We're looking forward to Kananaskis and other hotel openings, and ultimately we want to take our brand across the country. So there's lots for us to look forward to — and prepare for." ●



800.661.7239
sales@edentextile.com



Congratulations



POMEROY LODGING
FIERCELY INVESTED

You are committed to achieving excellence and upholding the highest standards in product and service.

At **Shorewood Furniture**, we share the same core values and we are proud to be a partner in your endeavors.



Shorewood Furniture

Beyond Expectations
www.shorewoodfurn.com

