

# Booked for Travel

## A Room at the Ritz

by Horace Sutton

**I**N A time when waterfalls cascade down the walls of hotel lobbies, and restaurants are built in aeries that twirl on hotel rooftops, affording a changing view for those who dine there, it is comforting to many that the Ritz Hotel in Paris stands as a redoubt



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César Ritz—"Pursuit of the good life."

of tradition. For the guests who occupy its 210 rooms, it continues to provide a ratio of staff to guests of two to one. Although it undertook a \$4 million renovation program, there is not the faintest notion of the circus air that swirls in caravansaries celebrated today—no cocktail pods suspended over lobbyside lagoons, no glass elevators slithering up the facades of buildings. *Grâce à Dieu*, the new Ritz is a preserve of paintings, woodwork, tapestries, reflecting, in the words of Monique Ritz, "the authenticity of a collection of wonderful treasures . . . and at the same time adding an atmosphere of joyful harmony which suits today's clientele."

If there is anything that is *nouvelle vague* about the Ritz, it is the presence of Mme. Ritz herself in the title and position of chairman of the board, the French not having as yet become enwebbed in the underbrush of femlib nomenclature. She was born in Geneva, is fifty-four, comely,

and the widow of Charles C. Ritz, son of César. Longtime friends, Charles and Monique finally married in 1971. A fey and engaging *homme sportif*, Charles, or Uncle Charles as some of his intimates called him, was as much interested in fly-fishing as he was in the direction of the hotel. Some think even more so. He thought the Ritz name was strong enough to carry along the hotel without refurbishment and without an overt sales effort to bring the customers. Having seen the Ritz's occupancy rate drop and many of his clients lured by the Plaza Athénée, the Georges V, and the Meurice, all of which now belong to hotel chains that employ spirited marketing exercises to bring the customers to the door, Charles belatedly began the costly renaissance of the Ritz. It was left to Monique to finish the make-over and ultimately to assume control of the hotel when Charles died last July.

Contrary to popular belief, the Ritz on the elegant Place Vendôme in Paris is not the central link of a chain. Indeed, there is no Ritz chain. The Paris Ritz is the de facto mother church of Ritzdom, a loosely linked confrerie of hotels of similar caste and station with which César worked at one time or to which Charles, after careful examination, awarded the right—without remuneration—to use the Ritz name. The roster includes the Ritz in London, those in Madrid and Barcelona, a large one that opened in a shower of royalty and jewels in Lisbon nearly 20 years ago, the venerable Ritzes in Boston and Montreal, and the new—and by far the most departural of the lot—Ritz-Carlton in Chicago, opened in 1975.

Sometime after the original Ritz was launched in Paris in 1898, ritz and ritzy passed into the language as synonymous with wealth and aristocratic style. "Puttin' on the Ritz" appeared as the title of a song by Irving Berlin that appeared in a 1929 film of the same name.

It was also a mutation of the less elegant form of the same expression, "putting on the dog." Underworld characters in Chester Gould's comic strip "Dick

Tracy" employed "ritzy" as an adjective. A comic strip called "Fritzi Ritz" appeared, later to be called "Nancy." And there was a proliferation of purveyors who adopted the word *Ritz*. They exist to this day in such corners as the Ritz Plumbing Service (Los Angeles), the Ritz Barber Shop (Philadelphia), the Ritz Pastry Shop (Chicago), and the secondhand fur store in New York called the Ritz Thrift Shop. Only some enterprises, among them the Ritz Tower in New York, Ritz Crackers, a product of the National Biscuit Company, and the Ritz Restaurant in Berlin paid for the use of the name.

Small hotels in places such as Italy, which didn't subscribe to the copyright laws, use the Ritz name without permission, and so does one in Manila. The



Georges Escoffier—"King of chefs."

only time the Ritzes prosecuted was when their name appeared on toilet tissue.

The originator of this life-style, or at least the man who established the pursuit of the good life and made it synonymous with his name, was César Ritz, born in 1850 at Niederwald, some 20 miles from Brig, which is the last Swiss railroad stop before the Italian border. He began as a shepherd, got his first restaurant job at the *Voisin* in Paris. The Edwardian flood rolled ashore in London like a tidal wave of plush in the 1880s, bringing new hotels, new fashion, and a new sense of luxury. At the height of the splendor, in 1889, Richard D'Oyly Carte, the impresario who had built the Savoy Theater especially for Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, opened the Savoy Hotel in London, complete with electric lights, 70 baths, six elevators, and César Ritz. A year later the Savoy was blessed with the appearance of Georges Auguste Escoffier, then forty-

four and mounting the heights of a career that was to span 62 years of active service and was to make him, as was often said, the chef of kings and the king of chefs.

Escoffier and Ritz were an irrepressible combination, pandering to the needs of the rich as fashion, ennui, and the climate moved the social venue from the National Hotel in Lucerne, to Brenner's Park in Baden-Baden, to winters at Lake Maggiore, and to business months in London. The faithful would have liked to come to Paris, assured of Mr. Ritz's impeccable service and Escoffier's exquisite cuisine, but, as they ruefully told César, there was just no place there where suitable standards were guaranteed.

César and Escoffier moved to the Carlton in London (where Escoffier was to have his most brilliant years), and Ritz took a trip to Paris to see if he could find a place to please his clients. Ambling along the Place Vendôme, near the Tuileries, he came upon a delivery boy bringing a bathtub and hot water to a small *hôtel particulier*—a private mansion. "I'm delivering water for the bath of the Prince of Wales" (later to be Edward VII of England), said the delivery boy—at least as the story has become forever engraved. Said César, if that is where the Prince of Wales stays, that's where the Ritz will be.

By circumstance, the town house, once the property of the Duke of Lauzun, a Lafayette general, was for sale. Ritz returned to London to raise money. He remembered a backer named Marnier La Postolle, a short man who had invented an orange-flavored liqueur of particular merit. As Ritz sought money for the Paris hotel, La Postolle sought a name for his cordial. Ritz looked down at the diminutive inventor and said, "Call it Grand Marnier." La Postolle gave him the money to buy the Duke of Lauzun's house, which opened in 1898 as the Paris Ritz. Eight years later there was a Ritz in the heart of Piccadilly, near Green Park, in London.

**A**RITZ-CARLTON opened in New York in 1910 at Madison Avenue and Forty-sixth Street, establishing a classy beachhead in these northern limits that had been pioneered by The Plaza, even farther north at Fifty-ninth Street. The New York Ritz survived until 1951, when, in a downpour of nostalgia, it was torn down to make room for an office building.

But during its lifetime in Manhattan, it brought the Ritz-Carlton imprimatur to the New World and to the heart of New

York. Scott Fitzgerald used its name in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," a fantasy he wrote in the winter of 1921–22. The Ritz bar was as famous as its counterpart in Paris, and for grande dames and businessmen the Ritz was the preferred place to have lunch. As a hostelry, the Ritz-Carlton was hyphenated in fact as well as in name. The Ritz side provided shelter for transient guests while the Carlton was set aside for those occupying quarters on longer term.

Oddly enough, the New York Ritz-Carlton was once owned by Harvard, to which it was left in the will of Robert Walton Goelet, its builder. Harvard sold it to the trustees for the English branch of the Astor family. The Astor trustees sold it in turn to the Uris brothers, who tore it down in 1952 and put up an office building, now unceremoniously known as 380 Madison Avenue. The Astor family built an apartment hotel that remains today, hushed and elegant, as the Carlton House. It contains some of the fixtures from the Ritz and a few from the old Astor on Broadway.

Arthur Brisbane, the Hearst editor, obtained a Ritz franchise, and in the heady year of 1927 the Ritz Tower, a hotel of supreme elegance, promising Ritz service, opened on Park Avenue at Fifty-seventh Street, on property owned by William Randolph Hearst. A 16-room duplex was set aside for Brisbane, but he never occupied it. Greta Garbo, Marion Davies, and Al Jolson and his wife, Ruby Keeler, were all tenants in the hotel. Even though the Ritz became a cooperative apartment-hotel and later ceased to pay for the Ritz franchise, it has continued to attract notables, among them Arlene Francis and her husband, the actor Martin Gabel, Paulette Goddard, and Goodman Ace. Perhaps it is a mark of social change that the Ritz Tower quarters, now occupied by The First Women's Bank was, in other times, the nest of the late Henri Soulé's Pavillon, hands down New York's ritziest restaurant and considered by some gastronomes to have ranked among the world's best.

Charles of the Ritz beauty salon, another street-floor tenant, got its name from Charles Jundt, a French hair stylist who achieved a reputation in proper circles for his mastery in coiffures. Since he had begun in New York's Ritz-Carlton, he became known, in grand fashion, as Charles of the Ritz. Adding the Ritz to one's name awards it a flash of trumpets in the fashion of Oscar of the Waldorf and Montgomery of Alamein. A line of cosmetics under the name of Lanvin—Charles of the Ritz is

marketed by the Squibb Company, and the Charles of the Ritz salons have been absorbed by the Glemby Company, international marketers of beauty products.

Although it succumbed, garden and all, to a mass of undistinguished concrete that now occupies its site, the New York Ritz-Carlton grew branches that continue to spawn offshoots.

Only two years younger than the late New York Ritz-Carlton, the Montreal edition, which opened in 1912, remains healthy and elegant to this day. The 267 rooms of the Montreal Ritz have all been redone in the past five years. It is managed now by Fred Laubi, an international-class manager who ran the refined Gritti Palace in Venice before coming here.

It remains the supreme hotel of Montreal, a city that has grown up all around it and is now the second largest French-speaking city in the world. During the Olympic Games last year, the Ritz was the site of the state banquet given by Queen Elizabeth and the queen's reception, at which, in a rare encounter, the whole royal family was assembled away from home.

**R**ITZ could scarcely have envisioned such success when he allowed the hotel to be opened with his name in the days before World War I. Having cut the ribbon on New Year's Eve, the thirty-first of December, 1912, the hotel had a house count of three guests on January first, a total that soared to nine on January fourth.

By now, Ritz was combining his name with that of the Carlton, in which he and Escoffier had interests. When a Boston politician asked Edward N. Wyner, a local real estate developer, to turn a new apartment building into a first-class hotel, which the city needed, Wyner obliged and succeeded in getting the rights to the Ritz-Carlton name.

The Boston hotel opened May 18, 1927, fifty years ago, on the corner of Arlington Street and Newburgh, overlooking the Public Garden. Like most Ritzes it has entertained such statesmen as Willy Brandt and Winston Churchill, but it was also a favorite inn of John Kennedy, both as congressman and as President. It being the habit of Broadway shows to try out in Boston, and it being the taste of producers and creators to recline in luxury, the Boston Ritz has been the home for many theatrical talents. Rodgers and Hammerstein reworked *South Pacific* in its satiny confines.

The Ritz that might have made César twitch is the new Ritz-Carlton, which opened two years ago in Chicago. It is not exactly a hotel one can point to, since it occupies 22 floors of a 74-story complex called Water Tower Place. Most of the floors not occupied by the Ritz are luxury condominium apartments, but there is also room for an eight-level mall set aside for shops. There are over 100 of them, including an edition of Lord and Taylor and of Marshall Field. Some corporate space is set aside on the eighth and ninth floors, and there is still room for the Drury Lane Theater and four cinemas.

To avoid what might seem an unseemly mix, Ritz patrons can take private elevators to the lobby, a two-acre expanse that happens to be on the twelfth floor. That level also provides the real estate for The Greenhouse, an arbor where drinks are served, the dining room, café, bar, terrace, and other stations set aside for nourishment. Marshall Field fills the 32 vitrines of a 210-foot-long shopping walkway similar to the one in the Paris Ritz and akin to the original Peacock Alley in New York's first Waldorf-Astoria, where the Empire State Building stands now.

Since César's salad days, nearly 60 years ago, hotel needs have changed. The Ritz-Carlton, Chicago, says it is the first hotel in the country to have installed a special facility uniquely for press conferences and live television broadcasting. The pursuit of health having been recognized as important to today's traveler as, say, the bar was in César's day, the Ritz-Carlton in the Windy City comes complete with an indoor swimming pool, gym, sauna, whirlpool bath, and other devices for disentangling the snarled executive.

The Ritz in Madrid, in its snootiest days—say in the late 1950s—was still in the habit of turning down actors no matter how famous. One didn't take performers in a house that was, well, that ritzy. In the new world, not only actors but businessmen are solicited, at least by the Paris Ritz, which makes assurances that it has on hand multilingual secretaries, conference rooms, Telex, and even portable signal devices that guests expecting to be summoned can carry on their persons.

Still, on the Cambon side, Claude and Jack remain at the Ritz bar, while on the Vendôme side, the residence of the Duke of Lauzun remains as serene as it was when the future Edward VII bathed there. At the Espadon, Escoffier lives, and so do his specialties. Even the dietetic meals are served by candlelight. You can't be ritzier than that. ©

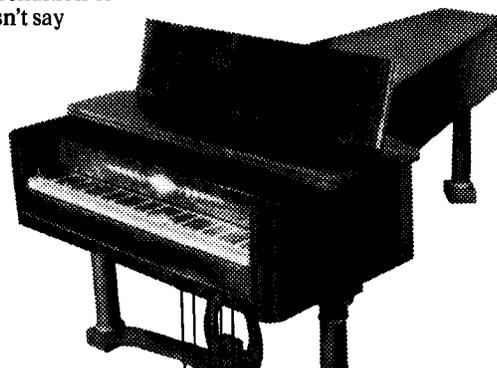
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Beethoven lived in Vienna, and Beethoven still lives here along with Strauss, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and so many others. My mother was right. I should have practiced harder . . .

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# World Progress Report

## Back to the Soil

Maybe it's the growing awareness of the world food crisis, or the increasing interest in things environmental, or even women's liberation. Or perhaps it's merely a case of students sensing the promise of a good job after graduation. Whatever the reasons, enrollment in the nation's agricultural colleges, long a backwater in the American educational mainstream, is growing faster than corn in Kansas.

According to the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, the "ag" schools have increased their enrollments by about 30 percent in only the past two years, and by 300 percent since 1963. In this school year, there are almost 100,000 undergraduates and 25,000 graduate students in agricultural programs at 72 schools.

The schools report a qualitative as well as a quantitative change in their student bodies. For one thing, there seems to be a reversal of the old truism about not being able to keep the young folks down on the farm after they've seen the big city. "In just four years," the head of the University of Minnesota's agronomy department told *The New York Times*, "we have shifted from predominantly farm kids who knew everything about farming to a predominantly urban enrollment with many students who have never even seen a wheat field."

An increasing percentage of the new students are women, who now make up 28 percent of the enrollment in the traditionally male-dominated ag schools. At Michigan State University, for example, there are now more than 1,200 women agriculture students, almost 30 times as many as there were a decade ago, and they are now entering areas that had previously been considered "men's work."

Few of the future graduates will end up working their own land; less than 5 percent of the American population now lives on farms, and the proportion is shrinking steadily. Instead, the ag students are preparing for careers in large-scale farm management, food processing, and other agribusinesses. In some fields of specialization, the schools are having a hard time keeping up with the demand. There are now more candidates for each avail-

able place in graduate schools of veterinary medicine than there are for each opening in schools that teach medicine for people.

## Educational Television

There seems to be no end to the arguments about what children learn from the programs they see on television, but a report in the *Harvard Business Review* argues that the kids are getting the real message from the commercials. According to Thomas Bever, a Columbia University psychologist, and Martin Smith, an advertising professional, the TV advertisements have little effect on the attitudes of five- and six-year-olds. Between the ages of seven and nine, the researchers' survey showed, children begin to be troubled by the conflict they perceive between the promises made by TV commercials and the actual performance of the advertised products their parents buy. For the child, says the report, the fact that "society allows for institutional hypocrisy violates [the] moral precepts he has been taught."

By the time the children in the survey turned ten, however, they had developed a protective shield of cynicism against the distortions in TV commercials. "They're all lies," said one group of preadolescent

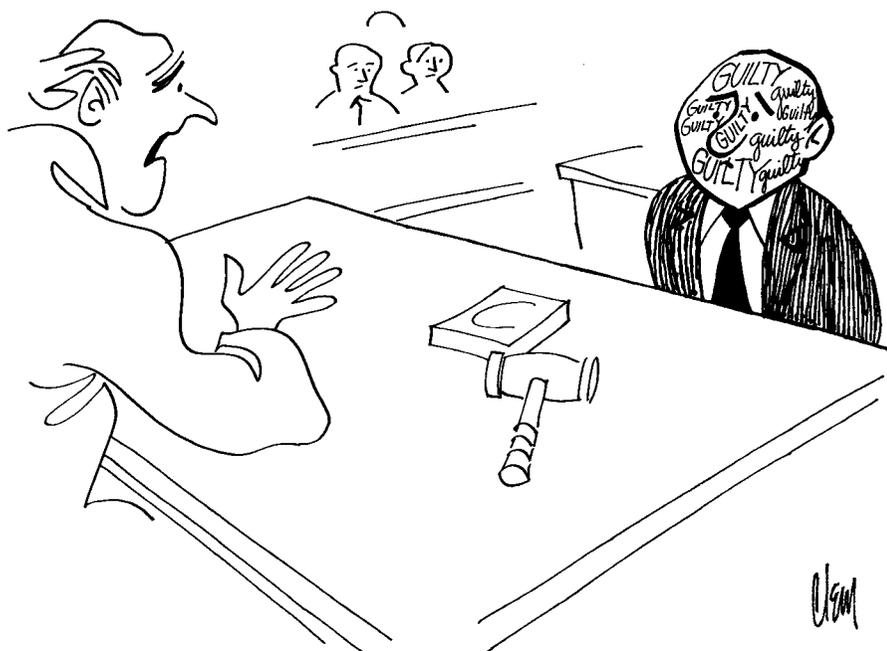
nonbelievers. But the oldest children in the survey, eleven and twelve years old, "finally accept societal hypocrisy as a fact of life."

## International Medicine

Seemingly undaunted by the flouting of the Helsinki accords and the waxing and waning of détente, a five-year-old program of cooperative research among Russian and American doctors has been making important progress on several fronts. Each year, the program has sponsored the exchange of 200 scientists between the two countries to work on cancer, heart disease, environmental health, arthritis, influenza, and the biological aspects of schizophrenia.

Cooperative studies in heart disease, for example, have enabled the scientists to test the effectiveness of Russian drug therapies against that of the surgical treatments favored in the United States, and to share valuable know-how in the development of artificial hearts. Cancer researchers have exchanged about 150 medicines used in chemotherapy and have also begun an investigation of possible links between viruses and cancer. Last year, the Soviet-American medical research resulted in the publication of 80 scientific papers. An important, though intangible, benefit derived from the program, according to an official in the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, has been the standardization of many research procedures, which paves the way for increased cooperation in the future.

—ANTHONY WOLFF



"You have 'guilty' written all over your face."