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## **R. D. (Dan) Musser Jr. announces retirement from Grand Hotel**

MACKINAC ISLAND, MI—Grand Hotel Chairman R. D. (Dan) Musser Jr., under whose guidance the hotel has doubled both its size and the length of its season, has decided to retire from involvement in day-to-day operations at the iconic hotel and turn full control over to his son, R. D. (Dan) Musser III.

Musser, who has been a part of the hotel for almost half of its existence, started working at Grand Hotel as a college student in 1951, became president of the hotel in 1960 and then purchased it with his wife Amelia in 1979. Next summer Grand Hotel will celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

“It is time for Dan to take over,” he said. “He has shown he is more than capable of running Grand Hotel and he will do it with a firm commitment to all the amenities that make it what it is. It’s a source of great pride to me that he is the third generation of our family to run Grand Hotel.”

The assumption of full control by R. D. Musser III completes a process that began in 1989 when he became president of Grand Hotel.

“Fortunately, I have a significant advantage as I assume this new level of leadership at Grand Hotel because I have been mentored by a legend in the hospitality field,” said R. D. Musser III. “He has instilled his dedication to maintaining the ambiance that makes Grand Hotel unique and his meticulous attention to detail in all of us who are part of this hotel and they will continue. Plus, while he has chosen to retire from day-to-day operations, I know he will still be available to be called on when needed.”

Thierry Roch, Executive Director of Historic Hotels of America, said the history of family involvement is a key factor in the continuing success of Grand Hotel.

“The family sense of stewardship and dedication to the unique nature of the hotel is a key part of Grand Hotel’s success,” he said. “They are true innkeepers determined to make each guest’s stay a memorable experience. They are legendary in our industry for their dedication and commitment to maintaining the highest level of hospitality at Grand Hotel.”

Grand Hotel had just over 200 rooms and was open from early June until mid-September when R. D. Musser Jr. became president in 1960. In the intervening years the hotel has expanded to 385 rooms and the season now extends from the beginning of May to the end of October.

During those years the hotel also has added a second golf course, grown from one restaurant to five and brought in the New York designer, Carleton Varney, to completely redesign its interior with the bright colors and ambiance for which it is known.

“When I took over we had about 120 rooms that shared a bath, which could cause real problems,” Musser remembers. “If you were in one of those rooms, you could lock the guests in the other room out of the bathroom. People would come to the desk complaining they couldn’t get into the bathroom, which obviously was a problem. We got rid of the last rooms with adjoining baths about 1970.”

Musser said the decision to lengthen the season was made the year he became president of the hotel in 1960.

“John F. Kennedy was running for president and he came to the island on Memorial Day weekend to meet with Governor Williams at the Governor’s residence to ask for his support,” he said. “It was a beautiful day, a beautiful weekend and the downtown was busy, but we weren’t open. I thought, ‘This is crazy.’ That was when we started figuring out how to lengthen the season.”

The 2011 season is the 78<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the hotel has been under the stewardship of the same family. In March 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression at a time when all the nation’s banks had been closed, W. Stewart Woodfill was the sole bidder in an auction to take the hotel out of receivership. R. D. Musser Jr. was Woodfill’s nephew.

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