

A Room at the Inn

Meet Indiana's major hoteliers.

INDIANA HOTEL CORP.

If you've already guessed that Tim and Bob Dora, partners in the Indiana Hotel Corp. in Anderson, are nephews of James Dora Sr. of General Hotel Corp., you know only part of the story.

"I have a plaque on my wall that acknowledges us as descendants of the first settlers of Indiana," Bob says. "Those settlers were licensed by the governor of Quebec to sell and trade brandy to the French fur trappers so they were the first people in Indiana's hospitality business."

Bob Dora thinks that's why the hospitality business comes so naturally to him and his brother Tim. Their father, Robert Eugene Dora, started eight hotels in Indiana before his death in 1973. Another brother, Michael, owns hotels in Ohio and Indiana, and brothers Joe and John also are involved in the business.

"Tim busied tables at age 10, and at age nine I was dragging people's bags to their rooms. I wasn't always paid for it, but a quarter tip was big money for me."

Even today, "Tim and I are in our hotels every day. We operate them personally," Bob says.

Tim Dora thinks quality construction sets his hotels apart from the competition. "We build them to own them. We spend more money on the front end than many, which gives us a higher level of quality and more longevity," Dora says. Specifically, Indiana Hotel Corp. spends "a lot of money on our lobbies, public restrooms and furnishings," he adds. "Instead of wood construction, we build everything with block and concrete. It costs a lot more, but it'll last longer than the mortgage."

Bob, former president of the Indianapolis Hotel and Motel Association, and Tim, recent president and current chairman of the statewide group, operate a Holiday Inn in Anderson, a Holiday Inn Express in Fishers, and a Ramada Limited in Fishers. The two partners are co developers of a Holiday Inn Express currently under construction in Plainfield, and plan to open a new hotel in downtown Indianapolis next spring.

"The downtown Indianapolis Comfort Inn will have 86 rooms, but we plan to expand it to 150 rooms. We're also starting up a hotel



Roots Hoteliers James Dora Sr. and nephews Tim (right) and Bob Dora trace family to early Indiana settlers in the hospitality business—they sold brandy to French trappers.

restaurant division," Bob says. The new \$3.5 million Comfort Inn will be "value priced" and will feature surface parking, charging about \$65 per double bed.

"Limited service hotels without restaurants is the trend. It's what the customer wants," Bob says. "Around the 1950s, full service hotels were popular because the traveler could choose between the hotel restaurant and the local 'greasy spoon,' where you had no idea what you were getting. Today, with all the chains like T.G.I. Friday's, you've seen the menu and know exactly what to expect. Hotel restaurants aren't as important."

"In Holiday Inn customer surveys, the six (limited service) Holiday Inn Expresses are tops among Indiana's 45 Holiday Inns in customer satisfaction," he adds.

Instead of restaurants, customers are demanding better security measures. "We provide visible, well lit parking lots and make sure the police come through regularly," he says. In this way, he hopes to attract the visitor

who otherwise would choose the more secure suburban hotels over a downtown facility.

The Doras are banking on the continued popularity of limited service hotels, noting that "even if there's an economic downturn, business people still have to travel. They'll just cut their budgets, and we'll actually gain customers," according to Bob.

"Last year, was the best year we've ever had, and this year looks like it will be even better," he adds.

Indiana Hotel Corp. charges about \$55 per room and averages 75 to 90 rooms per facility. The company employs 224 people.

Born in Vincennes and graduates of Vincennes Lincoln High School, Tim and Bob both earned degrees from the University of Colorado—political science for Bob and business administration for Tim. Tim and Bob live in Carmel and Fishers, respectively, and enjoy snow skiing, genealogy research, gardening and hot air ballooning in their free time.