

## THE TAKEAWAY

# Laurence Geller on what's wrong with boutique hotels, millennials—and other topics

By ALBY GALLUN

**Laurence Geller** is head of Geller Capital Partners, which owns the Waldorf Astoria in the Gold Coast and the new Conrad Chicago just off North Michigan Avenue. The 69-year-old Brit founded Strategic Hotels & Resorts in 1997.

**You have some pretty strong opinions about boutique hotels that are aimed at millennials, oozing cool with trendy decor and design. What's the matter with them?**

The strange thing that happens is that millennials grow up. Millennials have got all the staying power of a snake slithering on the floor. They're fickle.

**Are you still running marathons?**

Not very fast. My fastest time was 3 hours and 11 minutes all those years ago. I will be very happy with a 5-hour marathon these days. My knees—oh, do I hurt for months afterward.

**Speaking of hobbies, you've written two novels inspired by your experiences in the hotel business. Can we expect a third?**

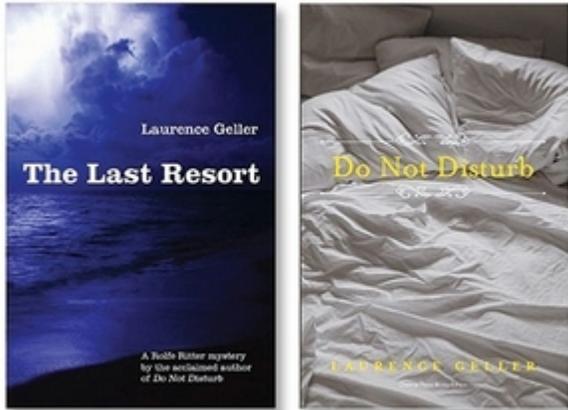
You can. The working title at the moment is "Room Service." Strangely enough, one of the heroes will be a millennial hotelier.

**When is that coming out?**

My guess is I can finish it during 2017, so it'll be a 2018 book. But at one point I got so angry I killed the main character. That was a bad mistake, so I have to rewrite.

**You recently opened a dementia care facility in London, and you're busy with Alzheimer's-related causes. Why is this issue so important to you?**

My father died at the age of 90 from dementia. But he still had plenty of memory. My mother had full-onset dementia at the age of 96 when she died.



"Room Service" has been postponed until its protagonist can be resurrected.

**Wow, 90 and 96—that's amazing, but I bet it was hard.**

I watched what it did to my family. My sister had to stop working, and I paid her wages. When my parents were in a full dementia state, they were funny, they laughed, they didn't know from one thing to the next. But much of the time they had lots of moments of lucidity, and I watched them struggling to get out of "prison." It was like a death sentence that they couldn't escape.

**What do you miss the most about your previous job, and what do you miss the least?**

I miss having \$4 billion or \$5 billion of assets. I like the scale. On the other hand, I can focus at the Conrad on the menu and the ingredients. I can focus on whether I want a fireplace or I don't want a fireplace. I don't miss the boards, the bureaucracy, the public market issues, the analysts.

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