

**Hospitality Icon Bruce White Dies at 70**

A person wearing a cowboy hat

Description automatically generated with low confidence

**Merrillville, Indiana (January 19, 2023)** – Bruce White, hospitality industry icon and Founder and Chairman of White Lodging, has died at the age of 70 after a nearly year-long battle with cancer.

Bruce White founded White Lodging in 1985 with a single hotel in Northwest Indiana, ultimately growing the business into one of the industry’s largest privately held development, ownership and management companies.

“Bruce was a visionary, a leader, and a hospitality icon like no other,” said White Lodging Chief Executive Officer Jean-Luc Barone. “I have learned more from Bruce about hard work, leadership, and family, than any other person in my life. And while he maintained a low public profile and was humble in his impact on the industry, there’s no question that Bruce White helped transform the modern hospitality industry by having a long-term vision, challenging existing norms, and executing at the highest levels—all from a smalltown in Northwest Indiana.”

“From the first time I met him when I was a line cook in the 1980s and throughout the 20+ years I spent by his side helping White Lodging develop hundreds of hotels across the country, Bruce's thirst and ability to be a life-long learner and leader was unmatched,” said Deno Yiankes, Senior Advisor and Board Member at White Lodging.

White Lodging’s portfolio includes approximately 60 hotels (14,600 rooms), more than 50 restaurants and 10 rooftops bars, and a collection of luxury ranches. Throughout his career, Bruce White developed, owned, and managed more than 225 new hotels over the last 35 years on behalf of White Lodging and with the support of other valued partners.

With hotels in some of the country's most coveted urban destinations, White Lodging remains family-owned and headquartered in Northwest Indiana—where Bruce White's legacy began.

**From Carlton Lodges to J.W. Marriott's**

Bruce White had a vision when he first took over several small Carlton Lodges in Indiana nearly 40 years ago. He wanted to be the best. He wanted to take risks. He wanted to make a difference. This combination earned him trust with partners and quickly gained the attention of one of the most influential individuals in the hospitality industry: J.W. “Bill” Marriott, Jr.

“Marriott’s relationship with Bruce White and White Lodging has been going strong for decades and that’s a testament to our shared values and our belief that people are at the heart of this business,” said Mr. Marriott, Chairman Emeritus of Marriott International. “Bruce embodied that value.  It isn’t often in business that you have the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with a partner for decades – it has been our distinct privilege to do just that with Bruce and the team at White Lodging.”

Bruce White’s relationship with Marriott flourished over the years beginning when he built and opened the first Fairfield Inn franchise (in Merrillville, Ind.) in 1990, followed by the first franchised Marriott headquarter convention hotel (Marriott Indianapolis) in 2001, the first dual-branded property (Courtyard & Residence Inn Austin Downtown) in 2006, and the largest JW Marriott in the world (JW Marriott Indianapolis) in 2011. For many years, Bruce White was Marriott’s largest independent franchisee.

“Bruce was a legend in hospitality, and it was my great fortune to get to know him very early in my career at Marriott,” said Liam Brown, Group President of United States and Canada for Marriott International. “He freely imparted his knowledge and learning, much to my benefit over a 30+ year career journey and friendship. I have a deep appreciation for his passion, his candor, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. He built and has left a remarkable legacy. He understood that at the end of the day, we are hoteliers, providing great experiences with great hotels and the best people. Fearless, passionate, and larger than life, Bruce was a hotelier through and through and very astute leader. I am fortunate to have worked with and learned from Bruce for so many years and blessed to call him a friend.”

Bruce White accelerated White Lodging’s growth in 2006 when he sold 100 of its suburban hotels. The proceeds were reinvested in new hotel developments where at one time the company was developing and opening more than ten hotels every year. In 2018, White Lodging sold 82 hotel management contracts and began a strategic shift to a concentrated urban portfolio with more complex hotels that deliver memorable and elevated guest experiences. In 2022, Bruce White sold the company’s remaining suburban hotels and management contracts to re-focus all efforts on urban and experiential hotels.

**Be a Learner, Be a Leader, Be a Friend**

Be a learner, be a leader, be a friend. These were the words Bruce White expressed to his children each day they went to school. This simple phrase beautifully captures Bruce White’s three-word philosophy on life, family, business, leadership, and philanthropy: Educate, Enhance, and Enjoy.

In recent years Bruce White and the White family stepped up their philanthropic support, aligned with this three-word philosophy. Over the past five years, Bruce White has invested or pledged more than $100 million in legacy investments from family foundations that are designed to transform communities.

This includes the expansion of inner-city youth education and several state-of-the-art community centers and YMCA facilities in Northwest Indiana named for Bruce’s parents, and tens of millions of dollars in support of business and hospitality education at his alma mater—Purdue University. Most recently, in recognition of Bruce White’s ongoing support, Purdue University renamed its hospitality school the White Lodging – J.W. “Bill” Marriott, Jr. School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

“In all its history, Indiana has produced few citizens the equal of Bruce White,” said Purdue University President Emeritus and former Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels. “In a spectacular business career, his imagination and boldness created opportunities and wealth for thousands of others. He invested enormously of his energy and personal resources in trying to build the prosperity and quality of life of his beloved Northwest Indiana. And, of course, as trustee, donor, and advocate, he was a central figure in building the Purdue University of today. We cannot replace him; we will remember him with the deepest gratitude always.”

**Established Family-Owned Succession**

White Lodging’s succession plans began years ago with the development of a strong leadership team and the expertise and counsel of family members and outside advisors that sit on the Board of Directors. With established governance in place, White Lodging will remain a private, family-owned business committed to excellence and growth. The company has a highly experienced and established executive team in place led by White Lodging Chief Executive Officer Jean-Luc Barone. In total, the company’s executive team has been involved in White Lodging’s development, investments, and operations for more than 100 years.

Bruce recently shared the following with White Lodging associates: “Regardless of who is in my seat, our people are the heart of White Lodging and together support each other and bring this company to life – and have for nearly 40 years. Our leaders’ job is to harness the strengths and diversity of our individual associates and achieve great things together, with the continued support of the White family and Board of Directors.”

The White family remains intimately involved as board members and in hospitality operations. Together they are committed to continuing Bruce White’s legacy of growing the White Lodging operational excellence and new hotel developments. This includes a long-term development pipeline in addition to the projects already under way in San Antonio, Austin, and Nashville that are expected to add up to 2,300 rooms to the company’s portfolio.

**About Bruce White**

Bruce White is a graduate of Purdue University, the Harvard Graduate School of Business O.P.M. Program and is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Business Administration in Hospitality Management from Johnson & Wales. Together with his wife, Beth, of 35 years, Bruce White has three adult children and welcomed their first grandchild in 2021.

He was a finalist for HOTEL magazine’s Global “Corporate Hotelier of the Year" and a member of the inaugural class of the Purdue University School of Hospitality and Tourism Management Hall of Fame. Bruce White was appointed to the Board of Trustees of Purdue University in 2011 where he served through early 2015. He is also a member of Purdue University’s Business Hall of Fame.

Bruce White has been recognized with the IHLA Lifetime Achievement Award, the Hunter Hotel Developer Award for Excellence & Inspiration and, along with his family, the Will Koch Indiana Tourism Leadership award. His board involvement has included University of Chicago Hospitals, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, the Chicago Economic Club, Big Shoulders Fund, the Terlato Wine Group, and Young President’s Organization.

**About White Lodging**

White Lodging, established in 1985 by hospitality icon Bruce White, has evolved into one of the country’s largest privately held hospitality companies focused exclusively on highly curated urban and lifestyle properties. The company develops, owns and manages a portfolio of brands in destination-driven markets, including Austin, Chicago, Denver, Nashville, Indianapolis, and Louisville. With a focus on elevated and experiential service, White Lodging’s portfolio consists of approximately 60 premium hotels; a private collection of world-renowned luxury ranches; 50 locally relevant, award-winning restaurants; and 10 market-leading rooftop bars. White Lodging focuses on hiring and developing hospitalitarians that are committed to exceptional service and fostering meaningful connections. White Lodging is the second highest in the 2021 J.D. Power Guest Satisfaction Benchmark for third-party management companies, and has been near the top since the first benchmark was published. For more information about White Lodging, visit [www.whitelodging.com](http://www.whitelodging.com) or follow the company on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/24597), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/whitelodging/) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/whitelodging/).