

Montreal Beach Resort

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can fully enjoy his summers for the first time and be fully present as his young family grows up.”

Memories remain

The sale of his family legacy leaves Hirsch with only the memories of the property.

“My memories of growing up are practically built into the walls of that place,” he said. “The lobby used to be my grandfather’s kitchen, where he would host Friday night dinners for the grandkids, with the indispensable help of his longtime right-hand, Marie.”

Hirsch said it’s a strange feeling not to call the Montreal his home anymore. Along with his brother, Jonathon, he recalls being pushed by the housekeepers in linen carts; he remembers his “Pop-pop” calling everyone “chief” and “sweetheart” because he couldn’t remember names; he remembers chatting with the Orr family from Syracuse, N.Y., who reserved the same block of rooms every year since the 1970s; and he remembers the roof bar at Harry’s when it used to be a sundeck, where his father, Larry Hirsch, would host an annual Fourth of July barbecue and scavenger hunt.

Hirsch said owning a vacation resort also came with the headaches, backaches and heartaches of operating a business.

“I may have my rose-hued glasses on right now, but I’m surely not blinded to the sacrifices that had to be made to make the Montreal what it would become,” he said.

While reflecting upon the sale of



Scenes of the Montreal Beach Resort in former days.

Provided

the business, Hirsch said he wonders what his grandfather Harry would think about the decision to sell the business he worked tirelessly to build.

“I don’t know, but I do suspect I know what my grandmother Sophie would have thought,” he said. “Few know that, in the early ’70s, the two of them had bought a little place in Florida near the beach, furnished it and planned to sell the motel and retire.”

Sophie Hirsch died from cancer a few years later and never retired to Florida. Harry Hirsch sold the Florida home and went back to work.

“They had earned [retirement

since] they both escaped the horrors of Nazi-occupied Poland, toiled for decades to build something great from not much at all,” Hirsch said. “My grandfather channeled his grief into the business. The success was born out of loss.”

Many Montreal employees worked with the family for years, some as long as decades.

“Some had kids during their time with us, and some of those kids ended up working at the Montreal, too,” Hirsch said. “Something meaningful kept them there, something bigger than a paycheck. I hope they felt we cared for them because we did and very much still do.”

Annual family vacations

Many families visit Cape May every year. The Hirsch family watched as customers grew up, got married and had kids.

“I became quite close with some families, maintaining relationships I keep until this day,” Hirsch said. “Fortunately, I get to keep those and I’m deeply grateful for that.”

Despite the sale of the property, the Hirsch family legacy continues with their other property, the Boarding House, as well as their commercial real estate business, The Hirsch Group.

“Though it was always our anchor, this place allowed me to

go out and sail on my own, try something entirely new, and to be reassured that I could always come home, knowing someone would leave a light on for me,” he said.

Cape May will always be a part of the Hirsch family’s DNA.

“One of these days, I’ll stroll the promenade with my own children, regaling them with lengthy tales of what it was like to be a child myself, riding those linen carts through the corridors of the beachfront hotel my family ran for nearly six decades. ‘You see that place over there? Your great-grandparents built that.’ Indeed, it’s a very long story. I’ll need a very long time to tell it.”

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