

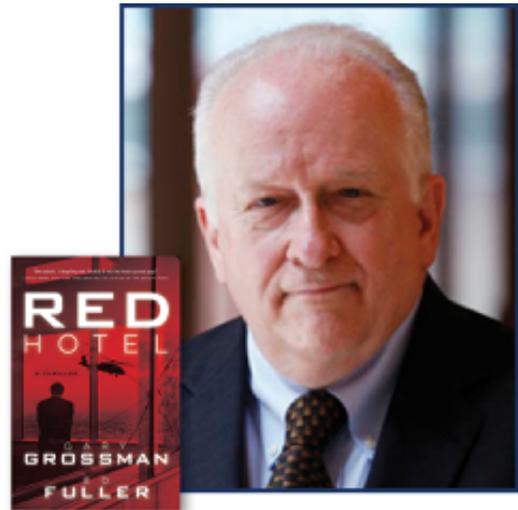
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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

CalTravel member Ed Fuller, President and CEO of Orange County Visitors Association, President of Laguna Strategic Advisors, and new thriller author, was interviewed by Mary Jo Ginther, Director of Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism.



You seem to have quite the varied background, from hotels to tourism to thriller book author! What took you from one area of interest to the next?

I was very fortunate to enjoy the unique career that I had with Marriott International. The 40 years included two significant positions which gave me opportunities to explore the world and develop relationships in over 100 countries as Chief Marketing Officer and later in my career as President and Managing Director of all operations (22 years) outside the USA & Canada. I also supervised operations in Hawaii for 23 years. Security and safety was the number one priority, which resulted in the creation of our Crisis System. We dealt with bombings, kidnappings, governments being overthrown, typhoons, tsunamis, and numerous other challenges which face hotel operations. We worked with presidents, kings, princesses, princes, and significant executives throughout the world. While working for Marriott, I wrote a business book [You can't Lead with Your Feet on the Desk](#) published by Wiley in the USA, China, and Japan. With my retirement (repurposed), I started consulting and working as an adjunct professor. As CEO of

the Orange County Visitors Association, I continue to market globally. I had several adventures and experiences which led me to writing [Red Hotel](#). My writing skills worked for my business book; however, I need a partner (Gary Grossman) to write a thriller....

After 40 years with Marriott, you started your own strategic consulting business – that’s quite a leap. Do you have any advice for those looking to begin their own businesses in or outside our industry?

Consulting is a difficult business until you have gained extensive experience. The lodging hospitality business is so complex and undergoing dramatic change. I recommend that experience with a professional consulting company, a master’s degree, and experience with one or two major companies is the only path for a young potential consultant. Extensive experience and a strong network of relationships is the best route for anyone making the change in the latter point of a career. The fun has been learning a new area of my career, my entrance into destination marketing.

Writing a novel is certainly different from running a tourism bureau....what is the process that you use in writing a novel, and how do you find the time to actually write?

Writing the business book was assembling my philosophies about global management and leadership. Placing my trip reports into various categories and sharing my stories and philosophies. Writing a novel required the help of my co-author Gary Grossman who has five thrillers and was a career producer of documentaries. We were both graduates of Boston University and were introduced by a BU friend and screenwriter and author. We spent almost a year and a half creating the characters and story of the first book [Red Hotel](#) which will be distributed in stores on March 19th. We should have completed the second book by May. We spent an exceptional amount of time in LA and Orange County, usually at hotels talking. We did

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did not want to use a ghost writer. I am a type A personality, just ask my wife Michela. We found the time between evenings, weekends, etc.

We’ve heard of authors who now “self-publish”, but yours is an actual book deal. How did you make this happen?

The fact is that 70%+ of the books today are self-published. I had such a positive experience with the Wiley Publishers and the support I received from them led me to seek a publisher that worked with fiction. I found an agent who helped find Wiley and another agent who helped me find Beaufort Books.

When my son was a Boy Scout, we spent a weekend at the Oso Lake Scout Camp, and I discovered a beautiful side of Orange County – canyon hiking, etc., that I hadn't known before. We've since gone back to several of the canyons to hike when the weather is hot here in Palm Springs. Do you have any "local favorites" that you'd recommend to CalTravel members who are visiting your part of the world?

Orange County is the heart of Southern California. The county provides a setting that everyone thinks about when they think of California (except snow). We have fun (42 miles of beaches and two fabulous harbors). We are the headquarters for every water sport, ranging from whale watching to Duffy boats that you can captain yourself. As you described, we have a wide variety of outside experiences from hiking, golfing, horseback riding, biking, etc. One of our cities is "Surf City". We have three world-famous shopping malls (South Coast Plaza, Fashion Island and the Spectrum). We also have two outlet malls and several community malls. We have a wide range of hotels and resorts including several five star resorts on the ocean, two of which have 18 holes of golf. Our culinary offerings are totally unique because of the authentic ethnic restaurants, five star cuisine, and locations overlooking the ocean as well as the OC. Our cultural attractions include many boutique and university theaters as well as the world-renowned Segerstrom Center, which features Broadway shows, our own symphony, major productions and opera. Of course we have two entertainment theme parks, Knott's Berry Farm and the original Disneyland Resort which will open Star Wars Land on May 31st. We have everything you could want. If you headquarter your travel in the OC (authentic California), you are a little over an hour to Beverly Hills, Universal Studios, LEGOLAND, SeaWorld, and the San Diego Zoo and its Safari Park. We feature the Orange County Airport offering air service from Mexico, Canada, the East Coast, and most major cities in the West. The heart of California, the OC is the place to be.

Anything else you'd like to add?

[Red Hotel](#) is a fun read, a thriller, set in a tourism environment. It's available today on Barnesandnoble.com and Amazon, and is designed to entertain the reader...Enjoy!