



An Exclusive *Robb Report* Listing of Influential People in Luxury Businesses

by Janice Stillman

Who are the people who set the styles? Who are the innovators, the ones who lead where others follow? Here are 21 of the most influential people in the top luxury businesses.

They come from all walks of life, with all kinds of backgrounds. Each one has a singular vision, a unique talent. They dare to be different, and rarely compromise their standards. They are innovative, are frequently perceived as pioneers, and often redefine their fields. They are the people whose ideas transcend the trends, the ones who influence the luxury businesses, services, and professions that affect all our lives.

But who exactly are they? To find out, we made dozens of phone calls, talked to dozens of people, and did a lot of research. When we were finished, we had identified 21 individuals who influence a variety of luxury businesses.

Before we unveil our Club 21, however, we should point out that this is an elite club, but not an exclusive one; there are other people and other spheres of influence that could be included in our list, though not many. We discovered in assembling this gallery of prominent individuals that success, even when measured in millions of dollars, does not ensure influence—but influence, for these 21, has sealed their success.

Here, then, in alphabetical order, is *Robb Report's* Club 21.



Giorgio Armani

Not since Adam donned a fig leaf has an individual had more influence on the way men and women cover their bodies. In 1975, reacting to what he has described as the "square, boxy, and rigid" design of men's jackets, Giorgio Armani introduced the unconstructed blazer. With this, his signature piece, he turned the fashion world inside out. He eliminated the stiff linings and abandoned traditional suitings, replacing them with soft, sumptuous fabrics that drape the body, lending comfort, not conformity. In striving for simplicity, Armani achieved sophistication—and garnered the loyalty of legions.

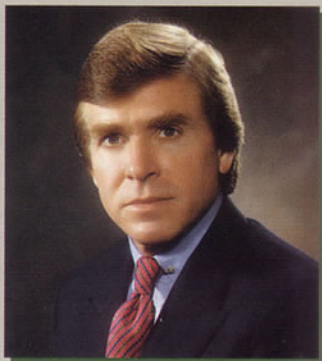
For a brief period early in his life, "dressing" had a different connotation for Milanese Armani. He spent two years in medical school before entering the fashion world as a buyer. That was followed by several years as a designer for hire. Legend has it that the seed money to start his own label came from the sale of a used Volkswagen—and what a garden it grew.

Today, the 60-year-old Armani wholly owns and heads an international fashion empire with estimated retail sales of about \$1.5 billion in 1993. Though his garments are distinguished by their relaxed form, the man himself is no slouch.

Dr. Sherrell J. Aston

For the beholder, beauty is in the eyes, the cheeks, and the chin—especially if the observer happens to be aesthetic plastic surgeon Sherrell J. Aston.

The Manhattan-based Aston was among the first to perform



skin-crafting procedures that are currently at the cutting edge of aesthetic, or "cosmetic," plastic surgery. Practicing a technique introduced in the mid-1970s by a Swedish surgeon, Aston became a pioneer in the two-layer face-lift, a procedure which requires repositioning facial muscles, fat, and tissues rather than simply stretching and tightening the skin. That and other face-saving techniques have brought Aston a distinguished clientele as well as the respect of his peers.

Aston also achieved recognition for introducing a new wrinkle in post-op skin care. Après Aston is a professionally staffed clinic that helps patients maintain a healthy afterglow.

Although Aston specializes in transforming body parts above the shoulders, he can enhance virtually any part of the anatomy. Whether he takes years off a face or pounds off a frame, only this plastic surgeon and the patient know for sure.

Jon Bannenburg

If a wealthy man's home is his castle, then his yacht should be his floating palace. That's the philosophy of Jon Bannenburg, the man who first transformed big, inelegant boats into sleek, sophisticated seagoing status symbols.

While working as a home interior designer in England in 1965, Australian-born Bannenburg was invited to renovate a client's yacht. That opportunity launched him—and the boating industry—on a new course. Under his direction, the naval architect, the shipyard, and the interior designer worked as a team to ensure the client's interests were paramount. Equally radical were Bannenburg's design treatments, now commonplace on superyachts: sweeping, sensual lines; large windows in place of portholes; elevators; swimming pools and steam rooms; climate-controlled wine cellars and cinemas; helicopter pads and auto garages. He also



Club 21

supervised the procurement of everything from crew uniforms to closet hangers.

Bannenburg's influence can now be seen on some of the most exotic and expensive mega-yachts afloat. In addition to yacht design, he also accepts commissions for residences and aircraft, making his work visible from ship to shore and more.

Richard Branson

He commands a fleet of only 12 aircraft, yet the level of service and array of amenities provided by British entrepreneur Richard Branson on his London-based Virgin Atlantic Airways has forced the other major airlines to fall into formation with comparable offerings—or fall from favor with frequent



fliers. The founder and former owner of Virgin Records, Branson sold the label in 1992 for nearly a billion dollars and began making Virgin Atlantic Airways, which had made its first flight in 1984, the best ride in the sky. To that end, Virgin has led the airline industry in passenger perks. Scheduled to be airborne this year is a new \$19 million in-flight interactive entertainment system.

A counterculture hero in Great Britain, Branson is also that country's most famous entrepreneur. A high school dropout, his first venture was the magazine *Student*. That led to a scheme to sell records through the mail and, ultimately, the "Virgin" birth. He was a millionaire by age 23, but being the best in a business—not financial reward—has always been his primary motivation.

Hardly the novice his corporate moniker would imply, Branson, like his fleet, is in the air for the long haul.

A "curtain call" for interior designer Mario Buatta is usually a cue to begin a performance rather than end one, since such a signal inspires him to "Buattify" a room from floor to ceiling.



Mario Buatta

Buatta describes his signature design treatment, an interpretation of the English country style, as "the undecorated look." It encompasses an artful arrangement of contemporary and antique furnishings chosen to look as though they have been assembled over a lifetime—slipcover, curtain, and cushion ensembles of textures, patterns, and stripes, lushly complemented with ruffles, bows, and fringes in richly painted rooms. Busy? Yes, he is.

During a career that has spanned more than three decades, Buatta has been draped in awards. His work has graced the pages of virtually all of the major interior design magazines and a number of books on the subject. His client list reads like a Who's Who of socialites and celebrities, but the impact he's had behind other closed doors has been more than he can measure: Retail sales of Buatta's five chintz fabric lines and two books of wallpapers and borders of his own design, as well as related home furnishings and accessories, run into the millions. He can bring the house down—by raising its interior design to a higher style.

Sean Driscoll

A co-owner of Glorious Food, a New York City catering company, Sean Driscoll knows that long after the crumbs have been swept away, the flavor of an event lingers in the mind.

No ordinary party planner, Driscoll produces every tasteful affair with panache and perfection. Since his company's inception in 1971, Driscoll's brand of showmanship and culinary fine art has been toasted in towns from coast to coast, notably at Ronald Reagan's 1985 inaugural luncheon and Caroline Kennedy's wedding reception, as well as at countless museum galas, in corporate boardrooms, and even on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier.

Driscoll developed a taste for being a kitchen commander when a friend who was a chef asked for his assistance with an event. Before long, Driscoll had abandoned his day job as a television commercial producer for the dinner circuit. Since then, he has assumed the role of executive director, overseeing an army of wait staff and supervising a cadre of account executives who script the meals and choreograph the food service sequences.

His magic chef and co-partner, Jean Claude Nédélec, was previously with the Plaza Hotel. Together, they make food, Glorious Food.

Dr. Ronald E. Goldstein



Ronald Goldstein is described by his peers as the architect of aesthetic dental care in America. He likes to make people smile, and he is one of the best at what he does.

The skills of the Atlanta, Ga.-based dentist have also made an impression on more public personalities. Among his clients are celebrities from film and television, sports, and politics. But his involvement with the entertainment industry doesn't end there; his special-effects dental services have been engaged to "make up" actors for various roles.

An advocate of the use of state-of-the-art technology in tooth care, repair, and maintenance, Goldstein employs many advanced systems in diagnosis and treatment. One of those—computer imaging—enables patients to preview the effects of specific procedures.

Now in its second edition, Goldstein's book, *Change Your Smile*, has opened the minds and mouths of thousands of people to the benefits of dental repair and restoration. He has also made significant contributions to the research and testing of new composite materials, and has invented several

dental instruments. His lectures and presentations on revolutionary techniques and technology have enlightened dental professionals around the world to the ways happy faces can make happy lives.

Barry Keiselstein-Cord

Early in his career, Barry Keiselstein-Cord never thought his future was in the bag. Today, however, the handbags he designs are high fashion, and some of his belts, buckles, and baubles are considered high art.

Keiselstein-Cord began his creative career in advertising, winning awards at several major agencies as an art director in the 1960s. A two-year sojourn in Europe followed—"my graduate school," he says. Upon returning to New York City, he enrolled in a six-week jewelry-making course. The instructor, unimpressed with his work, suggested he quit the craft.

But there were sunnier days ahead for Keiselstein-Cord, as evidenced by the reception given his sterling silver winking Ol Sol buckles shining forth from alligator-skin belts. Similarly, his Pompeii jewelry collection caused an eruption among the most fashion-forward when it debuted.

However, it's leather handbags that have brought Keiselstein-Cord notoriety in the '90s. Animal-themed to include alligators, snakes, dogs, squirrels, horses, and toads, many feature paws on their bases and animal profiles on the handles and at the clasps. Keiselstein-Cord's creations have been lauded by the fashion industry, but the jewel in his professional crown may be the fact that some of his creations are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Love him or loathe him, Robin Leach personifies the glamour and glitz of life at the top. Through his television program, *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, seen by more than 200 million viewers



Robin Leach

in over 40 countries, and its spinoffs, *Runaway with the Rich and Famous* and *The Rich and Famous World's Best*, the indefatigable 52-year-old executive producer, managing editor, and host has created an awareness and appreciation of wealth and the luxuries it affords by visiting mansions, palaces, and exotic destinations worldwide. The globe-trotting Leach travels up to 300 days and over 250,000 miles each year to interview the most exciting people, experience the most extravagant events, and explore the most expensive hide-aways in the world.

Ever extolling champagne wishes and caviar dreams, the former tabloid reporter turned tele-visionary also specializes in dishing them up. Leach recently authored a best-selling collection of recipes titled *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous Cookbook*, featuring favorite foods and entertaining secrets from more than 50 celebrities. He hosts a one-hour program, *Talking Food*, seen on The Food Network, and his most recent book project, *Entertaining with the Rich and Famous*, was recently released on CD-ROM. When money talks, Robin Leach listens.

Luca Cordero di Montezemolo

Ferrari's prancing horse has long been a leader in the exotic car market, and the man who has been leading the company's charge since 1991 is chairman, president, and chief executive officer of Ferrari S.p.A., Luca Cordero di Montezemolo. Most observers agree that Montezemolo has re-energized the marque and has given Ferraristi a reason to be passionate again about the cars they love. Under Montezemolo's leadership, Ferrari has also been aggressive in bringing out new models, including the 456GT; the F355, successor to the 348; and the successor to the F40, the F130 Barchetta, which is still officially under wraps.

Born in Bologna, Italy, Montezemolo graduated from the University of Rome in 1971 with a law degree and furthered his education at Columbia University in New York, where he specialized in international business law. His first important professional experience was acquired at Ferrari, where, as manager of the company's racing department, he brought Niki Lauda to success in the World Championship of Drivers in 1975 and '77. He then became director of public relations for the FIAT Group, and later occupied a series of posts as director of publishing companies belonging to the Group.

Montezemolo took part in motor sports during his university years and, in 1981, served as managing director of Team *Azzurra*, Italy's first entry in the America's Cup. From 1985 to 1990, he was general director of the organizing committee of the Italia '90 Football World Cup. Like Ferrari automobiles, the man has the competitive edge.

Oribe

His services are sought by some of the world's most beautiful women because he can tame their locks and create the looks they love. Oribe Canales, who goes by his given name (pronounced Or-EE-bay), has the hottest scissor-hands in haute coiffure.

The 37-year-old Cuban-born, North Carolina-raised haircutter and stylist tends to the tresses of the world's top models, as well as a bevy of celebrities,

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socialites, and professional types. Recently he added Chanel to his clipboard, the first American hair stylist ever selected by the French fashion house.

So busy is Oribe curling and combing at fashion photo shoots, shows, and movie sets that he works only two days a week at his New York City studio, part of the Elizabeth Arden Salon—but he is not too busy to be booked. Newcomers should allow three to six months to secure a first appointment and expect to pay \$250—or nothing at all—for at least an hour of individual attention. Oribe's regular clients occasionally get preferential treatment, in which case those who wait are not charged.

Once ensconced in the salon's 18th-century Venetian elegance and grandeur, clients are transformed—made "sexy" if they are women, "heroic" if they are men. A wash, clip, and comb, plus a breathtaking 10th-floor view of Fifth Avenue—that's a good hair day.

Alain-Dominique Perrin

The brilliance of the legendary jeweler Cartier is a reflection of its chairman and chief executive officer, Alain-Dominique Perrin. His career path was seemingly precision-cut. In 1969, as a recent graduate of the prestigious business college École des Cadres et des Affaires Économiques, Perrin joined Cartier as a commercial attaché. By 1976 he had become the president of Les Must de Cartier, the line of leather goods, eyewear, fragrance, pens, and accessories which he created and introduced. When Cartier Jewelers and Les Must de Cartier merged to become Cartier International in 1981, Perrin became its president.

After the acquisition of watchmakers Piaget and Baume & Mercier by the Cartier group in 1988, Perrin became president of the new holding company, PBM International.

Leading one of the world's most renowned jewelry empires is only one facet of Perrin's life, however. At his estate and vineyard in Cahors, France, he produces Château La Grezette, a red wine, and he serves as Grand Master of the Brotherhood of Wine of

Cahors. He is also a passionate collector of art and convertible automobiles, and an avid outdoorsman who enjoys horseback-riding, polo, tennis, and sailing. A polished individual, Perrin shines in any setting.

Harold "Skip" Phillips

Skip Phillips is in a business that's over his head, but he wouldn't have it any other way. President of Questar Pools and Spas, he is a leading authority on the design, construction, and maintenance of backyard water wonderlands.

Today's swimming pools are much more than splashy private playgrounds; they are artful waterworks or otherworldly waterscapes. Among the most popular and sophisticated pool treatments is the vanishing edge—an optical illusion also known as the knife edge, the negative edge, the disappearing edge, or the infinity design. Having been built in France as early as 1870, that design style is not new, but its technical aspects have been refined by Phillips.

Prior to diving into pools and spas, Phillips assisted in the manufacture of precision measuring instruments for

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the aerospace industry. He now brings an out-of-this-world, high-tech perspective to his pool and spa installations. While many of his projects are visually dramatic and have garnered a flood of awards, not all are built with out-of-sight water features. Using natural or simulated rock, he creates "natural" designs which blend in with their surroundings.

Phillips strives to keep his clients satisfied—within technical boundaries, of course. You could say much of his success is owed to his fluid mind.

Natale Rusconi

Natale Rusconi was literally born into the hotel business. Sixty-nine years ago, his mother delivered him in the Argentina, a small third-class hotel in Milan, Italy, that belonged to his grandfather. Later he lived in another family-owned hotel in Rapallo, Italy, that was frequented by such colorful and controversial figures as Ezra Pound, Sinclair Lewis, and Eva Perón. Playing host to well-heeled and well-known world travelers was Rusconi's destiny.

Today, he is the general manager of Venice's Cipriani Hotel, considered by many to be one of the world's finest hotels—thanks to him. Erudite, urbane, and unflappable, he is equally at ease with princes or politicians, dowagers or dilettantes, rock stars or recluses. He holds a doctoral degree in literature and philosophy and is an expert on wine and food. During a 17-year-long association with the CIGA luxury hotel chain, he rose to the peak of prominence in the hospitality industry when, as general manager, he restored the reputation of Rome's Grand Hotel.

Rusconi's success stems from anticipating and providing what guests want. His meticulous attention to details has earned him star-studded acclaim. The consummate host, he believes that guests should be amused and entertained during a visit. It is a practice he has perfected—without reservation.

Elbert "Burt" Rutan

When Burt Rutan began flying in 1959, even he couldn't have known just how high he would soar. Today,

as one of America's most inventive design engineers, he is taking the design of aircraft—and other modes of transportation—to new heights.

In 1972, after seven years as a flight test engineer, Rutan formed Rutan Aircraft Factory and introduced designs for high-performance kit planes. Some 9,000 sets of plans were sold, and many of the resulting airplanes are still flying. Concurrently, he began to develop a number of prototype composite aircraft, which in 1982 led to the establishment of another company, Scaled Composites, dedicated to R and D, including aircraft design, fabrication, and flight test.

Many of Rutan's programs are top secret; others have been sky-high headlines. He developed the *Voyager*, the first aircraft to fly around the globe without refueling; the 85 percent scale *Starship 1*, Beech Aircraft Corp.'s high-tech business plane; the *Predator*, a reconnaissance aircraft for California Microwave Inc.; the all-graphite warbird chaser *Pond Racer* for Bob Pond; and the pressurized gondola for the *Earthwinds* round-the-world balloon flight. Other programs include the



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The revolver pictured here was used by Frank McLaurry at O.K. Corral. Its complete history, matching serial #'s, and affidavit documentation from Frank McLaurry's niece, prove it to be the second gun recovered from O.K. Corral—and make it a significant piece of 19th century Western history.

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Ultralite, a 1992 General Motors concept car, and wing sails for the 1988 America's Cup challenge.

The 50-year-old Rutan has been awarded several patents for his innovations and has been recognized by his peers and the public for missions which many thought impossible.

Marvin R. Shanken

Three years ago, magazine entrepreneur Marvin Shanken began to wonder if others shared his passion for premium cigars. To measure interest, he ran an ad in *The Wine Spectator*, one of several magazines he owns.

Less than a year later, M. Shanken Communications Inc. published the first issue of *Cigar Aficionado*, a glossy quarterly magazine for and about lovers of the leaf. The publication has been so successful that critics of the concept are now ashen, while the 50-year-old Shanken is glowing.

The son of a New Haven, Conn., jeweler, Shanken is an unlikely bon vivant. After graduating at the bottom of his class from the University of Miami

and earning an M.B.A. at American University, he became an investment banker. It was a brief but fruitful career: Financial deals involving vineyards led to his infatuation with wines.

In 1972, Shanken paid \$5,000 for *Impact*, a wine and spirits newsletter with 200 subscribers. In 1979 he bought *The Wine Spectator*, which had a circulation of 3,000 and lots of red ink.

Today, *Impact*, with its sister publications, *Impact International* and *Market Watch*, is one of the bibles of the liquor industry, and *The Wine Spectator* has become the world's most popular consumer wine magazine. *Food Arts Magazine* completes Shanken's media menu.

Food, fine wines and spirits, and, of course, cigars—the finish but hardly the end.

Ivor Spencer

Kings and queens adhere to his prescribed protocol. CEOs heed his personnel advice. Celebrities applaud the talents of his household staff. In matters domestic, Ivor Spencer is the major general of major domos.

Some 14 years ago, Spencer established a school for individuals who are not to the manners born yet who wish to dedicate their lives to the performance of domestic service. At the Ivor Spencer International School for Butler Administrators/Personal Assistants in London, Spencer personally trains men and occasionally women, ages 17 to 60, in the white-gloved ways of domestic service. A professional toastmaster and master of ceremonies for 37 years, he is an expert on etiquette in the British tradition.

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Deborah Szekely

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the Essene School of Life in Tecate, Mexico, in 1940, being fit wasn't fashionable. The practices and philosophies they espoused—retreating to a rural environment, eating a vegetarian diet, performing physical exercises to music, limiting the body's exposure to the sun, and pondering the harmony of body, mind, and soul—were considered unconventional, even cultish.

Today, the philosophies and programs advocated by the Szekelys (pronounced Zay-kay) compose the core of regimens offered at the world's best spas. The pair—he a Hungarian Renaissance man, she the Brooklyn-born, Tahitian-raised daughter of an early disciple of vegetarianism—are generally recognized within the spa industry as having created the standard by which all other fitness spas are modeled.

Rechristened Rancho La Puerta, the "ranch of the door," and thoroughly modernized, their original health camp is now a full-scale resort attracting an international roster of devotees. In 1958, the couple opened the Golden Door in Escondido, Calif., universally acknowledged as one of the most innovative fitness resorts in the world.

Szekely has served on three U.S. presidential administrations' councils on physical fitness. Now 71 years old, she believes that "spa" is an acronym for "self-preservation association," one to which she maintains an open-door policy.

Jeremiah Tower

Among true foodies, there is a guiding star and there are the shining Stars. Jeremiah Tower is the first; his galaxy of restaurants is the second.

Harvard-educated as an architect, Tower began his meteoric rise in the kitchen as co-owner and chef at Chez Pannise in Berkeley, Calif., in 1972. One day, while experimenting with a recipe for garbanzo bean flour pancakes, he substituted leftovers for the "boring topping" recommended. With that, he began the gourmet pizza. In another period of culinary curiosity, he forsook imported foods and exotic influences to create a menu featuring (eureka!) locally grown ingredients. Dubbed the California Regional Diner and described as "American food

using French principles," it was an immediate palate-pleaser. In due course, Tower was christened the father of California cuisine.

He went on to wear the top toque at several other restaurants before shooting off on his own to open Stars Restaurant in San Francisco in 1984. Under his direction, other points of light soon burst on the scene: the neighboring Stars Cafe and, more recently, Stars Oakville Cafe, from which Tower is originating the new California style, "the Napa Country Aesthetic." Looming large on the horizon is Stars Restaurant in Palo Alto, scheduled to open in early '95.

This year, the Chefs in America Awards Foundation recognized Tower as 1994's USA Chef of the Year. It is but one in a long list of stellar awards and accolades.

Don Williams

A pivotal figure in the classic car market, Don Williams probably buys and sells more million-dollar cars than anyone else in the business. Annually, he handles an average of \$50 million worth of classic car sales.

The 49-year-old Williams, who is president of the World Classic Auction & Exposition Company, learned the art of the deal from entrepreneur Sam Bergman, with whom he became associated at age 18 in 1963. Five years later, the pair opened one of the first collectible car stores west of the Mississippi. In the early 1970s, Williams bought into and ultimately bought out a dealership called Automotive Classics. At the same time he began producing California's first collector car auctions, which led to an association with Tom Barrett III and the annual Barrett/Jackson Auction, a premier auto event.

In 1981, Williams assembled his first—and one of the world's greatest—private car collections, the Behring Museum, funded by real estate developer Ken Behring. That experience led to the formation of the Blackhawk Collection and, ultimately, World Classic two years ago. Through the latter organization, along with associates Rick Cole and Richie Clyne, Williams stages several of the world's largest and most prestigious classic car auctions.

As though in constant overdrive, Williams travels the world in search of one-of-a-kind classic automobiles or pre-World War II limited-production model cars. He has said that the three most important words in the collector car business are "rare, rare, rare." The same could be said of himself.

Stephen A. Wynn

Here's how the new West was won: In 1967, Steve Wynn, formerly the manager of a family bingo business in Maryland, strode into Glitter Gulch, the nickname of Las Vegas' main street. In 1972, with profits made from a real estate transaction between himself and corporate cowboy Howard Hughes, Wynn bought a small casino called the Golden Nugget.

For the auspiciously named Wynn, that deal proved to be the first strike on the mother lode. In 1973, he was named president and chairman of the board of Golden Nugget Inc. (now a subsidiary of Wynn's Mirage Resorts Inc.), and in the years since, he has dramatically and forever changed the landscape of Las Vegas.

In 1989, Wynn opened the first major new resort casino to be built in Las Vegas in 15 years—the \$630 million Mirage. With its main attractions—a volcano, white tigers, a dolphin pool, and a world-class, invitation-only golf course—he upped the ante on entertainment value and tamed the town, making it family-friendly.

But he still hadn't played all his cards. In October 1993, Wynn lowered the gangplank on Treasure Island, a full-scale, Disneyesque destination resort casino featuring a pirate theme, complete with 80-foot-long pirate ships that "sink" in battle.

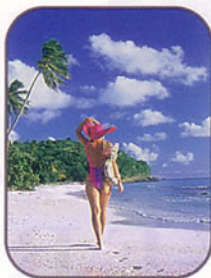
Future projects include development of the 164-acre Dunes Hotel & Country Club in Las Vegas, purchased for \$70 million in January 1993, and, pending provincial approval, development of a \$550 million convention center, cruise ship terminal, casino, and resort hotel in Vancouver, B.C. Talk about a Wynnning streak.

Janice Stillman is senior editor of Robb Report.

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