

An Iconic Hollywood Boutique Hotel

An Interview with Scott A. Mills, General Manager, The Garland

EDITORS' NOTE Scott Mills is General Manager of The Garland (thegarland.com) in North Hollywood. Mills joined the management team at The Beverly Garland Hotel in 2013 with more than 20 years of extensive experience in the hospitality industry. Prior to this appointment, Mills held senior management positions with luxury and lifestyle leaders including Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, The Siegel Group, and Viceroy Hotel Group. He also served as general manager of The Chamberlain in West Hollywood, The Avalon Beverly Hills, and The Oceana in Santa Monica, and as food and beverage director at the Four Seasons Hotel Silicon Valley and The Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills.



Scott A. Mills

Will you discuss your career journey?

My hospitality career literally started at birth – I was born into the industry, and my first memories are being a small child enjoying various hotels and restaurants with my parents while both traveling and also tagging along

with my dad. My father was in the business and had me constantly by his side. On weekends, I would go with him to his office at the hotel and “explore” all the offices of the execs as well as visit my favorite place in the hotel – the pastry shop. My first paying job in hospitality was a bus person when I was 14 years old. From there I did many hourly positions throughout high school and college. Those hourly jobs over nearly nine years really built a great foundation and knowledge base of what hospi-

talities is all about. Besides bussing tables at the start, I moved around various hotels, restaurants, casinos, resorts, and tourist attractions filling roles including valet parking attendant, bell person, front desk agent, pbx operator, housekeeping room inspector, utility engineer, food runner, food server, host, bartender, and marketing host. College took me to the hospitality program at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) and I was recruited by Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts to start my management career right after graduation at the Four



The Garland lobby

Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills. I was considered a “direct placement” in the food and beverage track – where there was no management trainee program. I was just thrown in the deep end and due to all my prior experience it worked. My first job post-college was an assistant manager running in-room dining. I excelled quickly and in less than a year I was offered the assistant banquet manager position. In that role for a little over a year, I was promoted again to the banquet director role overseeing many high-profile events and movie press junkets. Knowing I wanted to be a general manager, I then accepted the role of director of restaurants to oversee the dining outlets Gardens, Café and Windows Lounge. Within a year I was sent to the Four Seasons Resort Dallas at Las Colinas in the capacity of assistant food and beverage director. After a little over a year, I took the unique role of club director of food and beverage at the resort. I desired to get back to the west coast and got transferred to the *Pretty Woman* hotel – the Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills. After a little over two years, I was offered the role of director of food and beverage for a new opening – the Four Seasons East Palo Alto, Silicon Valley. That was a great experience to be part of the pre-opening and opening exec team. After nearly 11 years with Four Seasons, life was calling and I headed back to Los Angeles to be with my family as well as to take over a soon to re-open boutique luxury hotel in Santa Monica in the general manager role. About six months into that new adventure, the Viceroy Hotel Group (formerly Kor Group) recruited me to Beverly Hills to be the general manager of their iconic Avalon Hotel. After a few years there I took on the project of



Dive In Movies at The Garland pool

renovating and repositioning another hotel in the Viceroy portfolio – the Chamberlain West Hollywood. After a successful renovation and two property sales, I decided it was time to try my own thing.

I started my own hospitality consulting and management business with the dream of one day launching my own hotel. I had a client in Las Vegas with five diverse properties that required me to be in Las Vegas 50 percent of the time each month. After a year and a half of that journey, I decided it was time to come back home permanently to Los Angeles. I then took on a unique project to re-imagine and re-launch a family owned asset in North Hollywood – now known as The Garland. I initially thought it would be a three-year project – now over 13 years later, I'm still here and it's my second home with my second family.

Will you provide an overview of The Garland?

Time has only improved this iconic Hollywood boutique hotel in the heart of Los Angeles. In 1970, legendary Hollywood actress Beverly Garland, and her husband Fillmore Crank, discovered this bucolic seven-acre property and knew they wanted to create a hideaway for friends, family and guests. Together with Las Vegas hotel impresario, John Kell Houssels Jr., they decided to build one of the most stunning hotels in North Hollywood which would serve as an oasis within the high-energy excitement of Los Angeles. Chic, relaxed and centrally located, guests here are close to Hollywood landmarks, popular attractions and world-renowned business epicenters, all while being ensconced within the urban paradise the Garland family created. Today, The Garland has been re-imagined and renovated with a hip new restaurant, cool décor, manicured outdoor parks, incredible programming – all

lending itself to an authentic Los Angeles experience on a seven-acre campus of indoor and outdoor play. Check in and check out one of the most glamorous hotels near Universal Studios Hollywood – “Just past Hollywood – first house on the left.” Local favorite The Front Yard restaurant has always taken pride in offering a neighborhood dining experience that is as comfortable and casual as an evening at an old friend's home. Sit back and enjoy a morning, afternoon or evening under the sycamores – we'll take care of the rest.

What do you feel has been the key to the strength and leadership of the property?

Authentic hospitality, integrity, and a commitment to doing right by both guests and associates form the foundation of being an employer of choice and creating a workplace that is both fun and safe. Treating associates (employees) like guests and patrons further supports our mission to graciously host our actual guests and patrons. Having ownership that believes in people and consistently does the right thing is key. The classic concept of “The Golden Rule,” which I learned long ago from Isadore Sharp, the founder of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, has stood the test of time in our industry: treat others the way you wish to be treated.

How has The Garland approached its restaurant/food and beverage offerings?

When we first launched The Front Yard, our goal was to position it as a standalone neighborhood restaurant, fully separate from the hotel and embraced by the local community and that has absolutely worked. The concept is rooted in an approachable, everyday dining experience: a place for happy hour with coworkers, date nights, family brunches, and holidays where we take care of the cooking. At its core, The Garland and The Front Yard

are inspired by Los Angeles, from the full indoor-outdoor design that reflects the city's lifestyle to a beverage program focused on California craft beers and wines that stay true to our local DNA. We also celebrate Los Angeles' diverse food culture through playful, familiar offerings like a poolside taco cart and bacon-wrapped hot dogs.

For in-room dining, we've moved away from traditional room service in favor of a more casual, elevated to-go style with sustainable packaging. And for catering and banquets, all food and beverage is prepared through The Front Yard to ensure the same quality and culinary identity carries through every guest experience.

What does luxury mean to you in today's hospitality landscape?

Luxury in today's hospitality landscape is really all about the experience and the memories related to that experience. A crisp, fun and casually elegant service experience is much better received than an overly formal and stiff white-glove service. Luxury has shifted from what is seen on the cover to what the guest truly experiences and remembers from a stay.

What has made the hospitality industry so special for you?

To me, this industry is a lifestyle. It's the most fun way to experience life – yes plenty of work and 24/7 – but there are so many unique opportunities and experiences that come with the gig, along with meeting amazing people along the way – both guests and colleagues, and enjoying amazing travel and dining as well as other events daily, weekly, monthly, annually – it never gets boring.

You devote your time to many community organizations. What has made community engagement so important to you?

Community engagement goes beyond the job – it's the right thing to do to support the community around us, to support nonprofits, organizations and other efforts that help our community thrive and be better for us all to work and live in. As a side benefit, engaging with the community enhances the reputation and local identity of the hotel and restaurant, and in turn is a business driver. We work, live and play in our local community, and wish it to be the most successful experience and lifestyle possible for everyone sharing our neighborhood.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the industry?

The hospitality industry is a lifestyle. You must be a “people person.” Success depends on how well you connect with people, not just perform tasks. Every role in this industry is driven by making someone feel welcomed and valued. The industry is a grind at times, however it is very rewarding and exciting. Every day is a different challenge and the variety is never-ending. Don't underestimate the importance of understanding the industry from the entry level up – dedicate time to build a solid foundation of experience as you progress through your career. And have fun always! ●



Beverly Garland Theatre at The Garland