

MANSION

IN THE TRENCHES | AMY GAMERMAN

How Two Pros Landed Jobs In Luxury

Q What led you to your position at an exclusive residential luxury tower?

AZIZ BENDRISS
General manager, 53 West 53,
New York City

I'm originally from Morocco. I was privileged to have access to his majesty, the king of Morocco, who at the time was King Hassan II. My mother was part of the royal entourage. I was 16 when I started to work at the palace. Everything has to be done right: even sweeping, even putting down slippers.

It was my responsibility to set up the desk. There is a place where the pen is, where the envelope opener is—everything that is on the desk. If his majesty wants the pen to be put on the middle of the desk, it isn't because it looks nice but because it's more convenient. I measured where the pen should be with a little piece of paper.

When his majesty traveled, we took the desk with us—a plexiglass desk with a symbol of Morocco in front. We would go 10 days early and prepare everything. We used to go to the Plaza Hotel and take the whole floor. You remove the toilets, you remove the TVs, you remove the chandeliers. It's for two reasons: safety and privacy. You don't know what's in that toilet. The only thing you leave is the carpet, and then you put a Moroccan rug down on top of it.

In 1985, I came to America to teach judo, which I was learning

while I worked at the palace.

I met the vice president of the Palace Hotel when I was competing on the New York Athletic Club's team. The next thing I know, I'm working for Leona Helmsley. People called her the Queen of Mean. I said, "No." I learned from Mrs. Helmsley. She had an eye for detail. If one window blind was 18 inches from the bottom and the other was 21 inches, she would see it from the street.

Later, I worked for the Ritz Carlton company. For 12 years, I opened Ritz Carltons across the world, from Germany to Key Biscayne to Istanbul. I worked for Christian Dior, training their staff. Then one day I got a call: "Can you please come and work with us at 53 West 53?"

When I walked in, the luxury of



PETE RYAN

each inch of the building made me feel like déjà vu, back to Morocco, back to the palace, back to royalty. When you meet the people buying here, it's not some budget person, it's someone who wants to enjoy luxury service. It's about creating a

unique and memorable experience every time. I will greet you, I will escort you. I want you to feel you are a very important person.

Back in Morocco, that's what we learned. All their royalty still know me by name. One of the

cousins is proud to say, "Aziz has gray hair because of me." When they are in New York, I'll go to the general manager of the hotel where they are staying and say, "Let me help you out, I know what they like."

ERIC JAUSERAN
Cultural & lifestyle coordinator,
Four Seasons Private Residences
One Dalton Street, Boston

I worked for 16 years for the French consulate in Boston. With so many prestigious cultural and academic institutions there, my main mission was really to help develop and create the next generation of Francophiles.

Of course, luxury is one element of why you become a Francophile. While I was at the embassy, a film about Coco Chanel came out in France. I did a screening at one of Harvard's yards. We rented a big screen and brought in a macaron

truck and watched it outside.

In 2019, I was ready to do something else, to connect people and promote events for a different industry. I knew the real-estate development team working on One Dalton, which was about to open. The developer was planning a party. I helped them curate a guest list of 800 people, to reach out to the desired audience for One Dalton. We worked on that for four months. After the party, I had the idea of creating luxury experiences for fu-

ture residents. The developer liked it and Four Seasons created a position for me. I proposed a sophisticated year-round calendar of

events. Then nine months later, the pandemic starts.

Our residents could no longer go to restaurants or museums. I thought, "OK, what we are going to do is bring their favorite things to their doorstep." Last summer, to give one example, we brought in an oyster farmer. We went door to door and, while keeping socially distant, offered fresh

oysters to each resident. While he's shucking, he's talking about where the oysters come from. Naturally, I offered Muscadet. We did it over two or three days. Then for New Year's Eve, we did it again, with the same shucker, from 11:30 in the morning till 10 p.m. He shucked 750 oysters that day.

In January, we offered classes in fencing with an Olympic coach. I thought fencing would be great—you already wear a mask. It's the ultimate social-distance sport. Our motto was, "If you have to wear a mask, better come with a sword." The class was so popular it is now offered as an amenity.

—Edited from interviews

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