

Starring Role

Sandy Murphy, general manager, The Beverly Hilton, on casting the legendary property as the leading choice of both travelers and celebrities.



Global Traveler: *The Beverly Hilton hosted the 66th Annual Golden Globes Awards in January. It was your first Golden Globes event as general manager of the hotel. Tell us about the experience.*

Sandy Murphy: It was amazing that so many entities could come together and create this event, working collectively for the greater good of the occasion. It was impressive that the hotel became a virtual city of 5,000 people. We hired 300 extra people and brought on 30 representatives from the Santa Monica college culinary school to help in the kitchen. In fact, we took over the parking garage and created a commissary to feed everyone — plus assistants, make-up artists and other support personnel — during two days of preparation.

It took a lot of energy and cooperation from various hotel and Hollywood entities that some may assume

would have difficulty working together to produce an event of this magnitude, but it worked. The Beverly Hilton has been doing events like these for so many years that we have become experts. Being a part of it all from beginning to end was a marvelous experience.

GT: *Did you enjoy walking the red carpet?*

SM: The whole event was exciting — so much positive energy. People kept asking me if I was tired, but I wasn't. I was elated. The buzz, the roar of the crowd, the lights — it kept me going on overdrive.

GT: *Tell us a little about the history of the hotel.*

SM: It is iconic in its status, combining the excitement of Hollywood with the prestige of Beverly Hills for over 50 years. In fact, this was Conrad Hilton's second flagship hotel. Among other well-known events, the Golden Globes have been held here for 40 years; 36 years consecutively. Merv Griffin owned the hotel until 2003, when Beny Alagem and Oasis West Realty purchased it and embarked on an \$80 million reinvention of the 8.9-acre property. The hotel can be seen in many Hollywood television shows and films, from *Entourage* to *Frost/Nixon*, which featured the same suite that David Frost originally stayed in.

GT: *What are the future plans for The Beverly Hilton?*

SM: I want to strengthen our position within the marketplace. We were just given approval by the city to build the first West Coast Waldorf-Astoria on the property, which will give us a 5-star and a 4-star property in a perfect location. The Beverly Hills destination helps the brand to go from glitz to business overnight.

GT: *You have been with Hilton quite a while. Tell us about your career.*

SM: I have been at this hotel for just four months, but I have been with Hilton for 25 years. I started as a front desk clerk and by age 25 was general manager of a small Embassy Suites. I moved to the corporate level as area vice president for Northern California, overseeing 10 properties. I moved to Southern California in the same position to direct the course of eight hotels. When this opportunity came my way, I jumped at the chance to move back into operations at the helm of The Beverly Hilton. It's an honor to be the very first female general manager in the city of Beverly Hills. ■■