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Jan-June 2011

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Mark Ellert, Guy Harvey and Charles Forman cut a ribbon to officially open the Bimini Big Game Club.



GUY HARVEY® lands in Bimini

Renowned artist, scientist and entrepreneur revamps Bahamian resort famed for sportfishing

By Gillian Beckett

Noted journalist and fishing enthusiast the late Alfred W Miller once quipped: "If fishing is interfering with your business, give up your business." Fortunately for renowned artist, scientist, diver, marine conservationist and explorer Dr Guy Harvey, such a dilemma has never been an issue.

"My hobby has become my profession," says Harvey, speaking from his studio in Grand Cayman. "And it's been a very good journey so far."

It is a journey that began in 1985, when the self-taught artist illustrated Ernest Hemingway's classic *The Old Man and the Sea* with a series of original pen and ink drawings that were featured in an exhibition in Jamaica, his home country. After receiving many plaudits for his art, Harvey was inspired to make a career out of it, licensing his work and branding his name with the creation of Guy Harvey Inc.

Since then, Harvey has built a multi-million-dollar empire that includes an extensive network of branding on everything from apparel and outdoor furniture to fine jewellery and wine. The entrepreneur has also set up a restaurant chain—Guy Harvey Island Grill—with six restaurants in Florida, Alabama and South Carolina, the *Guy Harvey* magazine, and the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, which advocates marine conservation and research.

Recently, Guy Harvey Inc has ventured into resort development with the formation of Guy Harvey Outpost Resorts Ltd, which celebrated its first resort opening at the famed Bimini Big Game Club in June 2010. In its heyday, the club attracted big names such as entertainers Sammy Davis Jr and Rita Hayworth, Hollywood director Howard Hughes and even notorious Teamster Jimmy Hoffa, to name but a few, and Harvey is looking to recapture some of that former glory.

Inspired beginnings

Like the stars of Bimini's past, Harvey has become a celebrity in his own right, with his brand instantly recognized around the world.

Although he was born in Lippspringe, Germany, in 1955, while his father was stationed there as a gunnery officer in the British Navy, he is tenth generation Jamaican, as his family emigrated to Jamaica from Great Britain in 1664.

During his childhood in Jamaica he developed a life-long obsession with marine life and discovered his prolific artistic talent, as he remembers spending hours fishing and diving with his father along the island's south coast and drawing countless pictures of the marine animals he encountered. "We fished with fishermen in dugout canoes and they caught big fish on handlines," he



COURTESY GUY HARVEY

Harvey's journey has led to a multi-million-dollar empire that includes an extensive network of branding on everything from apparel and outdoor furniture to fine jewellery and wine.

recalls. "When I was about eight or nine years old, the blue marlin was the animal for me—it was my favourite fish of all."

The blue marlin is known among the sportfishing set as the ultimate angling challenge for its size, speed and endurance. "Just to look at them ... at their aesthetic appeal. They are marvellous looking animals," Harvey enthuses, adding that the blue marlin is one of the largest of all bony fish, second only to the ocean sunfish, and can weigh in at 2,500 lbs.

But the prize fish are hard to catch and it wasn't until Harvey was 17 that he landed his first blue marlin—a day he will never forget. "That was a big day for me," he says. "I caught three in three consecutive days after having a drought for a few years."

The story parallels that of Hemingway's tale *The Old Man and the Sea*, in which a Cuban fisherman named Santiago hooks the "catch of his life"—a giant marlin—ending an 84-day barren spell. Harvey says the Hemingway classic resonated with him as a youth. "The fact that someone would write about my favourite fish and explain exactly what I would see on a daily basis ... I couldn't believe it."

The budding artist sketched his own pen and ink illustrations to accompany the book. "Those drawings were done in 1973-74," he says, explaining that in the early 1980s he revisited his illustrations and displayed them in his first one-man exhibition in Jamaica. "That was the launch of my professional career as a marine wildlife artist."

However, before his illustrations jump-started his career as an artist, Harvey had pursued his love of marine science at Aberdeen University in Scotland, where, in 1977, he earned high honours in marine biology. From there, he continued his formal training at the University of the West Indies and obtained a doctorate in fisheries management.

Harvey's work as a scientist took him around the world, studying extensively the behaviour of marine wildlife. In his quest to get "up close and personal" with some of the oceans' largest billfish, Harvey became an avid scuba diver and skilled underwater photographer. His marine expertise has also helped to pioneer techniques of recording billfish underwater and a tagging system to monitor them over long distances.

"You get to know them and you want to know all about them, and, as an artist, to portray them as realistically as possible," says Harvey. "The only way to do that is to get in the water with them." It is through his experience as a marine scientist that Harvey has been able to capture, in detail, the subjects of his art, which has led to the creation of a business empire.

Building through branding

In 1986, shortly after his Hemingway exhibition, Harvey incorporated his name and Guy Harvey Inc was born. As Harvey recalls, "I signed my first contract with a T-shirt manufacturer that year." Since then, his paintings and images of big game fish have graced a slew of products from T-shirts, and silk-screen and embroidered apparel to giftware and limited edition prints. Harvey's income is generated from a profit share from the licensed products, which, amassed over a period of 25 years, has led to him building a very successful business.

"I don't think I have a definable business philosophy. There's no blueprint for this kind of business," says Harvey, who notes there are few full-time artists working today who have succeeded to the same extent. "There are very, very few marine artists who have been successful, probably less than five in this context," he

says. "The important thing for me after creating the artwork is to administer the copyrights on everything and the authentic reproduction of artwork on high quality items, whether it's apparel or on a coffee mug."

He credits much of his success to a "great business team" that operates out of Fort Lauderdale, and partnering with "great licensees" such as the American Fishing and Tackle Company (AFTCO)—one of the world's most readily recognized manufacturers of game fishing hardware and accessories.

"From a business perspective, it is very important to have your major licensee heavily involved with merchandising, because it's a very good source of profitability," says Harvey. "The shops that carry the apparel and artwork are an important ingredient in the overall business plan."

So good is Harvey's relationship with AFTCO that its owner and chief executive officer Bill Shedd is also a partner in Harvey's newest venture, Guy Harvey Outpost Resorts, which is seeking to expand its resort brand throughout the Caribbean, starting with the Bimini project in The Bahamas.

Bimini bound

Although Bimini is a mere nine square miles of land, it more than makes up for its tiny size with its rich and abundant waters. So plentiful is the local ocean, that the island has become known as the "sportfishing capital of the world." Author Zane Grey, reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes and Hemingway himself were once lured to the island due to its excellent year-round fishing conditions.

"An important part about Bimini, of course, is its history with fishing," says Harvey. "There's nowhere else in The Bahamas or even the Caribbean for that matter, apart from Key West, that has that [level] of fishing history. We obviously wanted to capitalize on that from a business perspective and maintain the link with the early forerunners of big game fishing, such as

"The Bahamas has everything I'm looking for as far as a marine experience. It has the full smorgasbord of fishing and diving experiences for everybody."

Hemingway, so that's been an important aspect in terms of theming, which may not happen at another location."

Harvey explains that Guy Harvey Outpost Resorts had been scouting The Bahamas, the Caribbean and Central America for a location for its first resort. After a three-year quest, the company finally found what it was looking for with the Bimini Big Game Club.

The club was first opened in 1936 by Bahamian entrepreneur and renowned bon vivant Neville Stuart, who organized big game fishing tournaments and black-tie events for the glitterati. The club was later owned by the Bacardi family for several years before they put it on the market in 2000. Since then, the resort passed through numerous owners before it was up for sale again in 2008 at a listed price of \$17.5 million.

"When Bimini came along, even though it was a very elaborate deal, [president] Mark Ellert decided that, because of its strategic location, it was the right place to have our first Outpost resort," says Harvey, who also partnered with Charles Forman in the venture. "So, we all put our shoulders behind the wheel and pushed really hard."

After a multi-million-dollar upgrade, the club reopened as a Guy Harvey Outpost Resort and Marina with 51 rooms and a 75-slip marina. Also included in the resort is a new Bimini Big Game Bar and Grill, Outfitter apparel shop, a dive facility headed by scuba diving legend Neal Watson, and Bonefish Bimini—with artist, conservationist and renowned fly fishing personality Vaughn Cochran—which offers back-country fly fishing programmes. A full-service fuel dock is expected to be fully operational



COURTESY GUY HARVEY

Harvey comes face to face with one of the ocean's top predators.

by this spring and plans are underway for the Guy Harvey Theater, which will feature guest lecture series and interactive sessions with Harvey.

Conservation efforts

Before committing to the resort's redevelopment, and attaching his name to it, Harvey says that some key criteria had to be met, such as elements to promote marine conservation and education. "There had to be certain components already existing and the ability had to be there to tweak it to suit my brand," he says. "It has to be a very green resort for a start, and something that's focused on the natural marine environment. There has to be a research component available, so researchers have a platform with which to work. And there has to be an educational aspect, such as a theatre, where we can show the documentaries I make from time to time."

Harvey adds that he is particularly keen to forge a partnership with top marine biologist Dr Samuel Gruber and the Bimini Biological Field Station, a world-class shark research centre. "We've established a very positive link on a formal basis," says Harvey. "We want to collaborate with them in research efforts and raise money through the [resort] to help specifically on research work with sharks."

"We hope to one day adopt the [station] into either the Guy Harvey Research Institute or Nova Southeastern University and formalize that relationship."

Shark conservation, Harvey says, is particularly vital to not only The Bahamas' ecology, but also its economy, as thousands of tourists participate in shark interaction programmes each year. He notes that recent proposals for long-line fishing to capture and harvest sharks for fins is an issue that needs to be "beaten down immediately."

"We're working very hard with the Bahamas National Trust to try to get the government to 'butch' up and protect the sharks," he says. "There's a company with a proposal to long-line [fish] for sharks to catch them for their fins ... that should never, never be allowed in an area like The Bahamas, which is so unique and productive, and has such a potential for growth in ecotourism."

As an avid fisherman, Harvey himself is a frequent "tourist" to The Bahamas, having visited about 30 to 40-odd times. "I've fished in The Bahamas many times and in many tournaments ... the Bahamas Billfish Championships—I used to fish in that quite a lot," he says. "I've fished in Walker's Cay a great deal too."

Although he has caught "many nice ones" in The Bahamas, his biggest catch was a blue marlin "well over 1,000 lbs" in Madeira, off Portugal. "I'll always remember it—July 27, 1997... that was one of my biggest angling experiences," he says.

With the acquisition of his latest "big catch," the Bimini Big Game Club, Harvey looks forward to some day expanding his name throughout The Bahamas and highlighting its potential as an ecotourism destination. "The Bahamas has everything I'm looking for as far as a marine experience," he says. "It has the full smorgasbord of fishing and diving experiences for everybody. But most importantly, we want to send a message to everybody that we should really care about the natural resources on which the Bahamian islands very much depend—conservation is good for business." ②



Ernest Hemingway in Bimini with his children

COURTESY JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

Hemingway's island in the stream

By Tosheena Robinson-Blair

The enduring appeal of Bimini was first popularized in the 1930s by the exploits of noted sportsmen, industrialists and philanthropists who ventured to Bimini for world-class fishing. Tournaments attracting anglers from all over the planet became common, as Bimini's reputation for giant blue marlin and bluefin tuna blossomed.

With the lure of great sportfishing to be had and through his friendship with retailer Michael Lerner, novelist Ernest Hemingway first set sail for Bimini in 1935—where he drank, boxed, and wrote his way through fishing seasons, travelling back and forth between his home in Key West and his beloved Bahamas. In the novel *Islands in the Stream*, published after his death in 1961, Hemingway immortalizes Bimini and the Compleat Angler hotel, where he stayed.

According to Hemingway's grandson, John, a 500-pound marlin caught off Bimini prompted his grandfather to visit the island, with his second wife Pauline Pfeiffer and three sons—John, Patrick and Gregory—in tow, on his boat *Pilar*.

"He was very excited about deep sea fishing, fishing for marlin, wahoos, sailfish, everything. He was catching really big fish off Bimini," says John, whose recollections come from his father, Gregory, Hemingway's youngest son. "He also liked the lifestyle there on the island. It was very relaxed. There weren't too many people there. It's like a small town where everyone knows everyone. People were very friendly. They always have been."

The affinity for Bimini passed from father to son, with Gregory bringing his own family to the island during the 1960s and '70s.

The Hemingway connection to the island lives on. The newly renovated Bimini Big Game Club is working with several Hemingway heirs to ensure the property reflects Hemingway's time on the island, and the recent history of Bimini was reported weekly in the *Bimini Out Island Newspaper*, which was published by Les Hemingway, the author's brother.

"We intend to launch the Outpost Club as a vehicle for individuals to help support Bimini's heritage," says Mark Ellert, president of Guy Harvey Outpost Resorts.