

Head:  
Concierge Corner

Subhead:  
Don CeSar host makes pampering the chief priority  
for his guests.

When Ron MacDougall retired from his first career in the corporate world of finance, he decided to pursue another career in customer service.

Guests at the Don CeSar Beach Resort, a Loews hotel, are glad he did. As resort host, MacDougall serves VIPs, celebrities, and frequent and long-term guests on a "one-to-one basis."

"I like servicing people," MacDougall said. "That is my number-one priority: To make sure people are serviced, pampered and taken care of."

MacDougall's route to resort host actually began at Nordstrom's, where he was concierge. "That's the only retail I know of that has a concierge," he said. "It's the highest-ranking customer-service store that exists."

When he moved on to "The Don," MacDougall first worked in the Guest Response Center, where he would answer all incoming calls, plus all incoming guest calls and requests. His intent was to advance to the concierge desk, which is exactly where he landed six months later. Another six months passed before he became resort host.

Declining to drop any names, MacDougall said many of his VIP guests are celebrities performing at the St. Pete Times Forum, Ruth Eckerd Hall or the Ford Amphitheatre. When he's not physically at work, MacDougall forwards his desk number to his cell,

just so he can be around for his guests "24-seven." It's not unusual for him to be shopping in the middle of the night for special requests. If guests simply need something from housekeeping, "they call me."

Among MacDougall's favorite requests are "helping or assisting a guy who wants to propose to his girlfriend."

"I've done many of them," he said. "I arrange for a dinner in a remote area of the hotel, an area that's really beautiful with rose petals, champagne and a nice table overlooking the Gulf. Then I'll escort the fiancée-to-be to the table, without her knowing what's about to be."

"I get a lot of good responses from that."

Such special touches are an integral part of MacDougall's life as resort host. "Meeting expectations is not really my goal," he said. "Exceeding is."