

# High PROFILES

Once again, BajaTRAVELER® pays homage to a group of talented, successful men. Each of these dynamic professionals has overcome challenges and obstacles, resulting in the betterment of Baja – its people, local economy, or community infrastructure. Their contributions are as varied as their backgrounds. And yet they are bound together by a common objective -- to bring prosperity to the Baja area. These outstanding individuals share an entrepreneurial spirit and the desire to improve the region and, in so doing, the lives of Baja's residents.

The 2006 honorees includes the country's Secretary of Tourism and two state ones who have done a great deal to increase Baja's blossoming tourist industry; the president of the Latin Grammys; a dynamic CEO for a company in Loreto; a marketing genius in San Felipe; a real estate mogul in Los Cabos; an entrepreneur in San Felipe who loves Mexico; a Mexico and Latin America Resort Director; a very talented and highly educated Hotel GM; a Tijuana based resident who made an empire that started from his love for pizzas; a renowned plastic surgeon whose also on a TV medical show; an entrepreneur

who creates some of the best celebrity parties in Cabo and a genius who was behind what is possibly the biggest tourism bash in the world~ the Tianguis Turístico in Acapulco.

BajaTRAVELER® salutes all of you for your many accomplishments. And wishes you continued success in your future endeavors. **BT**

Patrick Butler, 2006 Honoree





# Pat Butler

## Developer and Friend of the Environment

by Adam Critchley

Pat Butler, President of Club Acquisition Company (CAC) established in 1993, was a newcomer to Baja California where, a year later, he was invited to view some property in San Felipe. It was love at first sight.

"Where can you find, only 120 miles from U.S. border, a 10,000-foot mountain range, beautiful desert flora and a beach?" asks Butler. "I fell in love with San Felipe and knew it would be a perfect place for the development of vacation and retirement property."

Prior to founding, developing and operating CAC, Butler was President of Coast to Coast Resorts and a minority stockholder of its parent company, Affinity Group, Inc., from 1985 to 1992. He also served in management positions with the Marriott Corporation for ten years, and Beatrice Foods for five years. He holds a degree in Economics from Allegheny College and an MBA from Loyola College.

In May 1994, CAC completed the acquisition of El Dorado Ranch, a 200,000-acre retirement and vacation property in San Felipe. Two years earlier, the company had completed privatization of the property, to allow for individual foreign land ownership through a trust, the largest ever in Baja California.

"I spent several years in negotiations with the Ejido and bought 35,000 acres. In addition to the payment for the land, the balance of the land was returned to the Ejido. This is the privatization process. El Dorado Ranch has now sold more than 8,000 lots, and 2,000 residents have built residences in its 35 communities. It is now home to thousands of families and their guests, especially during the winter months," Butler says.

"El Dorado Ranch is a full amenity full-service operation with a very active sales and marketing program. What makes El Dorado work is marketing. There are 35 million households within a 10-hour drive from San Felipe. Many of these are baby boomers," he says. "Real estate in Mexico is affordable and many of those boomers want to plan for their retirement, so they buy vacation homes to use now. We spend millions of dollars promoting San Felipe and El Dorado throughout California and Arizona."

The newest development for San Felipe is La Ventana del Mar, a gated, seaside community with full underground utilities, which includes 750 home lots built around an 18-hole championship golf course, 500 condominiums, two bars and restaurants, an event

pavilion and, in the future, 210-room hotel and spa. The golf course lots are already sold, as are 300 condos. Butler is also the owner of the franchise of Century 21 in San Felipe.

Such sudden and extensive development in San Felipe could have caused a serious environmental imbalance but, thanks to intelligent planning, and the abundance of fresh water, the community has grown and its development is sustainable. San Felipe is now the largest solar-powered community in North America.

"When I purchased El Dorado Ranch, there was already a solar community. This mainly got started due to the lack of infrastructure at El Dorado—mainly electricity," Butler explains. "We have also come to see that there is a portion of the population very aware of their environment who choose this as an energy alternative. Solar is still a popular choice at El Dorado, and solar technology has advanced greatly. There are upwards of 500 homes at the Ranch operating off of solar." The environmental concerns extend to the construction of the houses themselves; many of which are straw bale properties.

"Straw bale construction began at the Ranch back in 1996, when a group concerned about the environment approached me to see if we would consider using straw bale construction in our homes. In Mexicali, excess straw bales were being burned which causes pollution and waste," Butler asserts.

"We built the first home in 1996, and it was so well received by many of our owners and visitors that we began constructing many more of them. Straw bale homes have a rustic look, which fits the architectural style of El Dorado Ranch. We also utilize many other construction alternatives at the Ranch. We believe in building an environmentally friendly community."

The new 18-hole championship golf course at La Ventana del Mar, the first in San Felipe and designed by Bradford Benz, also incorporates a water-saving facility, to prevent depleting the town's natural reserves. The course has been laid with passpalum turf, which can be watered using water of a high-salinity content.

As well as his projects in San Felipe, Butler also is a member of ARDA and has served on the ARDA board of directors for ten years. He has also served on the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds national board, the Regis University Board and the Kempe Center Board in Denver, Colorado. ■