

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts: A Match For All Seasons

by
Stan Tombs

Isadore (“Issy”) Sharp graduated as an architect and began in the construction business with his father, Max Sharp. Founding Four Seasons Hotels in 1960, he raised money privately and in 1961 built the Four Seasons Motor Hotel at 415 Jarvis St., Toronto. Their matches at this time were the 21-strike Feature-style with black & blue on a white cover with a “Harling Match Ltd. Made in U.S.A.” manumark.

Mr. Sharp’s second property was the Inn on the Park at Eglinton Ave. & Leslie St., Don Mills, Toronto. It was built in 1963 and featured the Vintage Room, which sported matches domiciled “Harling Match Limited, Toronto Made in Italy” with brown wood-grain cover over printed in silver and with silver-tipped brown wooden match sticks, then later with red-tipped black wooden match sticks. This was followed by hotel opening after opening, including The Inn on the Park, London, in 1970, and about 15 other openings in Canada and the United States up to the mid-1980s. Among his most spectacular acquisitions were two legends: The Ritz Carlton in Chicago (1977) and The Pierre in New York (1981).

Following the Feature-style matches, Harling then supplied the Ten Strike with front-striker, black & blue on white with “Harling Match Ltd. Made in U.S.A.” manumark. Ten-strikes continued in use up to 1980 with several variations: Harling black on white, Universal black on white, Foremost Match-Japan with back striker, Universal brown on white with back-striker and brown turn up, then Eddy Match brown on white with each city on white turn up. Eddy Match was having booking line production problems (jamming) with the ten-strikes, so early in 1980 Four Seasons agreed for Eddy Match to produce 4-colour process 20-strikes in support of a current 1-column magazine advertising program running at that time which was a perfect fit for the 20-strike matches.

The first order was placed September 1980 with 28 different pictures and two repeated pictures with different messages to make 30 designs. This occurred because Douglas Hall, V.P. Communications at Four Seasons, who had a major responsibility in producing the ad campaign that created these designs, simply couldn’t choose two more designs after choosing 28, so he had Eddy repeat two.

continued on p.3

In August 1982, the press sheet configuration at Eddy Match changed to accommodate 40 pictures, 37 different pictures and three repeated with different messages.

During this time, all Four Seasons properties were using matches printed in English, except for Le Quatre Saisons, Montreal, which required matches to be printed in French. In order to facilitate this, after the English press sheets were run, the black line plate was extracted and colour process “blanks” were run and held for French black imprinting as Le Quatre Saisons required them, which is why the initial letter of each French message was in black but was in full colour on the English messages.

Early in 1988, I brought this to the attention of Douglas Hall, also that there were only several different French messages that simply kept repeating with the different pictures. He quickly agreed that the French deserved improving and accepted twenty new French messages I submitted to him by my friend Denys Giguère of Excellence French Communications Ltd., with four-colour printing to allow for the initial letter in colour. The first complete four-colour French is Set #11 French, an order of 25,000 placed April 20, 1988.

Over the past two decades, 29 sets of English and ten sets of French 20-strikes have been produced, with most of the differences between sets occurring in the inside listing of hotel and resort locations, as they acquired new properties and let some go.

A few irregularities have occurred over the years, including Sets #2 and #2A, which were missing the Four Seasons Tree logo, and Set #2A even had their name spelled wrong, leaving the last letter ‘s’ off “Seasons Hotels”. In Sets #1 and 2, the silver coffee pot is facing right. In Set #3 and all following sets, it is facing left. In some Sets #2A French, the red-seated chair with message “Goûtez l’exquise détente.” faces left, while others face right.

In October 1986, while staying at the Four Seasons (Clift), San Francisco, Mr. Jack Bertolino of Pennington, N.J., noticed a quotation by Charles Dickens which read, “It’s trifles make the sum of life” was wrong, so it was corrected in Set #10 English to read, “That trifles make the sum of life.” In Set #12 English, “Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend” was changed to read, “Time is the most valuable thing you can spend”.

In January 1991, a set of eight box matches were produced for used in the Four Seasons Resorts with a different four-colour picture on the front of each sleeve (seven flowers and one sunset).

In April 1993, the Four Seasons Milano opened its doors following six years of new construction, re-building, and renovation of a former monastery. In about 1428, Margherita della Croce decided to convert her house into a convent. By 1702, it housed 75 nuns and novices renowned for their piety and moral integrity as well as their spice-making. After over 300 years as a monastery, it was converted into a private villa in the mid-1800s. During recent construction, several frescoes were found under the old plaster. Painstakingly restored, they now adorn areas of the public rooms.

Artwork for their first single four-colour process bookmatch came from the corporate office archives, showing a vase of red roses with gilt-framed oval mirror behind. A similar, but more recent, such issue shows a restored portion of one of the frescoes described above. Both were made by Italmatch - Saffa Group, Italy, with wood matchcombs.

On April 1, 1994, Le Quatre Saisons was taken over by Westin and became Le Westin Mont-Royal,

so no new French sets followed Set#17 French. On January 3, 1996, ten cases of a single four-colour process bookmatch were printed for the Four Seasons Berlin by Eddy Match and were shipped there January 24. The front panel shows an armchair from the 40 cover set that has the message, “To be successful, feel successful,...” however, the message on the Berlin match reads, “Wer nichts für andere tut, tut nichts für sich.” (If you do nothing for others, you do nothing for yourself)

On January 5, 1996, the eight Resorts boxes were replaced with a single box with golden brown oak leaves and acorns with two yellow roses. In July 1999, I discovered Set #28 English, now made with only 36 covers, down from the previous 40 covers.

Three boxes have shown up recently: two sizes of boxes with same design as Resorts box of January 5, 1996, are in use at Four Seasons, Mexico City. One is 2 1/8” x 1 1/2”; the other is 4 3/8” x 1 1/2” with CERIMEX MEXICO manumark. The third box is also 4 3/8” x 1 1/2”, from Four Seasons Hotel, London, printed black on white with no manumark.

As of January 2002, Four Seasons was managing 53 properties in 24 countries and plans 18 more by 2005, including Shanghai, Sharm el Sheikh, a second property in Tokyo, Budapest, Amman, Miami, and Riyadh, to name a few. Wow! What a success story! I’m pleased to help anyone needing more information on Four Seasons sets, including identifying the sets and offering more detailed information on each of the issues.

[Ed. My special thanks to Stan for a great article; he went straight to Four Seasons management to bring to you the latest information possible]



Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts Sets:

[These are 20-strike white covers. All properties used English except Le Quatre Saisons, Montreal (hence fewer French sets). Sets #1-#2F have 30 covers; all subsequent sets have 40 covers, except #28E with 36 covers]

-#1E (1982)			
-#2E (6/1983)			
-#2AE (1983)	-#7F (5/9/1987)	-#14E (14/7/1989)	-#23E (11/7/1994)
-#2AF (1983)	-#8E (5/3/1987)	-#15E (16/11/1989)	-#24E (1/11/1994)
-#3E (The Clift) (10/1983)	-#9E (13/4/1987)	-#16E (17/4/1990)	-#25E (8/8/1995)
-#3E (Clift) (10/1983)	-#10F (6/1987)	-#16F (17/4/1990)	-#26E (21/5/1996)
-#3F (11/1983)	-#10E (9/9/1987)	-#17E (15/11/1990)	-#27E (11/8/1997)
-#4E (The Clift) (10/1984)	-#11E (3/3/1988)	-#17F (28/11/1990)	-#28E (7/1999)
-#4E (Clift) (10/1984)	-#11F (29/6/1988)	-#18E (4/5/1991)	
-#5E (16/11/1984)	-#12E (16/8/1988)	-#19E (9/5/1991)	+ 1 set of 8 Resort
-#5F (18/8/1985)	-#12F (12/9/1988)	-#20E (13/5/1992)	boxes in English
-#6E (12/4/1985)	-#13E (23/3/1989)	-#21E (25/5/1993)	(11/4/1991)
-#7E (28/8/1986)	-#13F (7/4/1989)	-#22E (29/7/1993)	+ 1 Resort box (5/1/'96)