

The Eccentric

business

Ron Gerbinski coordinator/644-1100

Local firm offers alternative to hotel-cramped vacations

By JACKIE KLEIN

Have you ever taken a vacation with three young kids and found yourself holed up in one small hotel room?

Wouldn't you rather stay in a three-bedroom townhouse with a kitchen, free tennis and a heated swimming pool at a complex in northern Michigan — and at rates you can afford?

That's what Condo World Inc. in Southfield offers. The concept of renting vacation condominiums and villas

was the brain child of Zelda Gechter and Carole Cohen, who have traveled extensively and say they know the possible pitfalls.

The two women made contacts with condominium owners in popular tourist spots around the world and matched them with vacationers who liked the idea of renting attractive, comfortable facilities for a week, a month or longer.

They published "The Condominium and Villa Guide" in July and are selling

copies to travel agents in Michigan, Canada, Ohio and Illinois.

"WE'RE THE wholesalers between the condominium owners and travel agents," Ms. Gechter said. "But we also offer personal retail service to clients who can call us direct."

"Our fees are paid by condo owners and we pay travel agents a percentage for bookings. We can also get the best air fare package for our customers."

Ms. Cohen said the guide is the only source she knows of for complete listings of privately owned vacation properties. The year-old Condo World has been endorsed by the U.S. director of tourism.

"We screen our clients to make sure they're the kind of tenants condo owners are willing to lease their facilities to," Mrs. Cohen said. "We require security deposits and we hold them in escrow for our clients."

"Owners also sign contracts, agreeing to clean the facilities and provide liability insurance. We do our best to put our clients in the right place. We make sure they know where the condominium or villa is located. We supply pictures of the facility. If you want to rent a villa or condominium in Acapulco, Cancun or Puerto Vallarta, you don't have to call Mexico to find one."

THE DISCRIMINATING traveler and the budget-minded can have a good time in a privately owned vacation spot with all the amenities, Ms. Gechter said. At certain times of the year, persons can rent a three-bedroom villa for six in Barbados, West Indies — complete with housekeeper, cook and gardener — for \$500 a week. And that includes horseback riding, tennis, golf and all water sports.

Some facilities can be rented at daily rates. And if a client wants to rent a condo or villa for three months in vacation spots like Florida, the Bahamas, St. Thomas, Bermuda, Jamaica or Hawaii, Condo World may be able to negotiate with property owners to get a better rate.

"Times are lean, but people still want to get away from it all," Ms. Cohen said. "Christmas is coming and that's the season most vacation property owners want to spend time with their condos."



Zelda Gechter (left) and Carole Cohen offer condo/motel/hotel get-a-ways. (Staff photo by Mindy Saunders)

date book

SPECTRUM Computers, 26618 Southfield Road in Lathrup Village, will offer evening classes in computers. Instructor Barry Webster will discuss computer use and terminology during the three two-hour sessions: A second advanced session is offered in the fall where students will learn the BASIC computer language and write programs. The session begins Sept. 17 at 7 p.m. for three Wednesdays. Classes cost \$49.95 plus the cost of a textbook. For more details, call 552-8092.

THE AMERICAN Institute of Real Estate Appraisers will offer a residential valuation course Sept. 12-27 at an Oakland County Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills. For registration details, contact the chapter office at 573-6977.

DAVID Green, manager of corporate advertising and design service for PPR Industries, will discuss the preparation and presentation of advertising budgets at the Sept. 18 gathering of the Industrial Marketers of Detroit at the Detroit Golf Club at 11:30 a.m. Fee is \$12 for members and \$15 for non-members. Deadline for reservations is Tuesday. For more details, call 645-0300.

THE BUILDERS Association of Southeastern Michigan will host David Link, editor of the Professional Builder magazine, at a general membership meeting at 5 p.m. Sept. 30 at the Northfield Hilton Inn, 5500 Crooks Road in Troy. Dinner follows at 6 p.m. Reservation may be made by sending a check for \$15 to the Builders Association, 804 One Northland Plaza, Southfield 48075 or by calling 569-0644.

THE NORTH Oakland Chamber of Commerce Council on Small Enterprises will present a seminar on Unemployment Compensation. An Michigan Employers Pay the Price? 8:10 a.m. Sept. 16 at Roma's of Bloomfield. Terry Romine, president of the Employers Unemployment Compensation Council, will present the seminar designed for small businessmen. Cost is \$4 for chamber members and \$5 for non-members. For more details, call 335-6148.

Office complex under construction

A \$30 million, three-story office complex is under construction at Woodward and Opdyke Road in Bloomfield Hills.

The Stoneridge Office Park, a 324,000-square-foot building, is owned by Samelson Enterprises of Bloomfield Hills and the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Co. of Philadelphia.

Samelson will serve as project manager, developer and general contractor.

Designer is Rossetti Associates of Detroit. James C. Scott of Bloomfield

Hills is the landscape architect. John Catalano of Catalano/Shaw & Associates of Southfield will handle leasing arrangements.

The building will have entrances on two of the three levels compatible with existing grades. There will be parking for 790 cars in a two-level parking deck, a garage for 155 cars under the buildings and landscaped surface parking.

Convenience shops and other amenities are planned.

Utility Stocks ...time to pull a switch.

Considering their present prices, and increased dividends over the past few years, certain electric utility stocks are reflecting impressive yields. Moreover, several utility companies are capable of sizeable dividend increases which would further insulate the investor should interest rates again increase.

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