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ON THE WEB



Hiroko Masuike for The New York Times

Stanley Bard, 73, longtime manager and part owner of the Chelsea Hotel, was greeted in the lobby Monday by Mia Hanson, a photographer and resident, after his ouster.

Change at the Chelsea, Shelter of the Arts

By LISA CHAMBERLAIN

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For six decades the Bard family has managed the Hotel Chelsea, overseeing a bohemian enclave that has been a long-term home for writers, artists and musicians including Mark Twain, O. Henry, Tennessee Williams, Dylan Thomas, Andy Warhol, and Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen.

The Bard era came to an end yesterday.

On Friday, the board that runs the hotel told Stanley Bard, 73, and David, his son, 41, that they would be replaced on Monday with a new management team.

Yesterday, the Bards were busy filling boxes in the lobby with help from residents who expressed concern about what the management change portends for one of New York's more quirky cultural institutions.

“Everything is pretty chaotic in the lobby,” said Ed Hamilton, a writer who has lived for 11 years in the hotel, on 23rd Street near Eighth Avenue, and helped create a blog about it called Living with Legends. “Everyone is really worried.”

The new management team is led by BD Hotels NY L.L.C., which owns and operates about 5,000 hotel rooms at several upscale hotels in the city, including the Chambers, Maritime and Bowery Hotels. BD Hotels is also developing a hotel in TriBeCa with the actor Robert De Niro.

The switch in management is the culmination of a power struggle related to Stanley Bard’s efforts to increase his control among the shareholders who own the hotel. After the resulting shakeup, David Bard remains on the board, but he is outvoted by the other two members. They voted to hire new managers, although the Bards will retain their ownership shares.

Stanley Bard said he would cooperate during the transition with the new management, but added that he and the board had differences of opinion about how to run the hotel. Under him, it became famous as a haven for artists and creative performers, and he was known to allow some residents to get behind in their rent.

“This took 50 years of nurturing and development,” Mr. Bard said. “Everyone respected it — the cultural community, the people living there. That’s hard to create.”

One of the board members, Marlene Krauss, said a new management team did not necessarily mean a radical overhaul. “I’m very concerned about maintaining the hotel, its dignity and history,” she said. “There are infrastructure needs that have not been addressed. But we have no intention of throwing people out.”

She also said that she would like to find a way to keep the Bards involved with the hotel. “We understand they are an important part of the history and ambience of the hotel,” Ms. Krauss said.

Stanley Bard said he would continue to be associated publicly with the hotel, as an “ambassador.” In the early 1960s, Stanley Bard took over operation of the hotel from his father, David, who along with two partners bought the hotel in 1945.

The 12-story, 250-room Chelsea Hotel was originally built in 1883 as Manhattan’s first cooperative apartment. It was the tallest building in New York until 1902, and it became a residential hotel in 1905.

About 60 percent of the hotel is occupied by long-term residents, and the other rooms are available to short-term guests.

Ms. Krauss, the chief executive of KBL Healthcare Ventures, said a full evaluation of the hotel would be conducted before any changes were made. Two years ago the board told the Bards not to accept any new long-term tenants. “It’s been the plan of the board for a



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Stanley Bard with his children David Bard and Michelle Bard Grabell. The Bard family managed the Hotel Chelsea for 60 years.

while to have more transient guests,” she said. “I think it’s been hard to maintain the hotel with as many long-term tenants as we have. We’ll look at things on a case-by-case basis.”

The retail spaces of the hotel are also expected to undergo changes. Ms. Krauss said that many of the leases were coming due, and that infrastructure improvements were needed in those spaces as well.

Current and former residents said the management change was an unwelcome end to an era.

“That’s a disaster,” said Jeanne-Claude, who along with her husband and artistic partner, Christo, are famous for their large-scale public art installations, including the Gates in Central Park in 2005. They lived at the Chelsea in the early 1960s, and often could not pay the rent and would borrow money from the front desk to eat, Jeanne-Claude said.

The Bards asked them to pay their bill whenever they could, and to leave a piece of art when they left. Their son, Cyril, used to share a baby sitter with Rebecca Miller, the child of the playwright Arthur Miller, who lived at the hotel off and on throughout her childhood.

Christo said of the new management: “They will try to refurbish it and stop being generous with the artists that need help.” Several residents shared the same concern.

“Stanley is a unique character in New York,” said Philip Taaffe, a painter who has lived in the hotel since 1991. “He’s devoted his life to this place, which has become part of the cultural heritage of New York City. It’s hard to survive in this town as a writer, artist, or actor. He’s helped many people over the years. What is going to happen to New York when that’s gone?”