

Delivering Our Best

Host to princes, presidents and prime ministers, the 5-star Williamsburg Inn insists on the best for its guests. Crothall Laundry Manager, Kathy Mays and her team are determined that every sheet, towel and table cloth meet the Inn's exacting standards.

Heads of State rest on its pillows, wash with its face cloths and wipe their hands with its napkins; so naturally, the 5-star Williamsburg Inn demands the highest standards from its laundry. When in 1995, **Bob Jeremiah**, Vice President of Colonial Williamsburg,

became responsible for laundering operations he initiated a program of improvements designed to enhance quality—ensuring that the exacting standards of the hotel and its guests were met—while trimming costs. This was no easy task. The laundry at Colonial Williamsburg is complex, processing nearly four million pounds per year for a multitude of properties: five separate hotels totaling 1,000 rooms; over a dozen restaurants; two world-class conference centers; and a clubhouse for two 18-hole golf courses. Colonial Williamsburg is very much a city within a city.

Bob Jeremiah realized he needed help. Initially he relied on a study performed a year earlier by Victor Kramer Company, now part of Crothall Laundry Services. The report detailed numerous recommendations, which he asked his laundry manager to implement. But when the laundry manager retired, Mr. Jeremiah concluded that to

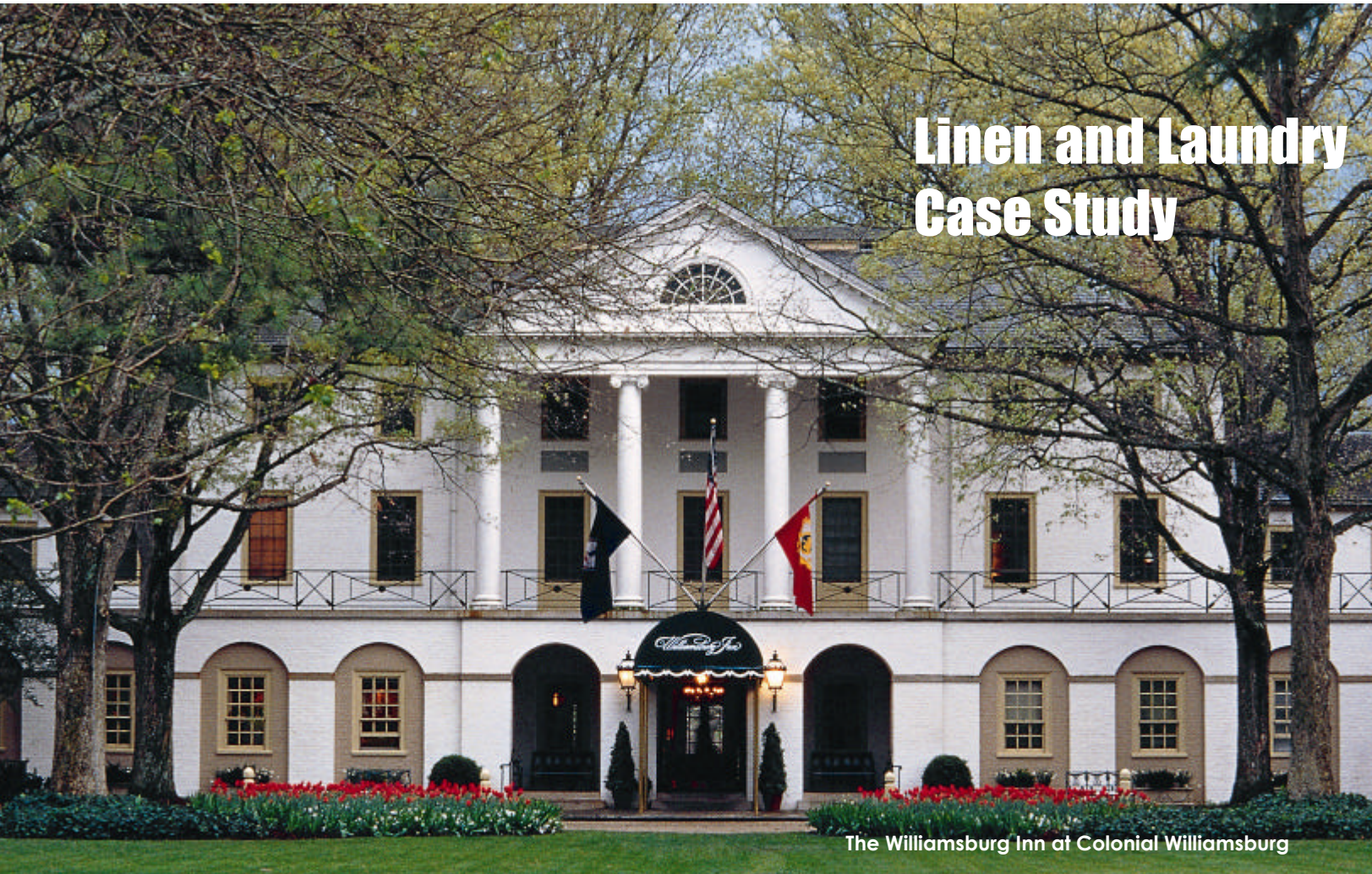
needed a more radical solution—outsourcing the management of the laundry. “Following a thorough market analysis,” says Mr. Jeremiah, “we turned to Victor Kramer, which appointed a new laundry manager and set about implementing the recommendations from its study.”

“Progress was rapid and impressive,” Bob Jeremiah recalls. “Victor Kramer defined new quality standards, introduced more efficient operating procedures and installed modern equipment. Dry cleaning and uniform processing were streamlined. Shortages and quality concerns became increasingly rare. Despite some early and understandable nervousness, the laundry staff responded positively to the training and support the company provided. Productivity rose, reducing costs even while quality increased.” According to an analysis prepared by **Ben Feldman**, a senior VK consultant, who has supported the program from the start, savings in the first year were approximately \$70,000; but as the programs and training took hold, the savings swelled, totaling \$2.8 million during the last eight years.

Both Ben Feldman and Bob Jeremiah credit current laundry manager, **Kathy Mays**, for much of these gains. “She has provided extraordinary leadership and responsive service,” notes Ben Feldman. “Perhaps because she has worked so closely over so many years with the staff, they trust, respect and genuinely like her. You can see it in their work.”

In fact, Kathy Mays was an employee of Colonial Williamsburg long before she joined Victor Kramer. As a local resident, fascinated by our colonial past, she longed to work at the historic site. “I applied for a position in 1984 and was appointed as a uniform inspector in the laundry,” she recalls. “I worked hard, and was promoted several times, first as super-

Linen and Laundry Case Study



The Williamsburg Inn at Colonial Williamsburg

visor of the uniform department, then as supervisor for both uniforms and dry cleaning, and finally after my certification by the International Fabricare Institute, I was appointed as assistant manager in 1990.”

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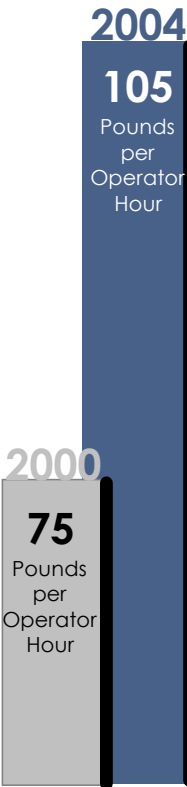
—Kathy Mays
Laundry Manager

Kathy was more than just a hard worker; she was a quick, intelligent and tireless worker. She showed a passion for quality and over the years developed a very special rapport with the staff. “Many were older and more senior in their jobs, and initially resented me,” says Kathy, “but when they saw that I worked with them, listened to them and supported them, their view of me changed. Today we are a team—almost a family.”

That sense of “family” is reinforced through picnics, luncheons and holiday parties. During the summer, when temperatures soar in the laundry, Kathy treats the staff to ice cream, lemonade and watermelons; and on Mother’s Day the moms receive colorful corsages. “Little touches have huge pay-offs in staff performance and loyalty,” observes Kathy Mays. “When Hurricane Isabel roared into the area in 2003, my staff worked double shifts to build inventory before the power went out. Their dedication and commitment was inspiring.”

Productivity Surge

Over a four year period, Crothall Laundry Manager Kathy Mays trimmed staffing and streamlined production. The result was a dramatic increase in productivity as measured in “pounds per operator hour.”



Kathy acknowledges initial misgivings over the outsourcing arrangement with Victor Kramer, but she grew to like and respect Ben Feldman, and Victor Kramer’s President, **Tom Mara Sr.**, as well as the managers VK assigned to the laundry. “I gave 100%. I wanted it to work and learned a lot from the VK team. It was an apprenticeship, and when they offered me the job in 1999, I was ready.”

Kathy Mays was fully ready. Under her direction, production processes were further streamlined and productivity rose by over 40%. “We upgraded our chemical solutions, improved the quality of linens and substantially increased our on-time delivery and fill order rates. My focus has always been on training, re-training and cross-training. We can never ‘over-train.’”

“I love the laundry business and working with my staff,” concludes Kathy Mays. “Yes, it’s exciting when special guests visit—the Emperor of Japan, Margaret Thatcher and Princess Di have all been here—but to us, every guest is special and deserves the finest quality we can deliver. That’s our focus everyday.”



Bob Jeremiah, Vice President, Colonial Williamsburg with Kathy Mays, Crothall Laundry Manager.