

## DESTINATIONS

WINTER SUN | JAMAICA

# Q&A

## DALTON SMITH, MAITRE D, SANDALS MONTEGO BAY

INTERVIEW BY Sasha Wood

**Q. You've been at Sandals for 40 years and are the longest-serving staff member. How did you get the job?**

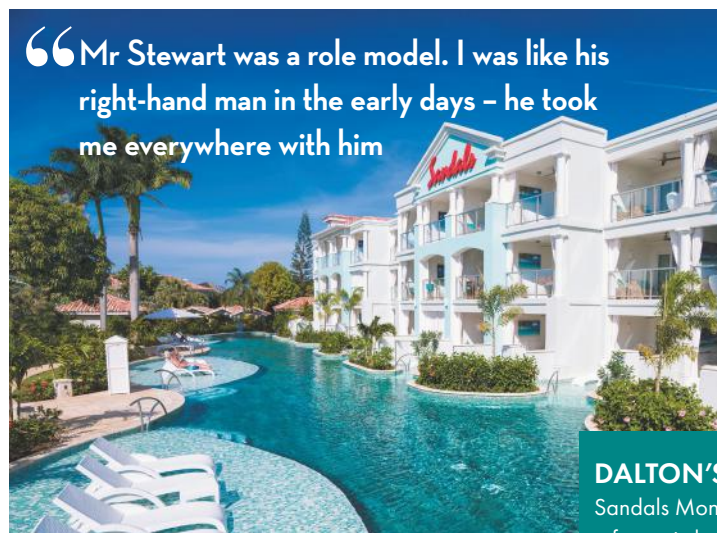
A. I'm from the Jamaican parish of Hanover and I always wanted to work in the hospitality industry, but I didn't know how to get into it at first. My first job was working in construction for a family member, who was hired as a sub-contractor prior to the opening of Sandals Montego Bay. While I was working at the site, it seems an angel was watching over me as a member of the management team suggested I work at the hotel. I had an interview and became the second staff member ever to be employed by the resort. I was also the first to get a proper uniform – I was so happy and proud!

**Q. What were your first impressions of the resort?**

A. I started work on the first day that Sandals Montego Bay opened. At first I was overwhelmed by the property – it was like a dream workplace. It was my first time in a proper hotel and I couldn't believe the top-class service that was offered.

**Q. What roles have you carried out at Sandals and which has been your favourite?**

A. My team loves to say that I'm a lifer at this resort! I've always been in food and beverage, starting out as a trainee bus boy, cleaning and laying tables, before moving up the ranks to waiter, assistant supervisor, supervisor and eventually maitre d'.



PICTURE: Rogerpaperno@mac.com

“Mr Stewart was a role model. I was like his right-hand man in the early days – he took me everywhere with him”

Being a maitre d' has been my favourite job as it allowed me to set standards for the dining room team and make sure we offer the best service possible.

**Q. How has the resort changed over the years?**

A. From day one the chairman, [late Sandals founder] Gordon 'Butch' Stewart, always sought to make improvements. We started out with only one restaurant, but today we have so many different restaurants and culinary offerings. We also have more top-shelf premium spirits than when Sandals first opened in November 1981.

**Q. What are your memories of working with Mr Stewart?**

A. Mr Stewart was a role model from day one. In fact, I was like his right-hand man in the early days – everywhere Mr Stewart

went, he took me with him. When he attended functions, he had me there, and when he opened other resorts, I was with him. He was very involved in all areas of operations and spent a lot of his time at Sandals Montego Bay, checking on each department, making sure they were up to standard. He never changed, regardless of all the financial success and the way his company has grown over the last 40 years. He always had the same easy-going, jovial personality.

**Q. What is the staff atmosphere like behind the scenes?**

A. Sandals Resorts has always had a family atmosphere. It's the same at the front of house as the back of house, and staff are treated the same as guests.



### DALTON'S FAST FACT

Sandals Montego Bay has a fantastic beach, which has been one of the biggest selling points for the flagship resort since it first opened on November 27, 1981. [sellingsandals.co.uk](http://sellingsandals.co.uk)

**Q. Do you see the same guests coming back year after year?**

A. We have guests who have been coming since the early days of Sandals Montego Bay, some of whom holiday here

every year. Several of them treat me like family and we have got to know each other very well. Sandals has been like a second home to most of them, and they like the fact staff remember their names, which makes them feel extra special.

**Q. What's your favourite thing about working at Sandals?**

A. The love within the organisation and how the company cares for its staff. That is a big deal for me and it's one of the things that has kept me with the company for all these years. I also love the community involvement – Sandals not only assists staff, but helps communities through its charitable arm, the Sandals Foundation. **TW**