

A Site To Be Seen

THE CHANDLER DAVENPORT HOTEL



by **Tobby Hatley**

Small Market Meetings

Eassersby did double takes, smiled and nodded with approval as they watched Walt Worthy, the owner of the Davenport Hotel and Tower, roll up his sleeves and man a floor buffer in the Tower lobby as the rest of his management team scraped, cleaned and waxed the marble floor to a high gloss.

"We care to get it right, and sometimes you stumble on something that has to be done," said Lynnelle Caudill, the Davenport's managing director, perspiring as she poured on floor wax and rubbed the marble floor with a rag. "That's the way Walt works, so we have to be flexible and willing to jump in."

Opening under pressure

Hard work was not the only reason Caudill and the rest of Worthy's crew were sweating on that January day in 2007. Spokane was about to host the 2007 U.S. Figure Skating Championships, and the historic Davenport Hotel and its brand-new sister property across the street, the Davenport Tower, were the national event's headquarters.

Both downtown hotels were sold out,

competition would begin in a few days, and the 21-story tower was not quite open.

But Worthy liked playing the odds. The former Air Force survival instructor, who had made his fortune by converting old grocery stores into Class A office space, had spent almost \$40 million of his own money to restore and reopen the landmark Davenport Hotel five years earlier.

The bold move created Spokane's premier meeting and convention venue at a time when many thought the 94-year-old hotel was doomed. Now, 328 first-class rooms in the Tower waited to join 283 comparable rooms at the AAA Four-Diamond Davenport.

"Never in a million years would we have thought that we'd open up a tower across the street," Caudill said.

But after the Davenport reopened, it became apparent that more downtown hotel rooms were needed for larger groups that were being drawn to Spokane by a 100,000-square-foot convention center that had opened a few blocks away, especially when 400 of the



Courtesy Davenport Hotel and Tower

In building his hotel, it was Louis Davenport's aim to bring the world to Spokane. He did so through the use of varied European architecture. The French style is exhibited in the ornate Marie Antoinette Room, above.

rooms in a nearby hotel's annex disappeared to a condo developer.

Building the tower has paid off. The hotels' combined 611 rooms and 33,000

Courtesy Davenport Hotel and Tower

Spokane's grand downtown hotel, the Davenport, reopened six years ago, and early last year it opened a new tower across the street from the original hotel, above.

square feet of meeting space can handle up to 400; meetings from New York, Chicago, Washington and Los Angeles are a regular part of the Davenport's business.

"It's one of the nicest places we've ever met," said Paul Raeburn of the National Association of Science Writers, which chose the Davenport for its annual convention last fall. "It was the perfect size for our group of some 350 science writers and editors. The meeting rooms were nice, there was plenty of space, and they (meeting rooms) were easy to find. We looked all over the country, and this is a much nicer hotel than we're used to."

Exposing Spokane to wider world

Most of the Davenport's meeting space is in the original hotel, much of it just off a second-floor mezzanine above the sky-lit, Spanish Renaissance-style lobby, where high tea is served next to a fireplace.

In building the hotel, part of original proprietor Louis Davenport's aim was to expose guests to the wider world, and he did so by choosing decors that represent