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DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire honored Tom Walsh, founder of Ocean Properties Ltd., for his outstanding achievements in and contributions to the hospitality management industry by awarding him the university's inaugural Hotelier of the Year Award Saturday, March 4, 2006.

Established in 1950 by Walsh, Ocean Properties Ltd. began as a family business with one hotel in Maine. Today it is the sixth largest privately held hotel and development company in the United States, owning and/or operating more than 100 hotels and approximately 20,000 guest rooms in the United States and Canada.

"Ocean Properties/Ocean Management and the Walsh Family have been fantastic partners with and generous donors to the Hospitality Management program over the years. The company has consistently hired many of our graduating seniors, giving them senior executive positions early in their managerial careers. This is aided in part because students enrolled for the degree in hospitality management have the opportunity to work in one of three Ocean Properties hotels in the New Hampshire seacoast," said Raymond Goodman, professor of hospitality management and chair of the UNH Hospitality Management Department.

The awarding of the Hotelier of the Year Award highlighted the return of the university's popular Gourmet Dinners. Students at the nation's second-oldest hospitality management program at the Whittemore School of Business and Economics put their classroom and on-the-job knowledge and skills to the test with the presentation of a seven-course meal. "The Gourmet Dinners represent the hotel management student's ability to take the classroom and operational knowledge from working in the hospitality industry and apply it to creating, marketing, planning, managing, and executing a successful event," said Doug Ridge, '85, general manager of the Chicago Marriott Downtown.

A resident of North Hampton, N.H., Walsh began his career establishing a small warehouse in Bangor, Maine, the Maine Motel Supply, after working door-to-door with his father, Paddy, who came to America from Ireland at the age of 12 after stowing away on a ship. Walsh built his first hotel in Brewer, Maine, in the late 1960s, The Plaza Hotel, and a popular seasonal motel and restaurant on the Maine seacoast, The Lobster House. He built Maine's first franchised Holiday Inn and continued to develop hotels in Maine and Eastern Canada.

In 1975, Walsh purchased five hotels in Florida and in the succeeding 30 years, Ocean Properties developed and operated more than 100 hotels in Florida and throughout North America as well as numerous commercial shopping centers, apartment complexes, residential

housing developments and the only private Cruiseport on the east coast in Key West Florida. Walsh was first to introduce the all-inclusive "mini vacation." He took a 27-acre island 10 minutes off Key West and developed it into the Sunset Key Cottages resort. Ocean Properties also bought and restored the 125-year-old Wentworth by the Sea Hotel in New Hampshire that had been closed for 25 years.

In addition to managing its own investments, Ocean Properties and its affiliates operate hotels, restaurants, golf courses and other real estate for several third-party investors and lenders. Ocean Properties owns Atlific Hotels and Resorts, the largest independent hotel management company in Canada. Ocean Properties and its affiliates have operated hotels under the franchises of Marriott, Hilton, Starwood, Intercontinental and Choice.