BR developer completes restoring stately Alexandria hotel

```
"I always enjoyed coming here. You're talking world class right here in Alexandria. It would be incredibly impossible to reproduce this — you wouldn't have the money to do this. The plaster work alone took 150 men months to create."

—Developer Bob G. Dean
```

ALEXANDRIA — Six months and $2 million later, the Bentley is finished.

It's got a new name, a new look, new rooms, new linens and, of course, a new owner.

Baton Rouge developer Bob G. Dean bought the 178-room hotel for $5 million in April from David Vey and Rick Hartley, who had purchased the turn-of-the-century hotel from the Tudor family just eight months before.

After a floor-by-floor restoration that included new furniture in the lobby and all the rooms, along with an escalator at the north entrance, a ball on Saturday celebrated reopening the business, now named the Radisson Hotel Bentley.

Dean, 45, has a certain appreciation for the grand hotel.

"I always enjoyed coming here," Dean said. "You're talking world class right here in Alexandria. It would be incredibly impossible to reproduce this — you wouldn't have the money to do this. The plaster work alone took 150 men months to create."

These finer touches drew Dean to acquire more than 25 historical properties over the past decade in towns like Alexandria, Shreveport, Monroe, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Natchez, Miss.

Dean pictures himself a self-anointed white knight of downtown rejuvenation. "I'm not saying I'm the chosen few, but who else is going to do this if somebody doesn't step forward?" he said.

"I don't know nobody else (who) would do it. It's hard work."

Dean hopes to develop northern and central Louisiana into a historical tool much like that of southeastern Louisiana. Many people, he says, fail to realize that the entire state can be just as much a cultural hub as New Orleans.

"The past is our legacy, and we can learn a lot from it," Dean said. "There's not much left to maintain. As an adult, I feel like we're just passing through, and if someone doesn't take care of this, it will disappear."

These days, Dean calls Baton Rouge home, but Alexandria will continue to hold a place in his heart. He has already purchased a Renaissance bedroom ensemble in anticipation of a small retreat — a 900-square-foot suite on the sixth floor — that he's adding to the Radisson.

The River View Room will have five rooms, including a formal dining and living room.

Additionally, Dean has lined up Three Dog Night and the Atlanta Rhythm Section for a New Year's Eve bash. He also plans to house one of his 100 antique cars, of which 16 were on display Saturday night.