

NEAL TRAVIS
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Forbes' capitalist fool paradise

POLITICS has not been kind to Steve Forbes. The billionaire publisher sank about \$80 million into his two woeful bids for the GOP's presidential nomination, and now the politics of a faraway South Seas nation is threatening to cost him and his family a whole lot more.

For some time now, the Forbes clan has been trying to sell Laucala, a beautiful little island just a short plane hop from Suva, the capital of Fiji. The island was a retreat for the late Malcolm Forbes (his ashes are said to be scattered there), but his kids have their own interests and want to unload the property.

Until earlier this year, it looked as if they had a deal with a British developer who planned to turn the 3½- by 2½-mile island into a super-luxury resort catering to the world's most discriminating travelers. But then, in May, anar-

chy erupted in Fiji. Rebel indigenous Fijians stormed the Parliament and took the nation's leaders hostage. (Something similar happened a decade ago, and tourism had only just recovered when the latest outbreak of violence occurred.)

The rebels — who are opposed to having Fiji's near-50 percent Indian population represented in government — held their hostages for two months. Tourism stopped and the island economy was wrecked. Now the rebels are to be tried for treason, which will only fan the flames of racial hatred.

A Forbes family spokeswoman confirms to me that the island is still for sale, but can't say whether there are any current hot prospects. Maybe Steve, with all his hard-earned political expertise, should fly down there and give the locals a crash course in international relations.

Fayed in low-blow act

EVEN before his son, Dodi, died with Princess Diana in that terrible Paris crash, Mohamad al-Fayed was pretty loopy. But the owner of Harrods, the Paris Ritz and sundry other trophy properties seems to have really lost it these days. He was recently interviewed on the BBC and out of the blue made a gratuitous slur against Richard Gere, mentioning a scurrilous "urban legend" about the actor and a gerbil. My British sources expect Gere to sue Fayed and win big.

Yacht's to do while waiting

SOCIETY bandleader Bob Hardwick knows all about presidential gridlock. He was actually late for a gig (something that's never happened before) at the Edgartown Yacht Club last week, due to the presence of the first family in the area. Walter Cronkite filled in the waiting time by giving some of the 350 guests a tour of the magnificent '30s America's Cup yacht, the Endeavor, which has been fully restored at a cost of some \$11 million.

Better in the Bahamas

THEY keep saying the Bahamas are emerging as the new Palm Beach, and there may be some truth to the boast now that the legendary Paradise Island hideaway, the Ocean Club, is about to reopen after a \$100 million rejuvenation.

The original Ocean Club was developed in 1962 by A&P heir Huntington Hartford, before high living destroyed his fortune and his life. The new Ocean, lavishly rebuilt by Sun International owner Sol Kerzner, opens next month and features the restaurant Dune, designed by Chris-



Model Christy Turlington and cuddly Chloe paws to pose over the weekend at the Mercedes-Benz Polo Challenge in Bridgehampton. The match benefited the Museum for African Art, the Minority Global Film and Media Festival, and the South Fork Breast Health Coalition. Marion Curtis/DMI

Back in the Nikki time

DIET queen Nikki Haskell just made it back to L.A. in time for this week's Democratic convention. Nikki and her pal Charles Evans last week were guests of Princess Caroline of Monaco and Prince Ernst of Hanover on Caroline's yacht, Pascha III. Nikki says Caroline is her new best friend. "I introduced myself to her earlier in the week at a party Charles gave for them in St. Tropez," she reports. "She said she knew who I was and that she couldn't live without my Starcaps diet candy."

Not so 'Good Morning'