

# How it all started ...

The main figures in private island real estate - René Boehm and Farhad Vladi - have both exchanged notes and experiences on how they came to sell their very first island.

After Farhad Vladi had the idea to buy an island, in 1968 he acquired the mandate to sell an island in the Seychelles and entered a partnership with René Boehm. Both were friends and students at the time - Vladi studied economics and Boehm studied law, which was the grounds for a good team. Hence, Boehm & Vladi was founded.

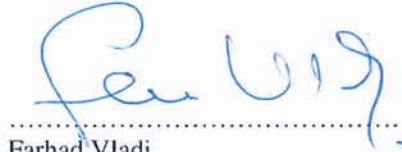
In 1971, an investor, acquired by René Boehm, purchased the first island.

This was a good basis for the following 15 years of successful collaboration, joint establishment of the first and only island business and of the sale of countless more private islands!

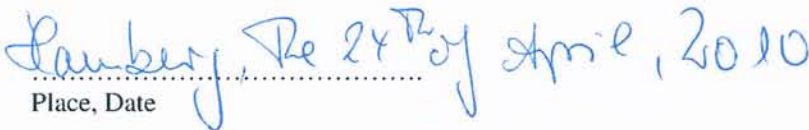
Even the term "private islands" goes back to the innovative talents of Mr. Boehm and Mr. Vladi - prior to 1971, this term could not be found in any lexicon!



René Boehm



Farhad Vladi



Place, Date



René Böhm



Farhad Vladi

## How the Island Business Started

There is always an event which kicks off an idea or movement.

When I was around 20 years of age, I had an appointment with my friend, Jakob von Uexküll, who has accomplished an incredible career as a philanthropist, focussed on the environment and founder of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation and the World Future Council. Jakob and I had arranged to meet for dinner in a Russian restaurant. It was 1968 and the Olympic Games were taking place in Munich. While he was running late, I decided to read a newspaper which a previous guest had left behind. In this newspaper, there was an article about an English gentleman who bought an island in the Indian Ocean for DM 5,000 (EUR 2,500). This article was the beginning of a 40 year career.

When Jakob arrived, we discussed the appeal of owning an own island for the entire evening. Through literature I had read as a young boy, I had become fascinated with the idea to own an island. Through my own investigations, I decided to find out if more islands were available to purchase. I found out that for DM 5,000, one could not buy an island, so perhaps this man had only leased the island.

In any case, I started to concentrate on the Indian Ocean and the Seychelles, as I was told that freehold islands were available there. I travelled to the High Commissioner in London with my old Volkswagen. He resided at Trafalgar Square. I walked into his one-man office and spoke to the Commissioner, who told me that islands could not be purchased in the Seychelles. Walking out of the office, I saw a newspaper, the Seychelles Gazette, and took a copy with me. Back in Hamburg, I sent DM 100 (which is the price I would pay for a small advertisement in a Hamburg newspaper) to the Seychelles Gazette. Surprisingly, for this amount, I received a full page advertisement which read that I was looking for a privately-owned island to be purchased and mentioned my name and address. Some offers came in – in particular one offer of a certain Italian gentleman, Mr. Raybaudi, who was selling Cousine Island as a result of a divorce. He was being represented by a lawyer called James Mancham.

Consequently, I spoke to Jakob von Uexküll and asked him if he would like to enter a partnership with me. At that time, he was studying in Oxford. He always had altruistic aims in mind and not private enterprises. For him, the planet was a concern – not the world of business. As I was very much partnership-minded, I spoke to my good friend, Rene Boehm, who was a student of law. The idea of joining forces to sell this island and many more in future excited him. He instantly liked the idea and as Rene was also a good friend, we started the venture. Needless to say, the asking price of the island mentioned was too high for two students to respond and therefore, we decided to sell the island to a third party and make money through a fee. We put all the photos and material together in a small offering memorandum and sent it around to people, whom we knew through the media were affluent. It was Rene Boehm who sent a letter to a certain Robert Vogel, who then acquired the island with two friends – Mr. Darboven and Mr. Marcard. Mr. Vogel and Mr. Marcard have since passed away. Mr. Vogel did not have the courage to purchase the island on his own and mentioned to Boehm and Vladi that he needed two partners. Two friends, Mr. Darboven, the most prominent German coffee merchant and the banker Marcard were mentioned. At that point, it was a coincidence that Farhad Vladi had worked as a trainee in the Marcard bank – what a small world. Nowadays, I often meet the Darbovens and not so long ago, Mrs. Darboven mentioned to me that “the island which you both sold to us was a trial for our marriage but obviously it has worked out well, as we are still happily married all these years later!” This was our first island sale and also the first business of the attorney, James Mancham, who later on became the first President of the Seychelles.

Since then, we have sold eight islands in the Seychelles. Some of these are still owned by our first clients.

Jakob von Uexküll was always interested in the island business and in particular at the beginning, he used to send me newspaper articles about private islands being offer for sale. At that time, I was sure that there was not one newspaper which Jakob had not read!

Some of these articles led to the next sales, which established Rene Boehm and myself in the business. For example – Île Lavrec in France or Tagomago in Spain.

The partnership with Rene Boehm lasted until 1985, when we decided to go different ways – mainly also due to my immigration to Canada and my new residence there with a new office and the strong focus on island property management. We are still friends today and while I am writing these lines, Rene and I have an appointment for dinner tonight. I will share the contents of this letter with him and invite him to comment on same.

I know that many journalists would like to know how the business started. Rene Boehm and I available any time to discuss the past.

Please see the enclosed confirmation.

Business had always been a great challenge for me but enjoyment always came from the successful partnership. It was very fulfilling and entertaining to work with such a partner for so many years.

Today, I look at many partnerships in investments or businesses (we are also involved in local television in Hamburg & Berlin, in geographical bookstores in Hamburg & Halifax; I am member of the World Future Council and curator of the Philharmonic of the Nations and honorary governor of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Canada).

I know that there are good people and bad people in life. Sometimes it is a challenge to disregard the bad and concentrate on the positive elements in life.

F. Vladi



**Cousine Island (Foto: F.Vladi)**



**Arrival of Rene Boehm and Farhad Vladi  
on their first trip to the Seychelles in 1972**