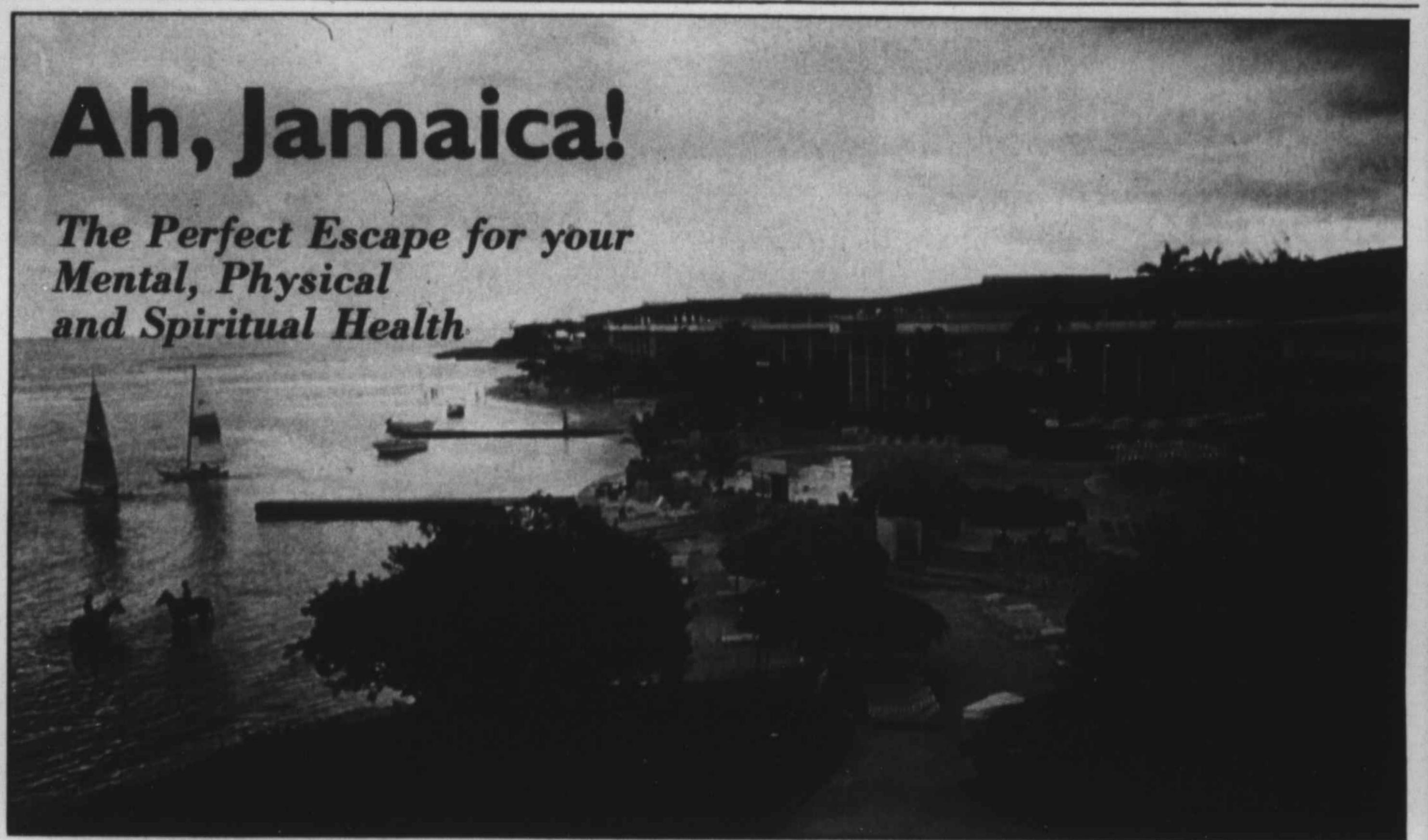


## HEALTH & FITNESS



Holiday Inn, Montego Bay

Photo courtesy Bill Kofoed, Inc.

## By Robyn-Denise Yourse

h, Jamaica! The lush tropical paradise of sun, sand, clear blue waters and non-stop rum punches may be just what the doctor ordered to eliminate the mental health woes that automatically accompany the hectic pace of the inner city lifestyle. Its leisurely lifestyle coupled with an appreciation of the simple pleasures can work wonders in helping to ease the day to day dosages of hassles and heartbreak.

Loosely translated, this spells stress. At the least, it can be tiring. At its worse, it can be life threatening. And it was staring me right in the face.

## BLAME IT ON THE RAIN

The winter of 1990 was truly one of my discontent. With the emotional fallout from the recent death of my mother; my termination of a horrendous relationship; mounting financial burdens; minimal but assorted health problems and an increased workload, the anxiety level in my life had reached an all-time high. But it didn't end there.

To make bad matters worse, someone knocked out the back window of my car in mid-March (in broad daylight) and took all my cassette tapes. That collection of mostly jazz and classical tapes, some 100 in all, was one of the few indulgences I had that gave me any pleasure. My insurance company refused to pay.

Was there some reason as to why the gods were wreaking havor in my life, all at once? "What next?" I thought. Surely there had to be mercy.

And so it came to pass.

To my own good fortune, I have always been blessed with an inner voice that quietly tells me when I've finally had enough. By April it was screaming "why don't you get away?"

Three weeks later, I was in Montego Bay.

## SPA STORIES: THE GOOD LIFE

The trip was my first to Jamaica, with more visits to most assuredly follow. What makes the island so appealing in addition to its breathtaking view, rich history and culture and mouth watering food? A basic appreciation of the simple life — devoid of pretense and "buppieitis".

During my four-day stay at the Holiday Inn there were no televisions, radios or newspapers. Dress was strictly casual; stockings, heels and underwear (smile) completely vanished from my wardrobe and my mind.

Others, too, have the same ideas. "Our whole concept is one of letting go of everything in the real world," says Richard Cherkiss, a native New Yorker and manager of Lady Diane's Health and Fitness in Montego Bay, located on the edge of the crystal clear Caribbean Sea.

At Lady Diane's, the bill of fare is strictly New Age: Yoga, meditation, low impact aerobics; stretching and toning classes; stress management and relaxation techniques are the order of the day. The resort sits on the town's main road near the airport, yet far away from the rigors of traffic and noise, and like most hotels and villas in the area, on the land that once housed the country's largest and cruel sugar plantations of the 18th century, the notorious Rose Hall estate.

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