

# Lodge at Suttle Lake sold to Portland development company

By **Bonnie Malone**  
Correspondent

On October 4, with a classic pastel sky glowing brilliantly as the sun set over the west end of the lake, Ronda Sneva locked the doors of The Lodge at Suttle Lake for the last time. The collage of colors reflected the emotions of the founder and owner of the landmark lodge that she built and opened in 2005.

“It is like the old saying, the best day for a boat owner is when you buy it and when you sell it,” she said.

The lake and the lodge are full of family and recreational memories, and memories of the many young people and local employees who helped make it special.

The lodge itself was a work of the heart. It was filled with Native and Western paintings, J. Chester Armstrong wood sculptures and representative wildlife taxidermy from the collection of Dr. Steven Spear.

Sneva also instituted a very popular annual Native salmon bake with storyteller Wilson Wewa narrating the Native history of the lake and mountains, along with traditional Native dances performed by the tribes of Warm Springs.

Sneva, who had been part owner of The Boathouse Restaurant, became sole owner of the facility in 2003. She invested in renovation of the rundown diner to create a memorable dining experience that became a favorite locale for both special occasions and quiet casual dinners.

Later that same summer, the B&B Complex Fire struck Suttle Lake as it destroyed 90,000 acres between Mt. Washington and Mt. Jefferson Wildernesses and forests. Although The Boathouse Restaurant was spared, access was closed for many weeks.

Sneva, who was able to talk her way into the evacuated area on the second day of “no access” government orders, passed the keys to the restaurant to a firefighting crew, who dined on five-star food for the next many days and continued to camp in the building and use the kitchen for almost two months.

“The food would have been wasted,” Sneva said, “so why not let those heroic firefighters enjoy it?”

(Sneva owns an emergency mobile food-service company. There wasn’t a moment of hesitation in offering firefighters the use of her new restaurant.)

Yet, despite such obstacles, the Central Oregon native was driven to do more. As a child, her family lived its water-sports experiences at Suttle Lake, and the lodge at the east end of the lake was a vision of romance and beauty for the young girl. The lodge burned in 1972, never to be restored. The few cabins near the lakefront suffered decay from lack of care and use.

With The Boathouse ownership, Sneva felt a craving to build a new lodge and share the elegant quiet of the pristine forest location with travelers and guests, especially those who enjoyed lake activities. She began negotiations with the U.S. Forest Service (the managing department of the publicly owned lake and surrounding forest) in a process that took most of the next two years. Ecological and environmental concerns were the primary focus. Septic systems, foliage diversity, and traffic dictated the planning.

“There was so much more potential there than had been tapped,” Sneva said, “and the vegetation was in desperate need of rejuvenation.”

Noxious weeds and barren ground, where local people

pitched tents and camped for long periods of the summer, had undone the former lake-side beauty at the east end and along Lake Creek.

“I am proud to have been a good ambassador in the restoration of both Lake Creek and the lake itself in environmental improvements. I believe our actions complemented the recovery of both by the USFS.”

Her development included a new well and an Orenco state-of-the-art wastewater system that was tested monthly. Sneva also reintroduced appropriate foliage in a cooperative effort with the USFS.

Finally, the lodge was opened, along with nine private cabins dotting the forest between the creek, the lodge, and Cinder Beach. Three of these were historic and six were new.

The Lodge became a welcoming location for events and fundraising in Sisters Country. There were Aspire workshops, sports fundraisers, and a Brain Injury Alliance dinner among them. As a strong believer in community support, Sneva often hosted these with no rental fees and donated meals.

In its opening year, the Lodge presented the Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce Christmas party, in which Sneva’s decorations for her favorite holiday were in full display. The gentle outdoor lighting of the lodge became

a permanent fixture, an anticipated signal of “almost there” to highway travelers heading to their eastbound destinations.

In 2013, as water levels in Central Oregon exceeded flood stage, The Boathouse Restaurant suffered severe flood damage. There was not sufficient insurance to rebuild the facility with improvements that were mandated. The crisis changed the atmosphere of the combined facilities, with a huge impact on function as a waterfront resort.

Throughout the next year, the resort attempted to continue dinner service for guests and residents from the Lodge kitchen, which was not designed for that kind of food service. This unsatisfactory attempt led to closure of the Lodge, except for special events and weddings. The 2015 season hosted weddings, almost every weekend of the summer and early fall, as its only activity.

“So many things changed, including within the family,” Sneva said, “which caused me to decide that it was time for someone else to take over this beautiful setting and promote the resort.”

The right investors seem to have been found.

“We are so pleased that someone will restore the resort to its full function, especially with food service,” Sneva said.

Robert Sacks and Dave

Schrott are the new owners of The Suttle Lake Resort and Marina. Their company, A&R Development Company, has been active in real estate and business development in Portland for many years.

“My family is excited to go there as guests and support the new ownership.”  
— Ronda Sneva

The company was responsible for the renovation of a 1911 hotel for the ACE Hotel group and the redevelopment of a defunct bowling alley into “The Lumberyard,” the first indoor mountain-biking park in the West. Their most recent vision, Coopers Hall Winery, has opened as the first “keg-only” winery in Portland, dedicated to the environmentally friendly wholesale distribution of wine in kegs.

Through the winter, The Lodge and Resort at Suttle Lake will be closed while renovation is completed. SL Resort, LLC, will be sharing more information about the new operation over coming months.

“My family is excited to go there as guests and support the new ownership,” Sneva said. “Suttle Lake will always remain a part of our lives.”



**SISTERS FOLK FESTIVAL**  
Presents  
**EMERGING SONGWRITER**  
AT THE BELFRY  
302 E. MAIN ST. • SISTERS

**CHRISTOPHER PAUL STELLING**


NEW YORK SONGWRITER WITH A UNIQUE IMAGINATION, VOICE AND GUITAR

SUNDAY OCT 25<sup>TH</sup> 7 P.M.

DOORS OPEN AT 6PM

ADULTS \$15 - YOUTH \$10 (18 YRS AND UNDER)

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [SISTERSFOLKFESTIVAL.ORG/SFF-PRESENTS](http://SISTERSFOLKFESTIVAL.ORG/SFF-PRESENTS)



**Dr. Bonnie Malone, DC**  
*The wind meets me in a thunderous rush of being.*  
*Thanks to a lifetime of chiropractic and exercises it is never too late to begin new life practices.*

Serving Sisters for 34 years!

Please donate to SPRD's Bonnie Malone Scholarship Fund, a tax-deductible gift for Sisters youth. [www.sistersecreation.com](http://www.sistersecreation.com).

**Chiropractic Musculoskeletal Therapy & Exercise Counseling**  
**Nutritional and General Health Counseling**  
Certified Cervical Cap Provider (safe, non-chemical birth-control device)

Oregon Board of Chiropractors Peer Review Committee, six years service  
COVERED BY ALL MAJOR AND LOCAL INSURANCE COMPANIES (by policy limits)

Sisters Chiropractic Clinic • 16190 Hwy. 126, Sisters • 541-549-7141