

# Real Estate Special Report

## Helmly launches Ponderosa Lodge remodel project

**Jim Cornelius**  
News Editor

Loy Helmly has returned to Sisters Country to help fulfill a vision.

For many years, Helmly was general manager at Black Butte Ranch (BBR), before moving on to work at other resort properties and as a hospitality industry consultant. His old friend Mike Reed lured him back to Sisters, and now he is general manager at Sisters' Best Western Ponderosa Lodge, where he is working on projects that will enhance the landmark Sisters lodging establishment in a way that was envisioned years ago by the late Bill and Jan Reed.

The work has started with a simple but significant upgrade of each room's bathroom fixtures — new granite countertops; sinks and faucets; mirrors; lighting.

The \$250,000 project got underway last month — after a long delay. The longshoremen's labor action at the Port of Portland left the granite countertops from China floating on a cargo ship out on the Pacific Ocean for weeks.

Helmly estimated the delay at 1-1/2 to two months.

The work got underway at last, bringing the rooms and suites at Ponderosa Lodge up to date.

Helmly explained the importance of such upgrades, which need to happen every five to seven years to keep up with wear-and-tear and changes in styles.

Travelers — who review hotels on online sites like TripAdvisor — and rating agencies pay attention to what properties are doing to keep up function and appearance.

"They want to see properties active in improving their offerings to the public," Helmly said.

Travelers are sensitive to dated-looking fixtures. They want quality and value — and the comforts and convenience of home.

"They've got that in their homes; they expect some of that in their lodging experience," Helmly said.

When visitors and raters see effort being put in, that translates to good word-of-mouth, repeat visits — and an improved bottom line. It's a highly competitive business

and every room rental counts. "There's nothing more perishable than a hotel room night," Helmly said. "If you don't sell it tonight, you can't sell it two times tomorrow."

The upgrade is just the first step in a more ambitious plan for Ponderosa Lodge. Before they were killed in a plane crash in the San Juan Islands in 2005, Bill and Jan Reed envisioned an expanded facility that their children — Ashley, Ryan, and Brittany — could operate as a legacy.

Now adults, they are active in different aspects of the operation.

"They are all still really enthusiastic about the Ponderosa Lodge and want to see it grow and realize the vision that their parents had," Helmly said.

"To be able to fulfill that vision ... is an exciting thing to do," Helmly said.

That vision includes adding another 50 rooms to the lodge and remodeling the pool area to create a natural look and feel. A new entry area will be constructed to accommodate the growth.

"The plan was to do this in the next three to four years

in a phased process," Helmly explained.

Helmly is well-suited to oversee the unfolding of the long-term plans. His entire career has been in the hospitality business, and he knows it intuitively through years of experience.

When he left Black Butte Ranch in 2008, he hit the road for several years — tough ones for the industry. He was a consultant in Hawaii, Colorado, and Washington, work that he described as challenging but fun.

He enjoyed the travel, but it was not easy working in an industry hit hard by the Great Recession, which heavily impacted business and personal travel and forced properties to fiercely tighten up their operations.

For two years, 2012 and 2013, Helmly managed House on Metolius in Camp Sherman, then, in 2014, he moved to Bend to Tetherow golf course, hotel, and resort.

But all the time there was another opportunity in the back of his mind.

Mike Reed, Bill's brother, knew that Helmly was the right man to see the family's



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Loy Helmly is actively at work to enhance Sisters' Ponderosa Lodge.

vision to fruition. The two men had established a strong working relationship when Helmly ran BBR and Mike was at the Ranch selling real estate.

Over the years, Mike gently planted the seed for Helmly to come to Ponderosa Lodge. And this year, Helmly decided it was time.

"It's fun to be back working with Mike again," he said.

Helmly is happy to be here and pleased to be entrusted not only with the management of a significant Sisters Country property, but with a family legacy that means so much to so many.

For more information on the Best Western Ponderosa Lodge, call 541-549-1234.

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