

Bowman's changes hands

After 30 years, the family-owned resort is sold

by CAROL THURLKILL
Post Correspondent

"There's an old saying: 'There's a time to sow and there's a time to reap,' said Gene Bowman.

Now is Gene Bowman's time to reap. After 30 years as owner of Bowman's Resort in Welches, he has decided to call it quits. American Guaranty Financial Corp. has purchased the resort for a reported \$3 million and plans to incorporate it into its Rippling River development.

Memories go back a long way for Bowman. He was reluctant to break his ties with the past for nostalgic reasons but economics and the demands of running the resort dictated that he sell the property.

"You don't give up your roots that quickly without feeling a little sadness about it," he said in a long-distance phone conversation from his winter retreat in Palm Springs.

"There are some people working there now who came when we did 30 years ago," he said. "And there have been some of the same groups of people returning year after year. We're going to miss all the friends we've made."

Bowman and his two sisters, Pauline Mathewson and Phyllis Fritz, bought the old Welches Golf Club in 1948 for \$68,500. It was something "fun to do" in the summer for himself and his wife, Peggy.

The investment didn't appear to have been the right decision financially for the first few years.

"As a matter of fact," he recalled, "when we first bought it, most of my friends thought I had rocks in my head. The place was in the red all the time."

But after we'd been there five years, we found out we had a wonderful location."

With the help of their children, identical twins Bruce and Keith, and Gail, plus a lot of long hours, the little nine-hole golf course and club house gradually developed into a thriving

resort with an 18-hole golf course, 42 motels, 70 condominiums, and a covered swimming pool. Expensive houses have sprung up on \$20,000 lots along Fairway Avenue.

The elder Bowman is proud of the fact that he never took any money from the resort for his own salary. Nor did he ever have to borrow to make improvements.

"There have been a number of things we wanted to do," he said. "But you have to make a place pay its own way. And you do that slowly."

Bruce and Keith both said that while they respect their father's decision to sell the resort, they too have mixed feelings about it.

"At first, I was definitely against selling," Bruce said. Now I'm in favor of it.

"I think he's saying how its time for us (boys) to do something on our own."

Both men, now in their fifties, helped their parents run the resort. Keith, who had thoughts of becoming a tug boat pilot, began working full time there about 20 years ago. His chores at first were primarily helping in the kitchen.

Bruce joined the business after working as an architect in Portland. The brothers assumed more of the management responsibilities of the resort over the past 10 years while their father spent more time in Palm Springs.

Keith says he is already enjoying the break from the responsibility. He plans to continue selling real estate for Mt. Hood Properties. After six more months at Bowman's, Bruce says he will have more definite plans for his future. They both plan to continue playing golf on Bowman's links.

So at least for now, the resort will continue to go by the name of Bowman's. American Guaranty president James Anderson said last week that operations will continue as before. What the future may hold for the resort is uncertain at this point.

Said the elder Bowman, "We have served our time."



GOLFERS IN earlier days practice their shots on Bowman's putting green. Inset photo is Mr. and Mrs. Gene Bowman.

Owners come and owners go, but Jennie Welch lives on

Heavens, they're taking color pictures on the moon. What am I to worry about two little golf courses in front and in back of me," says Jennie Welch.

The little lady (she is 88) operates a small antique shop on the road named for her husband's family. She has seen Welches Golf Club grow since 1927 from a small nine-hole golf course to the sprawling Bowman's Resort.

Jennie and her sister Mildred Simmons, owned and operated the golf club between 1939 and 1944. Jennie has cut the grass on the greens more than a few times and "played a pretty good game of golf" at one time.

Now the resort has been taken over by American Guaranty Financial Corp. which plans to incorporate it into Rippling River development across the road.

Jeannie remembers when the golf club wasn't nearly as in demand as

it is today. The course was built in 1929, not a good year for investments in leisure activities.

"They played their first game of golf in August of 1929," she recalled. "Then in October, the crash came."

Things went from bad to worse for the operators of the club, Mr. Shattuck and Mr. Walle. It was little used and the greens became overgrown, the silver and dishes became run down.

Eventually, they couldn't make the payments on the property and the Welches family, which had leased it to them, took it over.

"When we took it over, the place was in debt," Mrs. Welch recalls. "They hadn't paid the taxes."

"Then one day this burly mafia-type guy comes to me and says, 'I want you to put slot machines in here,'" she said. "I took the machines."

"I thank the Lord for those slot machines. They paid for the taxes

and the clubs."

She and her sister took over the golf club in 1939. Jennie's husband, Billie, the postmaster of Welches post office, died in 1942 leaving her to run that too.

Mildred did the cooking and Jennie chopped the wood for heat and mowed the golf course in summer.

"There were 10 greens to mow," she said. "In those days I couldn't hire anyone to work."

"I saved the golf course as a golf course." But after she sold it, "I've never been back on it and I don't intend to go back." The golf club went through two more owners in the 1940s before Gene Bowman purchased it in 1948. "When people ask me if I'm sorry I sold the golf course, I could kick them," Jennie says adamantly. "You don't live behind yourself. You have today."

— Carol Thurlkill

Urban boundary discussed County plan revision starts

by JAN LOVELL
county reporter

County residents and officials had the chance to educate each other on revising Clackamas County's comprehensive plan last week.

Only about 25 citizens seized the opportunity to attend what was billed as a "town hall" meeting on revising the county's 1974 comprehensive plan, however.

The "urban growth boundary" was a frequent topic of concern at the meeting. The urban growth boundary separates natural resources and rural areas from areas designated for eventual urban development.

County officials would not talk specifically on where they will draw the new boundary line, but they did say planners are now in the process of studying alternatives for the line.

County planners told the board of commissioners last December the urban growth boundary set by the Columbia Region Association of Governments was "unrealistic" in trying to meet the county's projected

population needs for the year 2000.

Tom Vanderzanden, land use transportation planner for the county, said it is "likely" the new Metropolitan Service District will not have the authority to designate the boundary and it will be up to the counties to determine their own boundaries.

The new MSD recently adopted CRAG's boundary line and is waiting for an opinion from Attorney General Jim Redden on whether it has the authority to set the line.

Some citizens felt the line should include more area and some said it should include less, with one resident saying that all development in the county should be halted.

"No one can afford to buy lots within the growth boundary because it is so limited and has caused costs to skyrocket," said R.C. Smelser, an Oregon City builder.

Delmer Schwab of Portland felt the current comprehensive plan showed the county was preparing to be a residential county instead of providing for development.

Dea Begert of Rock Creek disagreed with the county's plans to expand the line. "Is Clackamas County going to be a bedroom community?" she asked. "Or are we going to be concerned about economic development instead of bickering about lot sizes? It seems like we're putting the cart before the horse."

"If the county is going to expand the urban growth boundary and increase the population density, then the economic growth projections must be there too."

Vanderzanden replied the industrial and economic climate in the county looks "pretty good" right now and that industry would probably continue to grow even if the growth boundary was not expanded.

Gary MacDonald of Rock Creek said the county must look at the whole metropolitan area in deciding where the boundary line should be drawn. He said CRAG had determined the entire metropolitan area within the current growth boundary had enough land to support development through the year 2000.

Other concerns about the comprehensive plan were also voiced. One county resident said he felt the county

officials were speaking too "reverently" about the Land Conservation and Development Commission goals and the county should be able to make its own plan.

Ardis Stevenson, coordinator of the department of environmental services, said the county was required to at least address the LCDC land use goals in the comprehensive plan. "We don't want to parrot another plan exactly, of course, but we do want a legal one," she said.

Another county resident was concerned about controlling urban sprawl. He said if the sewage services continue to be so "strung out" he would no longer be able to stay in the business.

Mike Schmauch of Rock Creek questioned whether the commissioners or the planning staff really considered the opinions of the residents in a particular area before they made plans for that area.

Stevenson and Dominic Mancini, assistant director of planning, explained the "issues" and "directions" for revising the 1974 comprehensive plan. Stevenson explained the plan must be reviewed every five years to reevaluate changes in what the county officials and citizens feel is important and to make the plan coincide better with the physical changes that have occurred within the county.

Stevenson also said the 1974 plan was adopted before LCDC determined the land use goals and the county plan must coincide with those goals. The final revisions are expected to be adopted before January.

Mancini and Stevenson said the main concerns in revising the plan are with land use, parks and open space, economic development, housing, transportation, public facilities, natural resources and citizen involvement. Stevenson said each of the concerns is dependent upon the others, so any decisions made in one area must be made only after considering the impact on the others.

"We only have 25 people here now because we're still just in the philosophical stage of the plan," Stevenson said. "But you wait until May when we get down to the specifics of the planning for certain properties, and we'll have ten times as many people as we had here tonight."



Chain gang

WHEN ONE driver got out to put on tire chains, it started a "chain reaction" Sunday on Highway 26 going up to Mt. Hood. Even though the roads were clear at this place about a mile above Rhedendrum, many motorists stopped to put their

chains on anyway. Their efforts were not useless because they encountered snowy roads when they got to Government Camp.

Staff photo