

Shifting gears from software to visitor care

Former Intel engineer takes on hotels

By Edward Stratton
EO Media Group

For Taslema Sultana, a former engineer at Intel, taking over management of four hotels and two apartments in Cannon Beach and Seaside has been a relaxing step back.

Sultana, whose husband, Masudur Kahn, runs four hotels in Seaside, is part of an ownership group that recently purchased hotels in South County owned by Antoine and Rocio Simmons, who has transitioned out of the local hospitality industry.

Before hospitality, Sultana, who has a Ph.D. in chemical engineering, was a senior engineer at Intel for eight years, overseeing high-volume manufacturing for the chipmaker and helping set up a new factory.

By 2015, she had already been thinking about starting her own business, likely in real estate. She founded a property company and took over management of an eight-unit apartment complex in Seaside while pregnant with her youngest of three daughters.

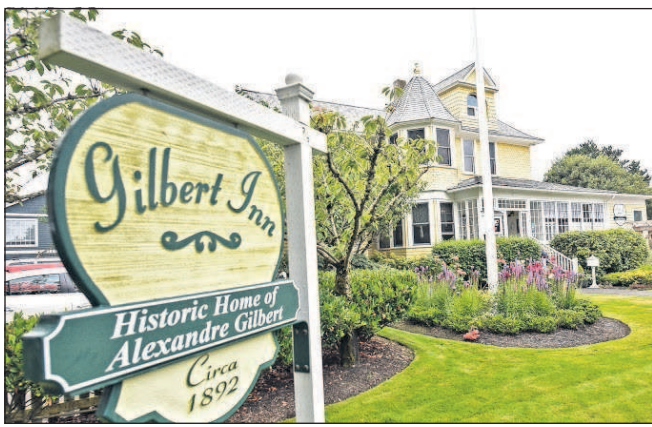
After the birth, Sultana left on maternity leave and a sabbatical from Intel. Upon returning in July 2016, Sultana learned she was among the hundreds of employees being laid off during the company's recent restructuring.

"It kind of expedited my business ventures," she said with a laugh.

Her husband, had been in the hotel industry for 12 years, first as an investor and later as an owner after buying the Inn at Seaside in the summer of 2009. Khan now runs four properties in Seaside, including the River Inn at Seaside, City Center Motel and Coast River Inn.

Transition

The Simmons family started their hospitality careers in 2001 with the purchase of the Blue Gull Inn, adding the Inn



COLIN MURPHEY/EO MEDIA GROUP

TOP, Taslema Sultana walks around the grounds of one of the hotels in Cannon Beach that she now manages. Sultana recently took over management of four hotels in the area as well as other real estate properties. **ABOVE LEFT,** The Gilbert Inn is one of the hotels in Seaside and Cannon Beach that are now managed by Sultana and her husband. **ABOVE RIGHT,** Several of the hotels managed by Sultana and her husband feature elaborate landscaping, including a wide variety of flowers and other plants as well as fountains and areas to relax for patrons.

'I really think they know what they're doing, and they're going to do a great job.'

Antoine Simmons

at Haystack Rock two years later and forming the management company Haystack Lodgings to run other hotels. They bought the oceanfront Inn at the Prom in 2011 and the Gilbert Inn, a historic 1892

Victorian, in 2014. Antoine Simmons, also a former employee of Intel before his foray into hospitality, said the properties in Cannon Beach had been on the market since last summer, as his fam-

ily sought to transition out of the coastal hospitality industry.

"It's tough, because it's really about the employees, being with them," he said of leaving the properties and

employees who grew to be like family. "We've been with many of them over 10 to 15 years."

Sultana learned last summer the properties were on the market. Simmons wasn't

ready to sell in February, she said, but let her start managing the properties in Cannon Beach and learning the ropes.

Late last month, multiple LLCs owned by Sultana, Khan and other family friends as investors completed the purchase of the Simmons' four South County hotels. The Inn at Haystack Rock and Blue Gull Inn in Cannon Beach sold for nearly \$3.6 million to SR Lodging LLC, run by Sultana and Sazzadur Rahman, with whom she and Khan also manage other properties. The Gilbert Inn and Inn at the Prom sold for more than \$3.9 million to Seaside Prom LLC, run by Sultana, Khan and family friend Bashir Mahmud.

Along with the four hotels, Sultana now manages two apartment complexes, coming to the coast from Portland several times a week. Despite the travel, she said the position is more relaxing and flexible than Intel, allowing her to spend more time with her children.

The future

Sultana said that beside some upgrades to the facades, furniture and other amenities, no big changes are coming to any of the properties, which are still taken care of by the same 25 or so employees through Haystack Lodgings. "They know what our guests want, and they're really good people," she said.

Antoine Simmons, who last month pulled the plug on a proposed 48-room luxury hotel in Seaside after receiving an offer on the property, is developing a new 37-unit apartment complex in the center of Warrenton. He is also developing another apartment complex in Utah and a branded hotel in Sherwood.

"It just was a good fit for both of us," he said of his and Rocio's sale of the hotels. "I really think they know what they're doing, and they're going to do a great job."

He lauded Khan's experience in the industry, and said he was especially pleased that all his existing staff could be kept on. "They're kind of like the new us."

Boone, Bonamici discuss energy, environment in Cannon Beach

Appearance at Chamber of Commerce breakfast

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

State Rep. Deborah Boone on Tuesday, Aug. 7, praised a bill approved by the Legislature that allows electricity produced from an ocean wave-technology test site at Camp Rilea in Warrenton to be used to power the site.

Boone, a strong supporter of wave technology as renewable energy for the Oregon Coast, said initial tests conducted last summer showed



BRENNA VISSER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

State Rep. Deborah Boone speaks to Cannon Beach residents at the Chamber of Commerce, Aug. 8.

promise for future growth in the industry.

The test site, funded by the Oregon Wave Energy Trust,

was introduced three years ago and faced initial skepticism about impacts to crabbing and fishing industries, as

well as ocean aesthetics. So far, Boone said, she has not been made aware of any negative environmental impacts.

"When we have a Cascadia event, we will not have power. We aren't talking for three to five weeks — we are thinking three to five years," Boone said. "So we will be relying on local energy."

Boone, D-Cannon Beach, and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Oregon, discussed legislative priorities and answered questions at the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce's monthly community breakfast meeting.

Bonamici discussed environmental and emergency preparedness-related bills she had worked on this year in

Congress, including a marine debris bill that would provide a funding source for research and cleanup.

The congresswoman also celebrated the bipartisan support for legislation that would help improve weather forecasts and storm warnings.

Bonamici came to Cannon Beach to talk about local issues, but also faced questions from the audience on national topics like immigration policy, the Paris climate agreement and what it is like to be in Congress during the Trump administration.

The Cannon Beach City Council voted recently on a resolution to support the Paris accord, despite President Donald Trump's decision to

withdraw. Mayor Sam Steidel asked Bonamici what kind of impacts small cities could make with resolutions like these. "It's been heard," she said, adding that any support helps when she still spends a significant portion of time debating the existence of climate change with some of her House colleagues.

Bonamici said she has been seeing record turnout at town hall meetings, often filled with inquiries about "polarization" in Washington, D.C.

"There are concerns about the Trump administration on both sides of the aisle," Bonamici said. "But there are still lots of bipartisan efforts in the House."



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