THE NORTH BEACH

## A whole new experience at Iron Springs

BY ANGELO BRUSCAS The Daily World

OPALIS BEACH Despite its wear and tear over the years, Doug True has maintained a long and lasting love affair with the Iron Springs Resort and its view cabins that look out on the majestic Pacific below.

"I just think it's such beautiful property," True said with reverance, surveying the scene beyond the new deck before him where the resort meets the ocean.

True is president of Gull Industries, a Seattle-based private company that started as an oil company with numerous gas stations in the region and now has transitioned into commercial real estate holdings, mostly in the Puget Sound area.

**Doug True** 

When he heard the resort was on the market last year, True decided it was time to jump headfirst into the resort business, too, making a multimillion-dollar investment with his heart for what he describes as the experience of a lifetime on the Washington coast.

He said he first started going to Iron Springs with his family in the 1970s.

"And then I got married in the early 1980s and we started going back with the kids up until the late '90s," he recalled of his many trips to the resort. "But after that, the cabins got pretty run down. Then we noticed the place was for sale, and so we took a run

designs were provided by Robert Arnesan of Seattle. New wood-carved signs adorn the resort, and those were all designed by local carver David Thompson, who works out of the Etue Woodcarving studio on State Route 109.

The True family also had to install a new septic and water facility because

some of the cabins lacked decent water pressure and some would lose water altogether.

"Probably the lower cabins, which were the oldest and in the worst shape, had more extensive remodels than the upper cabins that

had been built in the '70s," Doug True said. "But all of the upper cabins also have everything new inside. We just didn't have to do as much foundation work up there and things like that."

Dustin True said the approach was to rennovate everything while keeping the old charm intact.

"It became 25 single

projects that morphed into one huge project," he said.

Some of the wood from the old cabins was used in the reconstructed ones, and trees that had to be cut down were made into benches or used for other features. Only two fireplaces had to be taken down, so most of the cabins have been remodeled



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Dustin True stands in one of the newly remodeled cabins at the Iron Springs Resort in Copalis Beach. True has managed the resort's upgrade for his family.



"I think our experience is a lot different than Seabrook's, but there's something for everybody up here."

After a year of closure for the renovations, Iron Springs once again began to welcome guests on June 30. Doug True said the resort is "substantially booked" through July, with plenty of openings in August and September.

"We're just trying to get the word out right now, and most of the people who have already booked down the "lodge" because it wasn't salvageable)," said one reviewer on the Website yelp.com. "But my, oh my, it's worth it!

"Each cabin now has a beautiful, fully stocked and nicely sized kitchen with granite countertops and dishwashers. Each bathroom (also with granite countertops) has been totally remodeled, some with double-showers. Brand new interiors, flooring, carpets, furniture ... the list goes on. And the beds! No longer do you wake up with a backache, feeling like you slept on the floor. Now, it's like sleeping on a cloud."

Another velp.com re-

cabins for a reported price of \$1,66 million cash in June 2010 after Gull Industries sold a lucrative lot it owned across from Safeco Field in Seattle for \$17.8 million.

"It kind of correlated," True said of the timing of the transactions.

According to the Grays Harbor County Assessor's Office, the resort currently is valued at \$2.37 million, \$1.05 million for the land and \$1.31 million for the buildings.

Asked if he felt the price was a bargain, True replied: "I think we did pretty good, but there was a lot of work to be done. We went into it with open eyes, but it always ends up costing a little more than you think."

## **EXTENSIVE REMODEL**

While he declined to disclose how much money has been spent in the renovation project, True described the work as extensive, especially to some of the older cabins that dated back to the 1940s when the resort was purchased by Olive Little in 1947. The Little family had owned the resort for more than 60 years until it was sold to True.

"We pretty much remodeled or renovated all of the cabins, but left all the footprints" from the old buildings, he said. "Every unit got new kitchens, all new fixtures, furniture including beds, and complete new bathrooms."

Some of the cabins had been added in the 1950s, while others were more modern, but all needed renovation.

"This property is extremely special because of the footprints of the cabins," said Dustin True, Doug's son and the on-site manager of the project. "You couldn't build them today because they are so close to the cliffs, the shoreline and the river."

Black Creek Construction out of Montesano was hired to do the construction work because the True family wanted a local contractor, while the renovation intact. Resort in Copalis Beach.

"We tried to
use as much
from the renovation as we
could to stick back into the
buildings," Doug True said.

Old blankets were cut up and the fabric used to upholster chairs and stools in the cabins, giving each cabin its own unique funishings and features. All the beds are new, and each cabin also has a new futon that can be used as another bed. But all the original artwork that used to adorn the old cabins remains intact.

One popular feature that had to be scrapped was the old indoor swimming pool, that Doug True described as being "in pretty bad shape." Eventually, he would like to see a new pool built, but that's not in any immediate plans.

"We went back and forth on the pool, but we may put another one in. That's kind of phase 2 right now," Doug True said.

The family, however, did preserve one relic from the old resort lodge that

**Veterans' Benefits:** 

had to be torn down — the upside-down rowboat that was a fixture out front. It has been painted and raised up as part of a grand front entry sign for the resort. The remodel work also included an improved trail down to the beach, which looks out over the scenic Copalis Rocks.

### TV, PHONES AND WI-FI

Many of the cabins got new decks with new barbecues, and all of them now come with flat screen TVs and Wi-Fi throughout the property.

"It was important to us to maintain the things that first drew us to the place, while making some updates that simply improve upon what was already here," Doug True says in an online message to guests about the renovations.

"We added Internet, TV and phones, and there wasn't any of that before," he said.

True noted that he and his

family were once staying at Iron Springs when his wife Janet had a gallbladder attack. "The only phone that was available was a pay phone out on the highway," he said. "Now there's phones in every room and it's great."

The remodel at Iron Springs is expected to compete somewhat with the growing Seabrook resort beach community south of Pacific Beach, but True sees plenty of room for all on the North Beach coast.

"For some reason, the Washington coast just never took off," Doug True said. "With Seabrook doing what they have done and with us doing what we've done, hopefully we're going to get it revived and people will be interested in it again.

have been there before," he said. "We did capture some e-mail addresses and addresses of former guests, but the records of the former owners weren't that great."

### **RATES AND REVIEWS**

Rates at the new Iron
Springs start at \$159 to \$199
a night for the best cabins.
Prices also vary by season,
with the high during summer running \$289 per night
for an ocean-view, two-bedroom cabin. All the cabins
are "pet friendly," and the
resort even has special dog
towels available for those
bringing pets along.

Reviews upon reopening have been generally favorable, with the biggest complaint being the price.

"Yes, it's pretty dang pricey. And yes, some of the landmark things about it are gone (they had to tear viewer from Seattle wrote:
"They have gotten rid of
the charm ... and put prices
so high that folks that have
been coming to the place for
the past four or five decades
can't afford it anymore."

Doug True does have a few new ideas about how the resort should be marketed, such as trying to attract more group business.

"That would involve building some kind of meeting room where people could come for family reunions or weddings. We have space for between 75 and 80 people sleeping, so you would need room that could potentially accommodate that many people," he said. "But that's kind of the next step."

For more information about Iron Springs Resort, e-mail info@ironspringsresort.com, or visit the resort Website at www.ironspringsresort.com.



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