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Brookdale

Lodge To Reopen In June

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The Brookdale Lodge is being restored to its once-famous splendor and will reopen by June, Bill Gus, owner of the San Lorenzo Valley site, promises.

Gus said rumors are false that the effort to revamp the motel and restaurant has gone bankrupt.

He's facing a lawsuit from the lodge's former owner to repossess the site, and is involved in a Chapter 11 proceeding in Bankruptcy Court to work out a plan to pay \$80,000 to creditors, but he's not throwing in the towel, Gus insisted.

"I've footed the bill this long," Gus said. "We have a lot of pride in the place and we definitely plan to see it open."

Restoration work on the famous restaurant with Clear Creek running right through the center will begin again next week, Gus said. Construction was halted when the suit was filed by Burger in September.

The rustic-looking restaurant, bar, meeting rooms and indoor pool could have been opened a long time ago, but Gus didn't want to do the project piecemeal, his attorney, John Bohrer, said.

Gus, who started the restoration as part of a corporation and now is the only owner left, said he will add modern touches to the site that was built in the 1920s.

The entire place will be solar-heated, he said, and due to concerns raised during the recent two-year drought, he's installing some water-saving equipment.

He plans to refurbish the 40-room motel and install saunas and jacuzzis around the 126,000-gallon indoor pool.

But, along with these contemporary touches, Gus also hopes to bring back the Brookdale Lodge of the past.

The original restaurant, which burned down in 1956, had live redwoods growing along the creek bank. When the restaurant was rebuilt, the redwoods weren't replanted. Gus plans to replant some live redwoods.

Gus, who said he is a long-time area resident, explained he bought the lodge because he always wanted to build a restaurant and has fond memories of dining at the Brookdale Lodge.

His dream, however, verged on becoming a nightmare several times along the way.

First, it was concerns from area residents about the kinds of people the Brookdale Lodge was attracting and the in-



Brookdale Lodge Owner Bill Gus says the facility will reopen in June.

creased traffic and circulation problems a restored lodge would create.

Gus said he's removed the "undesireable element" in the cabins across Highway 9 from the lodge, and from the motel rooms.

The lodge once was a haven for the young transients who came to the Valley in the early 70s. Its use permit was lost because of rock concerts held at the lodge.

After appeasing the community, Gus then encountered delays in getting a use permit and building permits from the county, he said.

"When we finally go our use permits and building permits from the county, our financing (from private sources) was no longer available," Gus lamented.

Then came the lawsuit from former owner Richard Burger, who claims Gus failed to pay him \$725,000 for the site.

Gus doesn't want to give up the site, claiming its much more valuable today because he was able to secure a use permit.

"When we came in here, we were the first owners to be able to get use permits in seven years for the whole property. That means it's mortgageable now and that puts it in a good financial position," Gus said.

Despite all these troubles, the lodge hasn't remained deserted. The motel units are open and have filled up on some weekends, Gus said.

Several shops opened in a wing of the motel complex, but most closed when rumors of bankruptcy spread. Gus said the shops will reopen by June.

Also, he said, a revived interest in marriage has meant good business for the lodge's wedding chapel.

"Let's face it," Gus said, "they'll never be another place like this anywhere."

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