

Brookdale Lodge sold

By Jack Fraser

A San Francisco police lieutenant and his wife are the new owners of Brookdale Lodge, The Valley's most famous meeting place of the 1920's through 50's, that later became tarnished and allegedly a drug users den.

William Gilbert and his wife Leann purchased the eight-acre property in Brookdale, along with its famous old hotel, dance hall, dining rooms, bar and stores from Dick and Curtis Burger of Palm Springs and Minnesota. Burger was asking around \$3 million for the property but Gilbert said he paid less. The final price was around \$2.3 million, according to some sources. The deal includes valuable land on both sides of Highway 9 that some realtors say is worth more than the old hotel building and newer additions.

Gilbert, who has been with the San Francisco police department for 22 years and is assigned to the traffic division now, said Tuesday he evicted tenants who were behind in rent or presented other risks plus squatters. He obtained the help of Santa Cruz County Sheriff's deputies in making some of the changes Sunday and Monday.

Gilbert said he and his wife intend to prevent any use of illegal drugs or drug sales on the property.

In 1988 a months long investigation of persons living at the lodge, doing business there or congregating there led to several arrests.

Gilbert said he bought the lodge because of fond memories of staying in the The Valley at cabins owned by his family and because he enjoys the historic associations of the famous property.

He said his first objective is to get the property secure, to avoid further

breakins or damage by vandals.

The Gilberts plan on making improvements to the hotel, keeping it open, along with the bar and coffee shop and stores. Around 46 rooms in the lodge, in varying grade of quality, are open now and dozens more could be renovated and used.

Gilbert said he will live part of each week at the lodge while keeping his veteran job with the police department.

Brookdale Lodge was built in 1924 by a Seventh Day Adventist physician, Dr. J. H. Camp, though a portion, the redwood room called the "1870 Room" used for cards, is thought to have dated back to the days when a lumber mill occupied the site, according to research done by Grace Koopal.

Even though the present day lodge was built in 1924, and rebuilt after a fire Oct. 24, 1956, the general location had been used to accommodate loggers and later vacationers much earlier. By the late 1870's loggers had cabins at the site. Superior Judge John H. Logan, the father of modern day Brookdale, operated The Brookdale Inn across Highway 9 from what is now Brookdale Lodge in the 1900's.

In the 20th Century the lodge became world famous when diners could spot trout in a stream that ran through the dining room and over a waterfall in front of the hotel next to fern grottos. Dance bands from the Casa del Rey in Santa Cruz and other hotels and night clubs came to play.



Brookdale Lodge, The Valley's grandest building, its main portion completed in 1924, was quiet Tuesday waiting for the touch of new owners, William and Leann Gilbert of Woodside.

Fashion shows and pageants got publicity worldwide for The Valley. A wedding chapel lured bride and groom.. President Herbert Hoover, who knew the Santa Cruz Mountains well, visited often and such movie stars as Lana Turner, Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone, Tyrone Power, and Greer Garson came to the lodge.

After World War 11, Barney Morrow, T.J. Monaco and H.E. Pasquale bought the lodge for around \$200,000. Morrow enhanced the business and built the annex in 1952 and then the addition that looks like a motel in 1959. But floods in 1955 and 1982 and fires in 1956 and 1982 undermined the business and a succession of owners and managers wrestled with the business.

Morrow rebuilt the main structures with an Alpine theme, according to research by Mary Barnett, instead of the old redwood look and planned a \$1 million convention hall, covered pool (it was built), beer garden and wine cellar and other enhancements. He sold stock but got overextended and sold the entire property in 1960.

Next, a series of owners came and left, paying \$300,000 to \$400,000 though most of the money was never delivered. Almost 14 years ago Burger bought the property after a bankruptcy and other calamities. At one point the property was under consideration as a Job Crops Center.

Over the years owners had trouble satisfying the County Planning Department and Planning Commission that improvements would be done in conformity to current building codes and requirements. This problem was often given as the reason why the improvements did not go forward. But there were also numerous cases of announced new owners and managers not making payments and either departing or being forced out of the operation.

Burger said in 1988 he had tried to sell to a qualified owner-operator but wasn't successful. He emphasized then that only two persons in the lodge were among the 32 arrested in the 1988 investigation. The notoriety of the dope arrests may have been a factor in the last two years in driving business away although one business person, Claudette Bolding, has kept her Carousel Gallery of Arts and Antiques open all during this period, waiting for changes and renovation at Brookdale Lodge. Tuesday she was hopeful the Gilberts will be able to improve the historic property. "This should be the show place of The Valley," she has often said.