

OUTER BANKS LIVING

Friends recreate memories for their families

Sometimes things fall right into place and you think, "This is how life should be."

That happened recently at the sale of the Saltaire Cottage Court, a 51-year-old motel

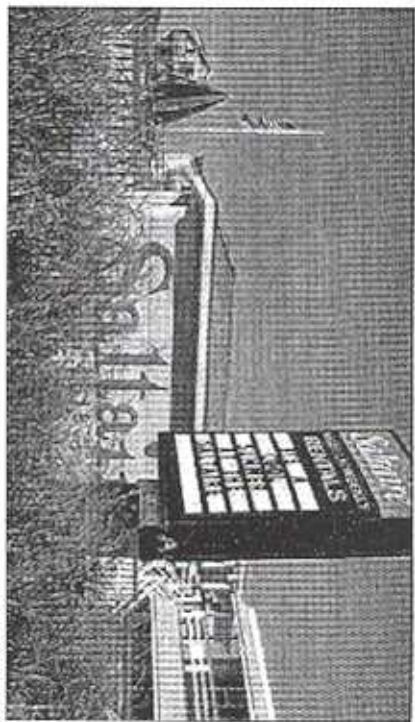
located on the west side of Virginia Dare Trail in Kitty Hawk.



If the Saltaire followed the normal plight of aging motels on the Outer Banks,

the new owners would have razed it and replaced it with lowering beach houses. But the Saltaire isn't like other motels and the new owners aren't your typical investors.

They are Jay McCarty, 46, a freelance audio technician for network television, and David Simpson, 50, owner of a scrap metal fabrication business and a heating and air conditioning company. They live in Northern Virginia with their families and, as neighbors, have



SHARLEIGH WASHINGTON

The Saltaire Cottage Court, a 51-year-old motel on the west side of Virginia Dare Trail in Kitty Hawk, is being restored.

forged a tight friendship.

Simpson grew up in a small Virginia town in Fairfax County, spending his summers as a youth swimming in nearby creeks and ponds. When he entered his teen years, he took his first plunge into the Atlantic Ocean while vacationing in Ocean City, Md.

By age 7, McCarty was already swimming in the Atlantic off the shores of the Outer Banks.

Their childhood memories were sealed by seawater,

so it wasn't surprising that, when they married and had children, they traveled to the Outer Banks annually in the hopes of recreating their summer memories for their own children.

On one of these vacations three years ago, the two men were biking down Third Street in Kill Devil Hills when they pedaled into the parking lot of Windswept Properties. There, they met owner John Thompson.

"We stopped and John said,

'Why don't you come on in for water?' We'd been riding for an hour and were all sweaty, so that was music to my ears," recalled McCarty.

As a result of this chance meeting, they asked Thompson to e-mail them information on investment properties that they might be interested in buying. When the Saltaire came on the market, McCarty got an e-mail immediately.

"One of the biggest jobs I got is matching buyers and sellers. A property such as the Saltaire requires the right kind of owner and they were a perfect fit," Thompson said.

After reading the listing information, McCarty was captivated. He telephoned Thompson.

"The more John talked, the more intrigued I was. It kept bouncing around in my head and that led to my talking to Dave and the whole thing just went from there," McCarty said.

The two men researched and toured the property. They ran the numbers and submitted a contract. On June 1, the McCarty and Simpson fami-

lies bought the Saltaire for \$1.1 million from Warren and Yes Judge/Southern Inns Inc. But this was as much of an emotional buy as it was a practical one.

"I think of myself as a cold, calculating businessman and I'm not a romantic person, but when Jay showed me the Saltaire, it tugged at my heart strings. An old motel like that is the beach to me. It's like the places I used to stay at when I was young. I told Jay, 'This is not fair. One of those big beach boxes wouldn't have that affect on me,'" Simpson said.

Built in 1955, the Saltaire Cottage Court was a summer vacation home for the Stokes family. It was gradually enlarged and today includes eight two-bedroom units with kitchens and living rooms; two three-bedroom cottages; and a large outdoor swimming pool.

"The Saltaire has been maintained by choice. While it's not the grandiose New Age beach property, the inside is very lovely with new

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OUTER BANKS LIVING

about it we like. Salthaire is just very, very nice. We've made so many good friends over the years," she said.

Generally, the same people vacation there the same week year after year, so guests get acquainted while swimming in the pool, grilling in the courtyard or relaxing in front porch rockers.

"You meet people here and build relationships. When you go rent a big beach house, odds are you don't meet your neighbors," McCarty said.

For 19 years, the Burbrink family has claimed the last week of July for their Salthaire vacation. This summer, 28 family members arrived, including patriarch Jim Burbrink (known as Grandpa B); his grown children, Paul Bur-

brink, Tom Burbrink, Phyllis Veillon, Susan Adams and Jean Harris; spouses, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and special friends.

The Burbrinks say the Salthaire encourages conversation because of its this-is-how-life-used-to-be atmosphere. They repeatedly choose it over more modern accommodations for several reasons.

"Location, location, location," Jean Harris said. "Family atmosphere," Susan Adams added.

"It's like a throw-back in time. I can remember when there was no phone here and we had to go next door to Winks to use the pay phone," said Phyllis Veillon.

"We can be together but not too much together, if you know

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what I mean," Paul Burbrink said.

And, while they admit to missing the bumper cars and the pink elephant miniature golf course that were once part of the nearby landscape, they don't miss all the electronics, game rooms and home theaters found in the new beach houses.

But then, why should they when they have Uncle Paul's Clipboard of Fun?

Uncle Paul (Burbrink) organizes the week's festivities around a theme and fills the clipboard with suggested ac-

tivities - Nerd Olympics, sand sculpting, Grandpa B's fishing tournament - front-lawn line dancing and the traditional green-eggs-and-ham breakfast.

The Burbrinks, Hubers and other regulars don't need to worry about the good times ending with the sale of the Salthaire. There are no plans to destroy the place - only improve it.

"My dream is that the children of the children who go there today will be enjoying the Salthaire in 20 years," McCarty said.



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