

Hawaiian Riviera resort shouldn't be built

THE southernmost part of the 50 states has a self-appointed preservationist trying to protect it from overdevelopment.

Recently I breakfasted with Glen M. Winterbottom, 36, a fourth-generation Hawaii resident. He relocated from Honolulu to the Big Island's Ka'u District in 1978 because it was the only place he could afford to buy a home lot. Price \$5,500.

He built a house himself on a quarter acre of land in Naalehu, has worked at a great variety of jobs and currently is designing and selling T-shirts with an island historical motif.

Winterbottom has developed an affection for the Ka'u District so great that two years ago he wrote and published a 105-page book on "Prosperity Through Preservation in the Great and Majestic District of Ka'u."

He defrayed printing costs by selling 300 copies, some of which are in the public libraries of Honolulu, Hilo and the University of Hawaii.

Ka'u embraces two active volcanoes — Mauna Loa and Kilauea — the Ka'u lava desert, the hills and environs of Pahala, Hilea, Naalehu and Waiohinu, and some 50 miles of the most southern coastline in the 50 states.

It is believed to be the first Hawaii area settled by Polynesians from the south. Hawaiian chiefs warred over it.

One army of 400 was asphyxiated by volcanic gas and ash from a tremendous 1790 eruption of Kilauea. Their footprints can still be seen in the hardened ash.

Tsunamis have pounded Ka'u's shores. Mauna Loa, the world's greatest mountain when measured from the ocean floor, has wiped out several villages by sending new lava into the



HAWAII'S WORLD

By A.A. Smyser

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sea. Sugar, macadamia trees and ranching help keep parts of Ka'u green today.

Large as it is in area, its current population is only about 5,000. Winterbottom is fighting to keep it that way. He argues that preservation can be the way to prosperity by turning Ka'u into a unique but uncrowded residential-historic-vacation area somewhat like Nantucket, Colonial Williamsburg or Mackinac Island, among others.

He sees the existing Punaluu Resort near South Point as a basis for this but wants it focused inland rather than on the shore. Inland resorts haven't succeeded in Hawaii, I and others tell him, but he insists a profitable niche could be found for one.

He desperately opposes turning any part of Ka'u into a tourist area like Kona to the north.

Where I'm with him 100 percent (and many others are, too) is as he continues to fight against building the Hawaiian Riviera resort at Milolii, site of the state's last fishing village.

He filed numerous petitions with the state Land Use Commission opposing the resort. He now intends to appeal its preliminary authorization to the courts — all of this with his own spare time and limited funds.

He says — and I agree — that the only economic justification for the resort is profit for the developer. If it is built labor will have to be imported to staff it. What new jobs Ka'u needs can be provided at Punaluu.

Milolii is in a lava danger area from Mauna Loa. Its distance from all other developed areas faces taxpayers with heavy support expense that the developer is unlikely to defray for all today's warm promises.

Should the resort be a success, which is far from a certainty, it will begin the Kona-ization of what is one of the state's last relatively pristine areas. There is simply no need for it. There is plenty of undeveloped space in the state more contiguous to established resort areas.

Winterbottom has the majesty of Gov. John Waihee's Office of State Planning with him on this issue. They both were overruled by the Land Use Commission in what has to be one of the most flagrant flauntings of common sense in its 30-year history.

I don't know if OSP will now feel bound to defer to the LUC judgment. But I know Winterbottom won't.

He will have only the power of one citizen but he will be speaking for many who will be cheering him on and hopefully even joining the fight.

Fortunately, there are other hurdles for the Hawaiian Riviera resort to jump before it can be built. It's pretty certain that Winterbottom will be at each one and won't be easily disposed of. Three cheers.

A.A. Smyser is the Star-Bulletin's contributing editor.

Social effects of Lanai resort questioned

By Lilo Fujimoto
Maui Correspondent

When Lanai's second resort hotel opened last month, some residents saw the Jacuzzis and chandeliered main hall as further signs that 60 years of plantation life were quickly fading.

But a University of Hawaii assistant professor predicts some undesirable plantation-era traditions will remain if more than 600 luxury houses and condominiums are built around an 18-hole golf course in the next phase of the island's development.

"It's going to be the single biggest change factor on the island," said Jon Matsuoka, who helped conduct a study last year on Lanai residents' attitudes toward the development that is reshaping their 140-square-mile island.

"You are creating a plantation-like social situation. You've got rich people in very exclusive areas, then you've got the working-class locals. They're separated by income, culture, lifestyle and by race.

"On a moral basis, I think there's something wrong with that. I thought we might be beyond that."

Matsuoka planned to testify at today's state Land Use Commission hearing on the luxury project, which would increase the number of houses on Lanai by about 60 percent.

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Lanai Resort Partners, the Castle & Cooke company developing the project, already has approval to build the houses and condominiums. But the company is seeking commission approval to reclassify almost 68 additional acres into the urban district for the project.

The company has said the additional land would allow better location of houses in the area overlooking Lanai City, above the year-old Lodge at Koele resort.

The commission, meeting on Lanai, was to hear public testimony on the proposal today.

Maui County representatives planned to ask the commission to delay any action on

the Lanai Resort Partners request until the Maui County Council can review the changes requested by the company, said Phil Ohta, a county planner.

He said the county would also recommend a review of the project's water consumption, restrictions on water use for landscaping, and monitoring of water quality in a nearby well.

The county also will ask that Lanai residents be allowed to continue to play for free at a nearby nine-hole golf course, Ohta said.

Matsuoka, with the UH School of Social Work, said he will ask the commission to consider the project's social effects on the 2,200 residents of the island, where 98 percent of the land is owned by Castle & Cooke.

Until the first resort opened last year, pineapple provided 90 percent of jobs on the island.

"I don't think that many people are aware of what the company's proposing," Matsuoka said.

He predicted that many of the new island residents who buy the expensive houses will be rich corporate retirees.

"You are talking about people from very powerful, well-to-do backgrounds with a lot of free time on their hands," Matsuoka said. "You're setting up a situation where you're going to have a major shift in power within the community."