

Behind the Scenes with Patti Payne

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“We never saw ourselves owning a resort,” Doug True says of Iron Springs Resort

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Photo: Patti Payne

Janet True, co-owner of the Iron Springs Resort at Copalis Beach, tends to corn bread and eight pots of chili for a recent gathering of family and friends.



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Work trumps getting away from it all for me, most of the time. But on my birthday, Oct. 7, I did escape to the ocean to check out a resort called Iron Springs in Copalis Beach. About two hours from Seattle, smack dab on the Pacific Ocean, with shallow, gentle Boone Creek flowing from mustard-colored cliffs to the sea, this old resort, made new again, is one of most special spots I've seen in this state.

Back in 1947, a woman named **Olive Little** bought the resort, which at the time had eight cabins and a lodge. When she passed away 60 years later, the place had become a 25-cabin favorite vacation spot for regulars who booked it for holidays, getaways, reunions — in short, for memories.

**Doug** and **Janet True** remember it well. **Doug**, president of [Gull Industries Inc.](#) in Seattle, has been coming here for four decades, Janet since the early 1980s.

“I had my first razor clam here when I was about 10,” recalls **Doug**. Over the years, the love of the place grew among its followers, even as it fell into disrepair. When it came available to buy last year, the couple, known for their large-scale philanthropy in areas of health care, education and arts, bought it for \$1.6 million — 113 acres of coastal woodland and the 25 historic cabins.

“We had to,” they told me. “It was calling us.”

They closed it for a year of renovations and restorations, more costly, all told, than the purchase price. They reopened the last day of June of this year, with son **Dustin True** as property manager.

The result of the year closed is 24 modern-yet-rustic cabins, unique and private, each with a killer view. Much of the furniture, from dining tables to coffee tables, fireplace mantles, lamps, even pegs to hang clothes, are made from wood from their own forest. They reclaimed all the wood they could from the cabins for walls, ceilings and roofs. And while the rustic feel is there, every convenience is too — each cabin is equipped with new, fully appointed kitchens with granite counters, Wi-Fi, flat-screen TVs, everything a family or couple would need for a stay, long or short, from towels to dishes and cooking utensils, pots and pans. And there is a fully stocked general store.

Each cabin contains a new, leather-bound guest book with recent guest comments that say it all: “Thanks for rescuing and restoring. With all your new comforts, this is the most beautiful spot on the coast.”

“Great to have Iron Springs back better than ever.... The pro dog atmosphere and the best beach on the coast will keep us coming back forever.”

“Thank you True Family for thoughtfully making over this wonderful getaway.”

The weekend I was here, **Doug** and Janet had reserved the resort for dozens of family and friends, with 14 birthdays among them and 18 beloved dogs off leash among the crowd, all gathered together in adjoining cabins Nos. 11 and 12. It was like **Norman Rockwell** meets Bon Appétit magazine, with babies, elders and everyone in between. Eight pots of various chilis bubbled on stoves. Planked tables were piled with cheeses and cured meats, salads, corn bread and rolls and condiments for the chili. The group voted and the “best chili” award went to **Christine Davis**, a longtime friend of the Trues and a longtime fan of Iron Springs.

Celebrations or not, Iron Springs is a destination you don’t want to miss, if you can get in. “It’s either a couple whiling the weekend away, or a family and friends combining for meals and games,” **Doug** says.

There’s really nothing comparable on the beach. Ah yes, the beach. We spent many heavenly hours on it, getting covered in sand, watching the birds try for razor clams (clamming season starts later this month), playing like kids in and out of surf and creek, with dog Pepper Lou, like us, not wanting to come home.

“It’s been a real adventure for all of us,” says Janet.

“We never saw ourselves owning a resort,” says **Doug**. “It was a pipe dream we’d talk about. This is one of those treasures you don’t give up easily. We’re really happy we did this.”