

Island Hall falls to Beach Club Venerable Parksville hotel to be replaced by condominium resort Jeff Bell May 12, 2005

Eileen Brookbank is all for progress, but seeing Parksville's venerable Island Hall Hotel give way to redevelopment marks the end of an era for the longtime area resident.

At 89, Brookbank is just a few years older than the beachfront hostelry itself, which opened its doors to visitors in 1917. Brookbank got her first job at the hotel in 1929 at the age of 15, and spent four years there as a housekeeper and server.

"I guess I'm old-fashioned, I liked it the way it was," Brookbank said with a laugh. Working at the Island Hall was a good introduction to working life, she said.

"It was interesting. You met lots of nice people."

The Island Hall will see its last patrons in July, after which work begins on a two-phase condominium resort to be called The Beach Club. The project's plans were previewed Wednesday on the Island Hall grounds, while Mother Nature provided a glistening backdrop for the beach that draws visitors to Parksville year-round.

Victoria-based developer Darren McAdams, who is partnering in the development with brother Brad, said he hopes to recapture the glory of the Island Hall in its heyday.

"Certainly it was a destination on the Island, and that's what we think this is going to be again," he said. "I think we've got a project here that Parksville will be extremely proud about."

The plan calls for a \$50-million first phase of 75 resort condominiums sold in quarter-ownership shares, a popular trend in resort ownership, McAdams said.

"They're all a little different," he said, making reference to such quarter-share developments as the Parkside in Victoria and the Miraloma in Sidney. "What we've done is we've chosen a week a month for our purchaser. They can decide to use it or they can leave it for the public to use.

"In a nutshell, it's an undivided, one-quarter ownership in each unit. It's actually something that you can mortgage, you can encumber and you can give to your family as a legacy purchase."

Phase 1 prices are expected to range from \$49,900 to \$199,900. The second phase, still being planned, should begin before the scheduled completion of the initial phase in the summer of 2007.



CREDIT: Debra Brash, Times Colonist
Eileen Brookbank, 89, was employed at the Island Hall when she was 15 years old in 1929. The hotel is going to be replaced by the Beach Club, a quarter-timeshare development.

McAdams said the past will not be forgotten, with selected antique items from the Island Hall being featured at the new development. In addition, the Parksville and District Historical Society will be given items for display at its museum, he said.

Parksville Mayor Randy Longmuir said he sees The Beach Club as being a key part of ongoing improvements in the town of 11,300.

"From the time the Island Hall first opened in 1917 with 28 rooms on one acre of land, its name has been synonymous with tourism in Parksville," he said. "The Beach Club will uphold that Island Hall tradition and will bring a vibrancy to our downtown and to our waterfront, and it will enhance our downtown revitalization efforts."

One of the features he especially likes is the new resort's pedestrian-oriented design. The project also includes a beachfront walkway that will be connected to other walkway links along the beach.

George Hare of the project's marketing arm said the site is ideally located in relation to large populations.

"We have two major urban centres, Victoria and Vancouver, within two hours from this site. People looking at resort real estate today are looking properties that are within that two-hour threshold."

Dean Paterson of Moore Paterson Architects, a Victoria firm, said design features draw extensively from the spectacular surroundings.

"The colours we have picked for the project are directly from the beach. We literally walked along and picked up samples of driftwood, seaweed, feathers, rocks, shells -- anything that we could find to create an authentic palette."