

CAMPUS AND CITY

Doubletree to run troubled Carolina Inn

By Vicki Cheng
Staff Writer

Although the Carolina Inn is long overdue for renovations, University and inn officials agree that the Southern charm of the state-owned hotel should be preserved when the University leases it to a private company July 1.

Carolyn Elfland, associate vice chancellor of business and finance, said the Carolina Inn would be leased to the Doubletree Hotels Corporation, which plans to add more than \$9 million in renovations.

She said the inn, built in 1924, had kept its original plumbing and electrical wiring systems, but they needed to be updated. Doubletree must submit its renovation plans through the University so that there are no surprises when the changes take place. "The University wants to maintain the same sort of feeling (the hotel) has now," she said.

Patty Nowack, public relations coordinator for Doubletree, said the company would continue to evaluate possible changes in the inn. "Once they determine what the market will call for, they will map out a renovation plan," she said. Nowack added that she did not know when the evaluation would be completed.

Elfland said the inn was donated to the University in the 1930s by the John Sprunt Hill family, University benefactors. "The idea was that the profits would support the libraries," she said.

But by the 1980s, the hotel was losing money. "We started not being able to manage it and break even," she said. In one year, the Carolina Inn lost \$300,000.

"You can't run a business with the state system," Elfland said. "The purchasing and personnel guidelines make it impossible to operate a hotel."

The University ran into budget problems that private-run hotels would not have to deal with. Due to state regulations, the University had to supplement the wages of every employee who worked later than 5 p.m.

In addition, state employees are guaranteed 40 hours of work per week. While the state was required to pay the workers the full wage, many hotel employees did not have a full work load. The state ended up paying for more work than could be given.

Elfland said the University attempted to get exemptions from state guidelines and looked into the possibility of setting up a private corporation before deciding to lease the hotel to an existing company.

She said that during the renovation stage, the company would get a percentage of the gross profits, and the University would get the net profit as rent. She said she did not expect the University to receive a lot of money during this stage.

But after the fully-renovated hotel has been in operation for five years, the University will split the net profit with the company.

"I hope in the end it will be a goodly amount of money," she said. The profits will continue to support the libraries.

Sherman Riggsbee, general manager of the Carolina Inn, said he hoped the upcoming changes would make the hotel more competitive with modern-day hotels.

"We are outdated," he said. "The rooms are old. But once we renovate, I think we will gain a large market share. We want to step into modern times."

Two-thirds of the building is still heated by radiators, Riggsbee said. Many of the bathrooms are small, the central air conditioning cannot be regulated by visitors in their individual rooms, the closets are tiny and some of the carpet is wearing down.

"But there's something about being here that gives you a special feeling," he said of the Carolina Inn, which contains 140 guest rooms and 13 suites as well as a restaurant, a cafeteria, a lounge and three ballrooms.

Despite the negative economic reports, the Carolina Inn is holding its own, Riggsbee said. Revenues were up by \$20,000 in April and the total revenue for the year was up by more than 4 percent.

In addition, the quiet elegance of the ballrooms continue to attract attention. Four weddings were booked last weekend, and three or four are expected this weekend, he said.

Also, an episode on television's "The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles," which aired about a month ago, was shot in the inn's Old Well Room. Riggsbee said the ballroom, complete with wooden balconies, a checkered floor and an impressive golden chandelier, was chosen because it brought to mind the olden days of the grand hotel.

"There's an air of the sophistication and hospitality of the Old South," Riggsbee said. "(The hotel) needs a face lift. Some physical things need to be changed, but we want to keep that rustic look."

Trustees from page 1

In addition, Copland said BOT Secretary Brenda Kirby told him two members of the board would not be able to attend the June meeting, and that might be another reason the board could not vote until July.

Jordan said he was concerned about issues other than the BCC as well.

He said he wanted to find a way to increase the University's funds through soliciting more donations from private citizens and alumni.

"One goal I think is most important is to maintain the physical integrity of the institution," Jordan said.

Soliciting private donations on a regular basis — rather than just during special fund-raising drives like the Bicentennial Campaign — to improve and maintain the quality of the University is of crucial importance, Jordan said.

Jordan and Davis both were noted donors to Gov. Hunt's campaign and the Democratic Party in 1992. Each gave \$8,000 to the governor's campaign, the maximum allowed contribution.

Among those who are leaving the board, only former Student Body President and ex-officio BOT member John Moody and trustee John Pope have openly announced their opposition to a free-standing BCC.

Of the new trustees, only ex-officio member Copland has publicly committed to supporting the BCC. The position of the other new members is unknown.

UNC to help town pay NCAA celebration bill

By Rochelle Klaskin
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill soon will receive a check from the University to help pay for the costs incurred from the NCAA championship celebration on Franklin Street April 5.

Town Manager Cal Horton said the University agreed to pay \$1,500 to replace five damaged trees and an additional \$500 to offset costs for paint removal and extra security.

Wayne Jones, vice chancellor for business and finance, said he reached the agreement with Horton last month. "We wanted to share in the other costs," Jones said. "We were looking at the total cost."

According to a report issued by Horton, the town's cost for the celebration totaled about \$11,200, less than the \$20,000 previously estimated for clean-up.

The total cost breaks down to \$7,600 for overtime work by public works, police, fire and transportation employees and \$3,600 for replacing damaged trees, removing paint on Franklin Street and hiring a security company.

The security company was hired to prevent residents from entering the Rosemary Street parking deck construction site, Jones said. He added that the trees would be replaced in the fall, after growing season.

Jones said he was not aware whether the University paid the town for the celebration following the 1982 NCAA

basketball championship.

Chapel Hill Town Council members said they were satisfied with the agreement between the town and the University, but that they were not sure whether it set a precedent for future University-related celebrations.

Council member Art Werner said the University did what was appropriate.

"Since the University was not under any legal obligation, their contribution was probably reasonable."

Werner added that he thought the University would act the same way in similar instances.

Mayor Ken Broun said he also was content with the agreement. "It was very agreeable," he said. "I was pleased at the University's cooperation."

Horton said he could not predict whether the University's donation would set a precedent for future contributions to the town.

"I hope we don't have anything like this happen again," he said.

Jones said he thought future problems should be handled on a case-by-case basis. "Some reasonable solution would be available as long as both sides are willing to participate in talking in an amiable way," he said.

Council member Joe Herzenberg said he thought the University would continue to act responsibly in local issues.

"People will think (the University) had a similar obligation," he said. "If you don't do it, you look bad."

PHE

from page 1

OCAP President G.I. Allison, pastor of Mt. Bright Baptist Church, submitted a letter to Mayor Johnson immediately before the town board meeting, offering to provide legal counsel for the town at no cost. "We made that offer after (board members) cited the lack of tax dollars as the reason why they would choose not to fight it," Allison said.

If OCAP does decide to try to fight the case, Orange County Superior Court Judge Gordon Battle will have to decide if he will allow the group to represent

the town in court.

Town board member Evelyn Lloyd said OCAP should be allowed to fight the case. "If they feel that strongly about it, they have the right to do it."

PHE owner Phil Harvey said OCAP members had the right to express their opinions about the case. "Everyone has the right to have their views heard, to picket, to write letters to the editor," he said. "However, they don't have the right to interfere with anyone else's lawful activity."

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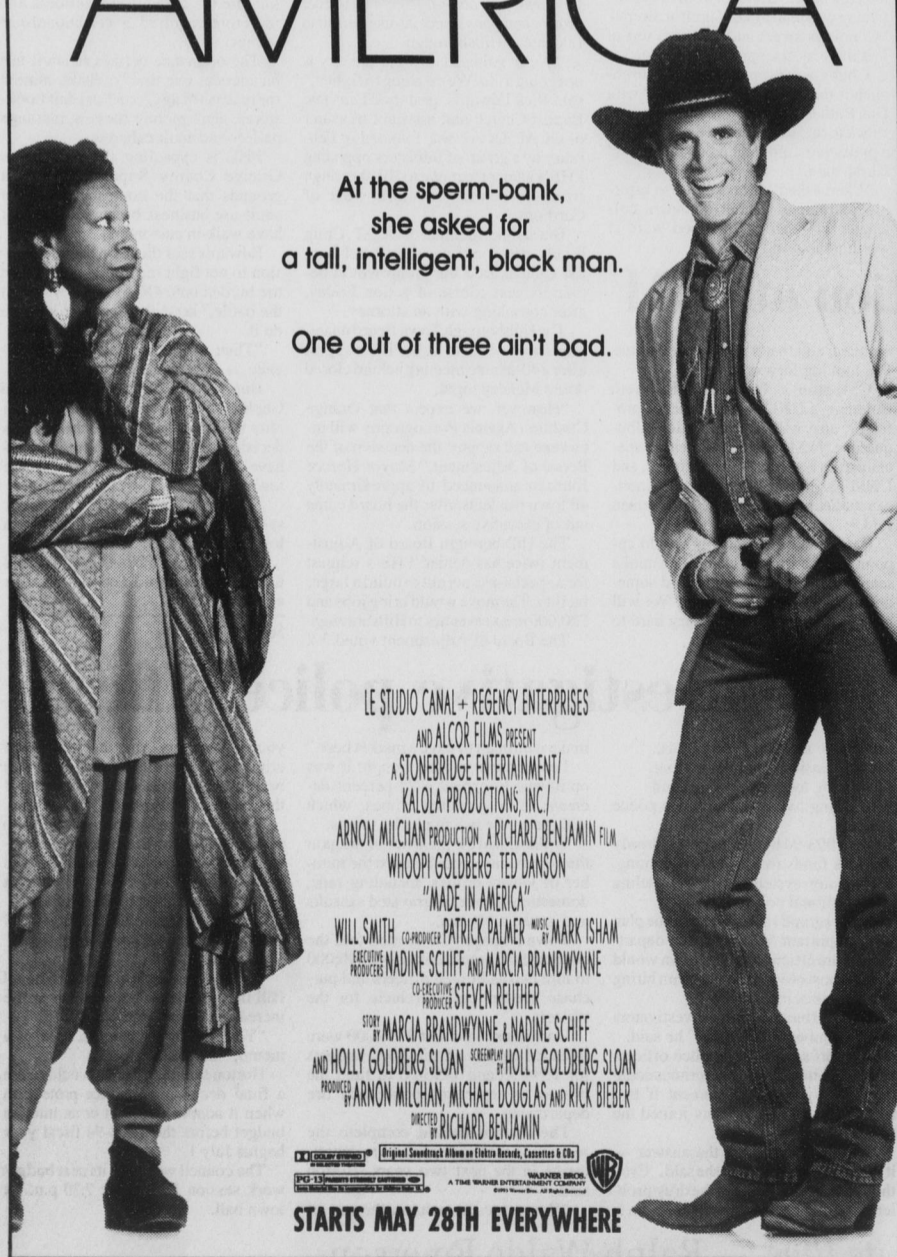
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