

Nostalgic Trailer Park Planned for Wilton Manors

Key West Cottages and Vintage Lodging to be Featured in New Trailer Haven

By Bill Hawkins

Steve Allen and Doug Bachman are finalizing their plans to turn a dream into a reality, creating a one-of-a-kind nostalgic trailer park in Wilton Manors.

"I've been thinking about this for so long that it's just so exciting about it finally getting closer to happening," said Allen, a retired banker.

What the two men, who are life partners of 14 years, are planning is a tourist destination quite unlike anything else available anywhere.

It means that the 50-year-old and run-down Trailer Haven at 2360 Wilton Drive will

27 other sites will be available to those bringing their motor homes with them and seeking nightly or seasonal space.

"We think the concept will fit very well into the Wilton Manors community," explained Bachman, who said the park is within walking distance to shops, restaurants, bars, antiques, and other stores and special services.

The park is expected to a reality within the next year.

It will be developed in phases and Wilton Manors residents will be seeing changes in the spring to the park's side facing Wilton Drive. New landscaping and upscale signage

clients became AutoNation, headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Bachman found he was traveling more and more to South Florida and eventually encouraged partner Allen to tag along.

Bachman and Allen, who was a BankOne auditor and software developer, met on July 4, 1987 and were busy in their separate careers, but looking down the road to some new challenges. Bachman, in 1998 opted to form his own retail consulting firm, while Allen was looking at early retirement.

In 1998, while on a business visit in Fort Lauderdale, the two were driving down Wilton Drive when Allen spotted Trailer Haven and nudged Bachman to drive through it.

"I always had this fascination of old trailers and their exterior design and the craftsmanship of the interiors," explained Allen.

When they got serious about the property — and found it was for sale — they decided to take the leap and go for it.

In the fall of 1999, they took an option to buy the site while they explored all the legal aspects of land use to see if they could develop it along the lines of their dream. They put their Ohio home on the market and it quickly sold. They exercised their option to buy Trailer Haven and, by December 1999, were heading south in their own Airstream motor home.

They rented an apartment at first until finally moving on site at their own trailer park this past June.

In the past year, the couple has gone through the tedious task of getting governmental and community support for their plans. They were able to impress Wilton Manors officials, including City Council, with their desire to turn an eyesore parcel into a new kind of business venture with positive eye appeal.

"We could have continued to run the park as it is now, but we wanted to make it better and be good neighbors in the process by improving the appearance, which will make the area look so much better," explained Bachman. "There wasn't one person we talked to that didn't want the old Trailer

Haven to disappear because of how it has looked," said Bachman. "But when we showed them what we wanted to do to turn it around and offer a resort with all the amenities, then we received the support we had hoped for."

The couple credit Wilton Manors' community services department with providing positive assistance to them in their paperwork processing through governmental channels.

One aspect of the development is its focus on historic preservation. Trailer Haven has its roots around the post-war 1947-48 period when so much of South Florida was being settled by people living in trailers as part of tourist camps.

"Our proposed Trailer Haven Resort is a 21st Century way of doing what was done in the old tourist camps," said Bachman. Even trees on the property are important as they have surveyed every one on them and taking steps to preserve them.

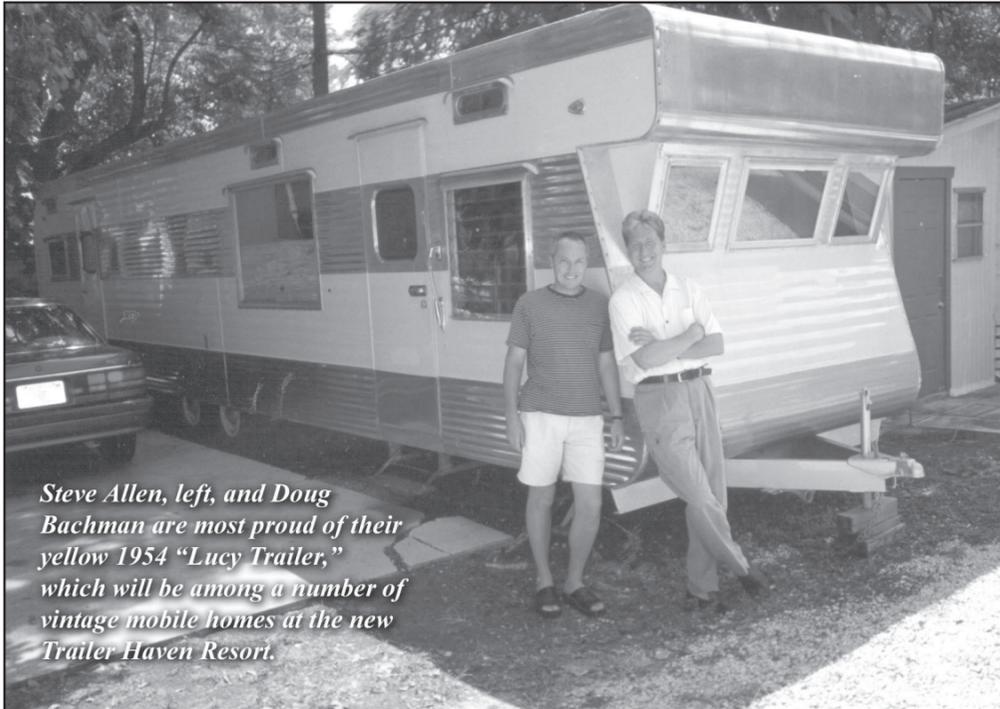
The couple has also been busy acquiring vintage trailers for one phase of the resort. They're most proud of a long yellow one they have labeled the "Lucy Trailer" because it is the same model as the one used in the 1954 movie, *The Long, Long Trailer*, starring Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz.

"I loved that movie and when I saw it as a kid I got the bug for wanting to own and live in a trailer someday," said Allen. "My parents didn't like the idea, but now I am able to do just that and to share the special sense of history with our guests who will be staying at the resort," said Allen.

Allen and Bachman believe the new resort will be a plus for Wilton Manors because it will draw people to the area and also shine some media spotlight on the community. They noted that modern trailer parks are popular with travel writers looking for something different to explore for readers. They said a trailer park in Bisbee, Arizona has received considerable national publicity and there are a number of clubs nationwide which are composed of trailer lovers who search out parks to visit.

"We have come a long way and we have a ways to go until all this comes together," said Bachman. "But we believe when it is done and operating everyone will appreciate the end result."

Persons interested in seeing concept drawings of the Trailer Haven Resort may log on to www.trailerhavenresort.com or call at 954.564.8811.



Steve Allen, left, and Doug Bachman are most proud of their yellow 1954 "Lucy Trailer," which will be among a number of vintage mobile homes at the new Trailer Haven Resort.

be turned into the new, up-scale Trailer Haven Resort offering lodgings in unique vintage trailers in a courtyard setting as well as charming cottages along with sites for RVs.

It's an effort to mix modern tourist conveniences with the nostalgia of the 1940s-50s, when trailers were all over Florida as travellers discovered the state's warm sunshine and created little tourist camps.

In the case of the new Trailer Haven Resort, what tourists will find will be 14 restored vintage trailers with well-recognized trademark names like Airstream and Spartan. They'll be part of a complex that includes lush landscaping, a clubhouse, pool, and lots of other amenities not found anywhere else. The nearly-three-acre park will also have 29 Key West-style cottages, brightly painted and offering lots of charm and intimacy, while

will be the first changes followed by development of the various park phases.

While the project is now on the fast track, it was three years ago when Allen and Bachman first spotted the trailer park and began to think of its potential.

Both men are Ohioans, having lived most of their lives in the Columbus area, although Bachman was born in Dayton and Allen in Indiana. Bachman has been in the design business for 25 years having first focused on retail clients and how best to present their products to consumers. He then moved into design work for banks, health care facilities and then auto sales — designing and developing a new process allowing consumers to search out car shopping information via computers to avoid hassles of high-pressure sales. When one of his



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