

# Orlando Sentinel

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## Fire damages 'Big Bamboo'

### Now closed, it was Disney cast hangout

Susan Jacobson  
Sentinel Staff Writer

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KISSIMMEE -- The future of the Big Bamboo Lounge, a quirky bar on the West U.S. Highway 192 tourist strip that closed late last year, is even more up in the air after a fire nearly destroyed the building last week.

Osceola County fire officials are calling the bar a "total loss," though the walls didn't collapse.

One of the owners, Nancy Duggan, said Tuesday that although she would still like to reopen the "Boo," she doesn't know what's going to happen. Duggan said she hadn't seen the lounge or a Fire Department report about the damage, although she plans to visit the bar this week.

"I'm just so sad about it," said Duggan, the daughter of Bruce Muir, who bought the property in 1977. "It's just a heartbreaking thing. I wanted to see it stay open all along."

Muir, who lived in Kissimmee's Orange Gardens, died in February 1999.

Housed in what was once a doctor's house, the Big Bamboo became a hangout for Walt Disney World employees and curious tourists.

It was decorated with Disney employee name tags, business cards, newspaper clippings and foreign money and featured swing and jazz music and bartenders wearing Hawaiian shirts.

Only cash was accepted, and there was no air conditioning. Out front sat a vintage military ambulance and a watchtower.

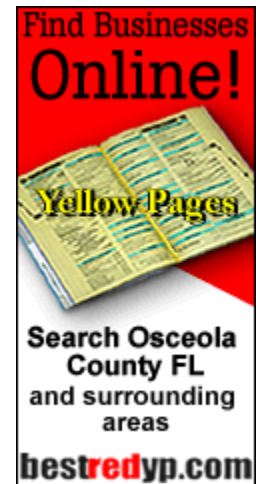
Disney animators sometimes entertained other patrons by drawing Mickey Mouse and other characters on cocktail napkins.

"It was unique," Duggan said. "It was almost like a club where people met their friends."

Muir's widow owns half the bar, and Duggan and her sister also have shares, according to a probate settlement agreement. The Sentinel was unable to reach Glenda Muir, who has a Vero Beach address, and Duggan said she does not respond to messages or correspondence from the sisters. That leaves the property in apparent legal limbo.

The Osceola County Fire Department received a 911 call about 5 p.m. Dec. 18 saying flames and smoke

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were coming from the Big Bamboo Lounge, said Larry Krause, a county spokesman.

A fire report says homeless people trying to keep warm may have started the fire. Clothing was found inside, indicating people were living in the vacant building at 4849 W. U.S. 192, Krause said. Five county fire engines and one each from Orange County and Kissimmee helped battle the flames, he said.

The fire was under control in 15 minutes, according to the report. Damage was particularly severe in the rear of the building, where flames came through the roof, the report states.

It's unclear whether the building -- which also was damaged during the 2004 hurricanes -- can survive the most recent assault.

*Susan Jacobson can be reached at [sjacobson@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:sjacobson@orlandosentinel.com) or 407-931-5946.*

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