

Bellingham Cold Storage owner focuses on building Barkley Village

STORY BY MICHAEL BARRETT

Once or twice a week, Jim Talbot leaves his Seattle home and drives his forest-green Grand Cherokee 85 miles to work. He's the owner of the city's most ambitious development project, Barkley Village, as well as 53-year-old Bellingham Cold Storage, a Squalicum Harbor landmark.

He's also recipient of the 1988 Business Pulse Lifetime Achievement Award, presented March 17 at Inn at Semiahmoo in Blaine.

"Bellingham has been very much a part of the Talbot family since 1941," he said during an acceptance speech. "I'm very, very honored to receive this trophy."

An international man with decades of global achievements behind him, Talbot, 72, was born, reared and schooled in Seattle and earned an economics degree at the University of Washington.

"I still live just 10 houses down from where I grew up in Laurelhurst," he says.

Talbot's father, A.G. (Arch) Talbot, was a prescient, innovative man. Six months before Pearl Harbor was attacked, he bought what would soon become Bellingham Shipyards. There, he produced minesweepers - "faster than any other comparable shipyard in the nation" - first for the Canadian and British navies. With the natural downturn in business following the war, Arch Talbot began construct-

ing warehouses and cold-storage facilities on the same property he had leased from the Port of Bellingham.

"I would say my father was very innovative and loved new ideas," Jim Talbot remarks. "His timing was certainly very good." Over a span of 75 years, Arch owned the shipyards where at one time he employed 1,500 workers; built Bell Boy, one of the first companies in the country to make fiberglass boats; and owned a lumber business and five TV stations in Eastern Washington.

Bellingham Cold Storage (BCS) today is huge - the largest portside cold storage on the West Coast, with 16 refrigerated and several dry storage warehouses at two locations.

The Squalicum property is 25 acres, with the likes of Trident, Icicle, Home Port and Kanaway seafood companies, Long John Silver's, Gourmet Cuisine and other similar firms nearby

Barkley development beckons

Talbot's most recent achievements concern a 200-acre parcel of land along Woburn Street in Bellingham that is fast developing into Barkley Village.

Over the course of time, more of the Barkley area is expected to grow, "as the community grows," in various stages. Phase II is currently under way.

"I'd like to develop it so we're a real asset for the City of Bellingham - not in



competition with downtown but to complement downtown," Talbot remarks. "We have specific plans for that."

As for the future of BCS, he says, "My hope - my dream - is that Bellingham Cold Storage develops as a 'breakbulk carrier' to the Russian Far East, Siberia, northeast Manchuria and northeast China, which are just a few miles from Vladivostok. This is something I'd really like to see. I think there's a good opportunity there. We've been a major shipper there for many years."

The area's growth, coupled with the Olympic Health signing, is lifting spirits at Talbot, where owners have long dreamed the village would serve as a sort of downtown for east Bellingham.

"The second office building is an important part of the urban village plan," said Jim Talbot, owner of Talbot Real Estate, the real estate development arm of Talbot Investment Co.

The second office building will be similar to the

first one built by the company in 1992. That building houses the corporate headquarters of Hagen Inc. as well as several other smaller businesses. Talbot originally planned to have the second building open by 1995.

Like the first building, the new one will be brick and four stories tall. A third office building has been proposed, but Talbot officials said there are no plans to build it any time soon.

Whatcom County bought the company's current home, the Civic Center Building at 332 N. Commercial St., in June 1997 for \$3.26 million.

The county plans on converting the building, just a block from the County Courthouse, into the headquarters for its Health and Human Service Department. Olympic's lease is up May 31, 2000.

Olympic Health workers will move into the new Barkley Village building when it is completed in the spring of next year.

Olympic Health helps businesses and the insurance industry create health care programs, especially in dealing with Medicare.

The company was founded in 1989 and was purchased by Aon Corp. in September 1998, for which it operates as a subsidiary.

Talbot Investment Co. is a group of companies that includes the real estate division which owns Barkley Village and Bellingham Cold Storage on the Bellingham Bay waterfront, one of the largest public cold storage operations on the West Coast.