

This article was published in the Providence Journal on Sat., August 8, 2009, reported by Karen Lee Ziner (Journal Staff Writer)

CABANAS — from primitive to posh — dot seacoasts and pool sides throughout the world. [Some say “cah-banna,” and some say “cah-bahn-yah, from the Spanish “cabaña” for “hut”].

In Rhode Island, there are in excess of 1,000.

Some, like those at Easton’s Beach in Newport and in Narragansett, offer little more than room to wiggle in and out of spandex attire and towel off the salt spray and gritty sand. Beach-goers can rent them by the day, or the season.

Many, like those at Watch Hill or the cabana condos at Bonnet Shores in Narragansett, allow interior decorating of one’s own design. Cabana boys — or girls — rake the sand of seaweed and set out tables and chairs.

Others, like those at Bailey’s Beach in Newport, formally known as the Spouting Rock Beach Association, offer cloistered, pampered respite for the super-rich. At Bailey’s Beach, privacy is king.

“We prefer not to have any discussion about the cabaña life” at Bailey’s Beach, said club president Howard Cushing. “This is sort of a luxurious beach club compared to all the others. We aren’t looking for any publicity.”

Publicity, Cushing said, “gives us nothing but grief.”

A quick online perusal finds countless cabana choices. Cabanas “nestled in the tropical jungle by the sea” at a clothing-optional eco-resort in Tulum, Mexico. Cabanas at an Istanbul thermal pool. Cabanas at Russian resorts. And, poolside cabanas — “tastefully decorated, filled with amenities” on a European cruise ship.

Many are going condo. Two years ago, [wallstreetjournal.com](http://wallstreetjournal.com) reported unfinished poolside condo cabanas were going for \$43,000 at a Hallandale, Fla., Yacht club. As one interior decorator described it, “It’s sort of like having a prime parking space.”

JOE HERBOLD loves noise. That’s what he told the developer who sold him the first of four-in-a-row condo cabanas Herbold bought at Bonnet Shores Beach Club, starting in 1994. All told, he spent roughly \$90,000 for what he calls his “penthouse suite.”



“Right here, overlooking the pool,” said Herbold, pointing to the azure rectangle below. “That’s what I wanted ... I’m a people person. It makes me feel alive.”

A former teacher, school principal and school administrator, Herbold said he was used to commotion.

Herbold got his wish. From his “penthouse” he hears the splash of flippered fins, the slap of rubber flip-flops, and children’s happy shouts. He also has prime view of Beavertail and Narragansett Bay. .

A self-described “beach, boating, golfing bum,” Herbold spends the winter in Florida’s Bonita Springs, and summer at Bonnet Shores.

He decorates his “suite” with historical plat maps and aerial views of Bonnet Shores and the beach club. He keeps a stocked bar, and a row of walkie-talkies for friends, so they can stay in touch from the beach, restaurant, shuffleboard courts or other facilities.

An amateur historian, Herbold has archived old photos of Bonnet Shores on the club’s Web site [ [www.bonnetshoresbeachclub.com](http://www.bonnetshoresbeachclub.com)], which he maintains. There are black-and-white photos of women, seated indoors, in dresses, hats and white shoes with ribbons. Umbrellas like striped turtle shells, crowding the beach. Men wearing bathing trunks and felt hats.

Though his house is in Cranston, “this has actually become my community,” Herbold said. He belongs to a church up the street. He plays golf in Jamestown. The Cranston house “is just to sleep in.”

Recently, he received notice that his condo value had appreciated, and taxes were going up.

“I’m not complaining,” he said. “I’d pay anything to come here.”