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# Desert Dispatch

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## Roy's Motel, Café to be restored

By AL MORRISSETTE

Special to the Daily Dispatch

AMBOY — Albert Okura, the businessman who bought and restored the original McDonald's restaurant in San Bernardino, formed a partnership Thursday to restore Roy's Motel, Café and gas station on Route 66.

The California Route 66 Preservation Foundation and the Bureau of Land Management made the announcement in the tiny community of Amboy, halfway between Barstow and Needles on Route 66.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently listed historic Route 66 motels as some of America's 11 most endangered historic resources.

"Of the motels on Route 66, this is one of the most significant," said Glen Duncan, president of the foundation and a board member of the national trust.

Okura first took an interest in purchasing Amboy in 1998, but the price was too high. In 2003, when Amboy was for sale on eBay, his bid fell short of the \$995,000 reserve price.

In 2005, a message from Bessie Burris, who owned Amboy, got to Okura of yet another pending sale.

"I had to buy it," Okura said. "The more I got involved in the



Photo courtesy of Albert Morrisette

Standing in front of the world famous Roy's motel and café sign are (L-R) Jeff Samudio, Jim Shearer, Michael Orme, Jim Conkle, Albert Okura and Stephen Razo. They have formed an alliance to help in the restoration of Amboy on Route 66.

sale, the more I realized it has to be protected."

He offered \$425,000 and Burris accepted with the condi-

tion that Okura not destroy but renovate Amboy.

Okura, owner of the Juan Pollo Restaurant chain, had al-

ready established himself as a preservationist when he saved the original McDonald's in San Bernardino from the bulldozers and converted it into a McDonald's museum and his company office.

After the announcement Thursday, Okura gave a tour of the facilities and explained his ideas and plan for the restoration.

Also on the tour were Stephen Razo, BLM director of external affairs; Jim Shearer, BLM archaeologist; Michael Orme, field representative for Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt; Jim Conkle, a national trust board member; and Jeff Samudio of DesignAid Cultural Research Management, who is performing a historic survey documentation of sites for the state of California.

"Roy's Motel, Café and gas station are perhaps most beloved and considered particularly important relative to other Route 66 properties because of the remote desert location" Duncan said.

"Traveling east or west, it was and still is a long way to go for gasoline, a bed or something to eat. Roy's was a godsend for travelers," he said.

The announcement Thursday came just days after Route 66 was listed as one of the 100 most endangered sites by the World Monument Watch in New York City.