



LAND LORD: John Bradley and the domain he'd like to develop.

UPSTATE UPROAR

Rocky Mountain Fervor

McMansions on the Shawangunks?!? Ulster County revolts against its local squire. **By Ralph Gardner Jr.**

WHEN WE LAST MET John Bradley—country squire, self-proclaimed environmentalist, and Knickerbocker Club member—he was locked in a dispute with fearsome opera critic and Ulster County neighbor Manuela Hoelterhoff over her threat to grill his “balls” after he evicted a friend of hers from her home.

That was two summers ago, and alas for Bradley, the court “recognized it was a matter of freedom of speech that I might turn a significant part of his anatomy into a meal!” recalled Hoelterhoff

last week en route to the Salzburg Festival.

Since then, Bradley has managed to alienate a far larger swath of the Hudson Valley with a proposal to turn his 2,600 acres of the Shawangunk Ridge into a gated community with 349 McMansions. Somewhat perversely, Bradley claims the plan is the best way to preserve the land.

Naturally, his neighbors are skeptical. “It’s a shocking proposal,” says Gioia Shebar, who severed her friendship with Bradley last fall after news of the development leaked out. Now SAVE THE RIDGE signs are

as common as mosquitoes, and locals, including Congressman Maurice Hinchey, hope to quash the plan during the environmental review.

That is, if Bradley doesn’t quash it himself. In May, one of his partners in the plan, Chaffin Light, a “conservation-based” developer, inadvertently

e-mailed an internal memo to a local reporter in which Roger Beck, Chaffin’s point man, confessed to some personality problems with Bradley. Those problems, says Beck, have been resolved.

Perhaps he ought to tell that to Bradley. Rumors are circulating that he may now sell the land to a conservationist group instead, or even to architect David Rockwell or Robert De Niro, a friend. “They’ve both expressed serious interest,” he says. Neither Rockwell nor De Niro could be reached, but sources say the rumors are false.

Beck argues that even if Bradley wanted to sell, he’d need the other partners’ okay. But Bradley, of course, begs to differ. “I’m not just a partner,” he says. “I’m *the* major partner. If I say it goes, it goes.”