

Coming Home

News from The Bishop's Ranch

Fall 2020



COVID-19 and the Ranch

by Aaron Wright, Acting Executive Director

Six months ago as COVID-19 began to interrupt life as we knew it, the Ranch got very quiet. As the impact of this novel coronavirus was beginning to appear worldwide, we preemptively closed to guests the week before the official Shelter-In-Place order came on March 17th—which happened to be the exact same day I stepped into the Acting Executive Director role. At that point our staff went home and there was almost no activity at the Ranch for two weeks.

I think like most people we thought it might be more temporary than it has turned out to be. We began working remotely and made a commitment to pay our staff through the initial closure while we planned for reopening—hoping that would happen in May. As the possibility of reopening moved further and further away, we received enough funds from the Paycheck Protection Program to extend our staff commitment for an additional 8 weeks. That helped sustain our staff and allowed us to perform some critical maintenance and fire fuels reduction projects while planning for and implementing new protocols to keep our staff and guests healthy and safe. As we approached the end of our PPP time period it was clear that we would not be reopening or returning to “normal” in time to keep moving forward with our full staff. We did the painful work of reducing our staff by 50%. All of those laid off had faithfully served the mission of the Ranch—some for multiple decades.

By mid-summer it became clearer how the Ranch might be of service during this time. As

Continued on page 2

A Beautiful Parachute

by Jack Dowling, Advancement Director

On my last birthday my wife, Lisa, told me she had made reservations for me and our son, Ivan, to go skydiving. She wasn't trying to get rid of me, she knew it was an item that had long been on my bucket list.

On a chilly Saturday in November we drove up to NorCal Skydiving in Cloverdale and after watching a cautionary video and signing a small booklet of release forms, we were ready to meet our instructors. Tony and Carson kept the conversation light and encouraging while they geared us up with jumpsuits, harnesses and goggles and then guided us to the plane.

The four of us wedged ourselves in behind the pilot and then headed down the runway. The small, one-engine plane slowly flew south down the Alexander Valley. As we gained altitude over Healdsburg, I could see the hills to the west of The Bishop's Ranch and noted how the different valleys and watersheds connected with each other. We banked and came back north to get to the 12,000 foot jump altitude. I could see snow on the tall mountains that make up the Mayacamas range, and glimpse Clear Lake and the flat plain of the central valley.

When we got to the jump area, Carson asked if I was ready and I gave him the thumbs up signal then climbed onto his lap as instructed so he could attach our harnesses. He opened the door and we swung our legs out into the open world below us. The view was breathtaking and my heart was beating faster.

We leaned forward and fell away from the plane. The first sensation was shocking cold,

Continued on page 3

Covid-19 - Continued from page 1

guidelines became clearer, we were able to open in August for individuals and household units to get away for the weekend. Our first weekend was magical. There's a great line in our vision statement (crafted over 30 years ago) about the Ranch fulfilling a vital mission of being a place with a spiritual atmosphere at its core, where people can "wash the dust off their souls." One guest upon arriving stood in the Ranch house courtyard with arms open wide, near tears, saying, "thank you for letting us come"—I felt like I was witnessing not just dust washing away but boulders of pent up loss, grief and isolation falling off her shoulders. Other guests expressed similar sentiments: "We haven't been anywhere in five months," and "It's been a long time since I've just been at the Ranch and not been working and got to soak it all in just for me." We lost power due to the lightning storm on the final morning of that weekend, yet our amazing kitchen crew still cranked out a hot and on-time breakfast and lunch. The guests went home refreshed, and our staff, though tired, was energized by finally getting to do what we love.

That lightning started the Walbridge fire. Two days later the Ranch was evacuated and sadly we had to cancel the next two weekends of retreats (both of which were sold out!).

After thirteen days we returned to the Ranch and began preparing for our Labor Day weekend guests. We had a similarly wonderful long weekend. The guest went home refreshed, and our staff breathed a sigh of relief. That evening the Ranch was evacuated again due to a flare up behind the dairy. Thankfully that was short lived.

As I write this we're preparing for another weekend retreat. The

sky is orange as so much of the West is burning.

Pain, loss and transition are inevitable in life. Though 2020 does seem to be offering more opportunity to face this fact than any previous year in my life experience. I know that physiologically we experience all change as loss. And we must grieve our losses. Where does it all go?

Throughout this time of COVID-19 I've reminded our team the importance of naming loss and grieving it. I often find myself thinking of and singing this song that has its roots in a Rilke poem that I learned in a *Music the Makes Community* training in Ohio years ago:

"Fear not the pain, let its weight fall back into the earth. For heavy are the mountains, heavy are the seas."

I feel like that's what was happening for the guest in the Ranch House courtyard, and on the lawn and in the pool and so many moments over these weekends. People have found the healing potential of letting the grief fall off into the sacred ground that is the Ranch. This is why the Ranch is here. This place is our "heavy mountains" and "heavy seas." We can let go here knowing the Ranch can hold our pain and our grief.

Witnessing those moments has made all the work and pivoting of the last six months worth it. It has renewed my commitment to work for a more resilient Ranch so that we don't just survive this challenging season of the pandemic and wildfires, but so that we can find new ways forward and steward this sacred ground that has been entrusted to our care, so that generations to come can experience healing here as well.

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A Beautiful Parachute - Continued from page 1

like diving into an alpine lake, since we had lost about 21 degrees in the long climb. Next came the exhilarating rush of adrenaline as we plummeted towards the ground. The rushing air, as we fell 200 feet per second, made it hard to get a good breath, but I remembered the instructions and just took slow calm breaths so I could enjoy the experience.

It felt like we were in freefall much longer than the typical 60 seconds before Carson deployed the parachute. The big yellow canopy opened and we slowed down to enjoy the view over the next four or five minutes. Carson brought us in for a pretty soft landing and I looked up to see Ivan making his descent with Tony. It was an amazing experience that I will never forget.

I have been thinking about that day a lot over the past few months. It feels like the Ranch is going through a parallel experience as we navigate this highly unusual year.

There was the period when we knew the coronavirus was coming: we read all the warnings and planned for how we would react, letting the gravity of the situation sink in. When the initial shelter in place order came, we thought it would be for a short while, and we used the time to discover things about the Ranch. We heard the birds in new ways and experienced the deep quiet of the chapel. We had fun walking out with the cows and taking tours of little visited spaces.

We used social media to connect with people and when we asked, they told us what was

important for them to see in our social media posts. The chapel was high on the list, as were the views of the valley. We got requests for the Peace Pole and the Labyrinth, confirming that the Ranch holds deep meaning for so many people.

Then it came time for the leap. It became clear that we would not be able to operate normally for a long time. That was frightening and took our breath away and made us wonder if we would survive. Then the parachute opened.

Ours is a big beautiful parachute, made up of large and small multi-colored swatches. It is the charitable contributions of so many that love the Ranch and wish to see it succeed. Our descent was slowed long enough for us to navigate the Payroll Protection Plan and keep our focus on the future.

New challenges have arisen. The pandemic continues to make it difficult to host guests in a sustainable way. Fire season has come months early and sidetracked our attempts to provide some weekend hospitality. Our parachute is being tested.

You can help us grow this beautiful parachute. There is room for more colorful swatches in different sizes. Your support will gently bring the Ranch to stable ground, ensuring we can continue the good work we have done together for over 70 years.

Read more on page 5 about how a charitable gift can be matched.

Marty Hits 100!



Marty and Joyce Griffin

Ranch folks are joyfully joining Ranch board member, longtime neighbor, supporter, and Legacy Circle member Dr. Marty Griffin in celebrating his 100th birthday this year (in August). The founder of Hop Kiln Winery, Marty and his family created the Gina's Orchard Preserve, one of the most beautiful areas of The Bishop's Ranch, in memory of granddaughter Gina Monaco. If you haven't already, be sure to see Marty in the gripping documentary film *Rebels With a Cause*. His book *Saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast* tells the inside story of why the North Bay still has a natural coastline.

On this milestone birthday, retired medical doctor Marty is being honored by the U.C. Berkeley School of Public Health and by Audubon Canyon Ranch, which he founded in 1962. Well known for his pioneering environmental advocacy, Marty helped save West Marin from extensive development and the Russian River from intensive gravel mining. He stood with the Ranch to protect water quality in Northern Sonoma County and continues to fight for many other important causes for the public benefit and the natural world. Happy Birthday, Marty! All of us at the Ranch give joyful thanks to God for your enduringly inspiring life.

Virtual Camp

by Megan Anderson, Residential Host and Chaplain



Ivan Thorpe loads "Camp-in-a-Box" for delivery

The last two weeks of July were packed full with arts and crafts, cooking workshops, small groups, chaplain time, singing by the campfire, dance parties, and so much more. When we had to make the heartbreaking decision to cancel in-person camping programs for the summer due to COVID-19, I could have never imagined such a transformational camp experience taking place in camper's homes and on ZOOM video conferencing.

A phenomenal team of volunteer counselors came alongside me to vision and plan for what a summer camp online could look like. This team, along with the amazing leadership of Assistant Camp Director, Ivan Thorpe, met with me every week for over two months. Everyone came to our planning meetings with such creative ideas and energy that the brainstorming and planning turned out to be so much fun. It was a joy to see how such a robust program came together from the inspiring teamwork of these young adult leaders.

Typically BREAD Camp is divided by session according to age group. For Virtual BREAD Camp 2020, we decided to do a hybrid program. All age groups were invited to register for 2 weeks of camp from July 19th to July 31st. Campers had age-group-specific chaplain and small group time in the mornings, then all of the age groups came together to participate in afternoon workshops and night time activities. In addition to holding three live Zoom sessions Monday-Friday each week, every camper was sent a "Camp-in-a-Box." The box included art projects, s'more kits, a daily devotional compiled by counselors, a battery-lit tea light for compline, and more!

Generations Camp also hosted an amazing week of family camp online during the last week of June. This week included an art workshop, compline services, a costume dance party, and chaplain time. It was such an amazing experience that it was quite hard to sign off of Zoom after the closing compline on Friday night.

In a season where so much that we hold dear has been postponed or cancelled, it was heartwarming to witness the ways in which the Ranch camp community came together this summer to create inclusive and loving community in an adaptive and inspiring way.

Camp is just one of the ways that the Ranch is striving to nurture community in this time when we cannot physically be together. The Chapel Community has been meeting every Sunday for chapel and coffee hour at 9:30 a.m. on Zoom since late March. We have also been enjoying some new mid-week gatherings during this time. Fall gatherings start up this week with Meditation Class on Wednesdays at 11 a.m., and The Art of Hosting: Conversations That Matter gatherings on Sundays at 10:45 a.m. Everyone from the wider Ranch community is always welcome to attend any of these gatherings. Please send me an email to join the Chapel mailing list that contains Zoom links to these gatherings.

Circling back to this summer, virtual camp would not have been possible without all of the incredible volunteer leaders that offered their time and talents so generously. Please join me in thanking them!

Blessings,
Megan+

Thanks to:

Assistant Camp Director: Ivan Thorpe
BREAD Camp Counselors:
Sawyer Castleberry-Backman
Kimble Helms
Maddy MacGregor
John Robinson
Francesca Rubinson
Camilla Sigmund
Lydia Villa

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Annual Fund Matching Challenge

The Ranch is relying on the generous support of those who use and love it to keep operations running until we can safely return to serving larger groups of people. We have set an ambitious goal to raise \$300,000 between July 1 and December 31.

Using a bequest from long time board member and supporter Kay Bishop, the Ranch board has created a \$50,000 matching fund. The fund will match dollar for dollar any new or increased donations.

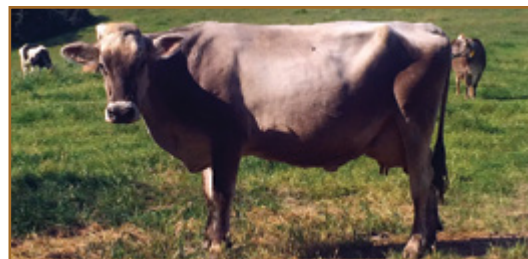
The chart below shows the type of gifts that will help us meet our goal. Do you see a place for yourself on the chart? Donations can be made online at www.bishopsranch.org/support.

GIFT RANGE \$	# GIFTS	GIFTS IN RANGE	CUMULATIVE GIFTS
\$15,000	2	\$30,000	\$30,000
\$7,500	7	\$52,000	\$82,000
\$5,000	10	\$50,000	\$132,000
\$2500	19	\$47,000	\$180,000
\$1,000	45	\$45,000	\$225,000
\$500	50	\$25,000	\$250,000
\$250	80	\$20,000	\$270,000
\$100	300	\$30,000	\$300,000

If you would like more information about being part of this matching grant, contact Jack Dowling, at 707-433-2440 x105 or visit www.bishopsranch.org/support.

The Cows (a social distancing parable)

by Allie DeArmond, Prayer Resident



During the weeks I was a Prayer Resident at the Ranch, I worked on my novel in the morning and explored in the afternoon. Thus I became acquainted with the cows at the neighboring dairy. I would speak with them from the other side of the fence, where they lined up when I

approached.

One path ran right through a small corral where a few cows occasionally gathered. An instructional sign informed everyone to make sure to close the gates when passing through. Reading this sign, standing firmly on my side of the gate, I noted that the cows were significantly larger than the ones in Farmer Brown's story book. Who would dare pass through? While the cows didn't look particularly nasty or aggressive, they didn't look very bright either. It seemed highly likely that either these enormous beasts, or I, could do something stupid with disastrous results.

Coming Home

A newsletter about life at The Bishop's Ranch, a retreat and conference center for all ages.

Send correspondence & address corrections to:
The Bishop's Ranch
Coming Home
5297 Westside Road
Healdsburg, CA 95448
Tel. 707.433.2440
Fax. 707.433.3431
email: info@bishopsranch.org
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A Time in the Kitchen

by Robin Miller, Kitchen Manager



Robin Miller (right) and Whitney Cox with fresh baked cookies

This year represents one of the most dynamic changes to the Ranch and its kitchen in my time here (more than a quarter century).

I started cooking in the kitchen as a prep cook in 1991. I came to the Ranch by way of my step-daughter, who was friends with Ariel Ross. Ariel cooked in the kitchen along with her mother Liz (McClure) Schmidt, the former kitchen manager.

I became the Assistant Manager to Liz and helped to share the details of this kitchen's work. At that time, we would alternate job sharing, each taking a month on and a month off. This arrangement allowed for her to leave and cook in her brother's gold mining camp in the Yukon. I was able to go trout fishing for a month at a time in the summers. When Liz retired in 2009, Sean offered me the opportunity to become the Kitchen Manager.

I have been the Kitchen Manager for eleven years. Now ending my 29th year here, it is time for me to retire. It is hard to move on from this unique position at The Bishop's Ranch and I will always treasure my time spent here.

I have come to value the benefits in the continuity of community that the Ranch offers: the familiarity of families and of seeing some of the same individuals season after season. I see my time spent here surrounded by nature. I have witnessed the same sun rising, over the same valley, the beauty from a different dawn on the Refectory's veranda for over a quarter of a century. I am thankful for having had the opportunity to be creatively expressive with food as my medium. The Ranch provides a sense of place. It has provided me with a place that will reside within me in many ways for the rest of my life.

My place of work, The Bishop's Ranch, has been a gift. I am also very grateful for all the people I have encountered and who I have worked with, who have been supportive of me in my many years here.

The Cows - Continued from page 5

Conversations about cows ensued at meals. Several meals. Everyone assured me I'd be perfectly safe crossing the paddock. One girl, who had grown up at the dairy, showed me a picture of a cow she had raised from a puppy—I mean, a calf.

One afternoon, I approached the gate, took a deep breath and screwed my courage to the sticking place. I opened the gate and carefully closed it behind me. A cow stood on the path between me and the opposite gate. I took a couple of steps toward it. She looked at me. "Hello," I said in my best pleasant but firm voice. "I'm crossing to the other side."

I took another couple steps toward her. The cow studied me for a long minute and then lumbered off the path. I thanked her profusely and inched forward. Unfortunately, now that I was halfway across the field, another cow was directly in my path with its, um, back, toward me. I cleared my throat. Nothing. Some chewy tidbit on the ground had this cow's total attention.

It should be noted that the only difference between the path in front of me and most of surrounding ground was that the path was a direct line between Gate #1 and Gate #2. Any idiot knows that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Thus it had become my yellow brick road. It didn't even occur to me to move off the path and start weaving between the cows. "Um, excuse me?"

At this point, the first cow, who had watched this little drama without expression, lumbered over and butted Mrs. Munchy off the path. She then backed up, giving me a clear path to the other side. "Oh, thank you," I said, my eyes filling with gratitude. "You are wonderful." I will admit that I did not go up and pat her neck, or kiss her nose, or scratch her ears or whatever one does to cow friends. I scurried to the other side and through the gate, carefully closing it behind me.

I suspect that my rescuing cow was the one raised by the young woman. However, despite seeing the picture, I couldn't say for sure. To me, one cow looks very much like another: *Ginormous!*

Cass Comes Home

by Jack "Cass" Grimes, former Residential Host

Since retiring and leaving the beautiful Ranch in March, 2019, a lot of things have changed. We moved to the quasi-country in Penngrove and bought a property with two homes on it: a smaller one-bedroom home and a larger four-bedroom house where our oldest daughter and her family of five live. We have enough property to share it with goats and chickens and have an enviable vegetable garden to help sustain us. My life and days are much different now than when I lived and worked at the Ranch. My daily to do list is shorter, I don't have meetings or guests to attend to, I have more time to read and reflect and I am available for my grandkids. Yes, everything is different. Yet, when I come back to the Ranch to be with friends and family, many things feel the same or better. I appreciate the Ranch more than ever: the diversity, the people, the environment, the food and the history. I feel connected and part of the history that has helped to transform it. As I write this article, I am sitting in Harrison House during the early morning being enveloped with its beauty and transformative nature.

When I lived here, I came to realize and appreciate what a special place it is where guests can find company and solitude, rest and opportunities for exercise, quiet times and quality discussions. Now, I have the same opportunity as a guest to come and utilize this sacred space. Coming back I feel a real sense of familiarity and homeyness that my almost ten years of living here had provided. So, as the name of the Ranch newsletter is Coming Home, how appropriate for me to come home every time I visit it.

As anyone who has been here is aware, the Ranch is also an institution with a rich history that needs to be available for many years to come for all to enjoy and appreciate. This year, due to COVID-19, there have had to be significant changes in the uses of the Ranch. A virtual summer camp had to replace the "real" camp experience this year. The business of the Ranch has slowed way down, yet there is much to do to maintain its beauty and workings.

We as guests, retreatants, and long time supporters are needed to assist the Ranch to regain its footing. We must be willing to help however we can to ensure that this beautiful place of rest, retreat and renewal is available for future generations so that everyone has the opportunity to come home to the Ranch.

We Kept Extending That Time

by Laurie Glover

The divisions reveal that the suffering is everywhere.

Frankly, it's a grim time,
not ideal, but a gift:

We get to decide what to stir up.

Frankly, it's a grim time,
nothing of the usual swirling around.
Though we get to decide what to stir up,
I have no exact answer how it's going to look.

Nothing of the usual swirling around:
we don't know up from down, left from right,
have no exact answers how it's going to look,
and yet and yet we persevere.

We don't know up from down, left from right.
By the end of the year that number will be
more than a million.
And yet and yet we persevere.
Show us what our work is to do.

By the end of the year the number will be more
than a million:
Are you healthy? How can we help?
Show us what our work is to do.
I'm just grateful we can see each other.

Are you healthy and how can we help?
It was looking like things were beginning to
flow;
now I'm just grateful we can see each other.
It will be different, it will be hard.

It was looking like things were beginning to
flow,
but the divisions reveal that suffering is
everywhere.
It will be different, it will be hard,
not ideal, yet still a gift.

*A pantoum is a poem of any length,
composed of four-line stanzas in which the
second and fourth lines of each stanza serve as
the first and third lines of the next stanza.*

*For this poem, Laurie used words from a
Zoom gathering of the Acorn Society in early
June, where members heard updates about the
Ranch during COVID time.*

Mushroom Pecan Burger Recipes from The Bishop's Ranch Kitchen

**Note from Robin Miller: The original recipe calls for firm tofu. I think if this is a binder that a softer tofu works better. Twelve ounces of tofu seem like a high amount too. Try 6-8 ounces. Also this doesn't have to be vegan, eggs are a better binder (I used 2 whole eggs for 6 servings).*

1/2 cup onion, chopped
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1/2 teaspoon dried marjoram
1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
4 cups mushroom, chopped
(Shiitake mushrooms work well)
1/3 cup toasted pecan
2 tablespoon tamari
1 cup whole wheat bread crumbs
1 cup brown rice
1/4 cup rolled oats, ground
1 tablespoon fresh dill
(or substitute 1 teaspoon dried dill)
1 tablespoon miso
12 ounce firm* tofu
Salt & pepper to taste

Heat oven to 350°

Saute onions in oil on medium heat until the onions have softened, about 5 minutes. Add the mushroom, marjoram, and thyme. Cook until the mushrooms are tender, 5-10 minutes more. Place cooked mushroom mixture into a bowl and add: pecans, breadcrumbs, rice, oats, tamari, dill, miso, tofu. Using a potato masher (or by hand), mix well. Season with salt and pepper. Test cook a small amount for seasoning before cooking the whole batch.

Oil a ½ sheet pan. Scoop 6 portions and shape with water moistened hands to form patties. Bake 15-30 minutes, flipping the patties over halfway through cooking to brown on both sides.

Source: Moosewood Restaurant