

Coming Home

News from The Bishop's Ranch

FALL 2021

A Celebration of the Swift Family Era

by Mark Farmer, Former Ranch Director



Calen, with baby Athie, Sean, Brendan & Caroline

On Saturday, September 25th, nestled in the middle of an Acorn Society weekend, a couple of hundred friends of the Bishop's Ranch gathered to honor and celebrate Sean Swift's three decades as Executive Director of the Ranch. The celebration was a great success, despite the COVID delay of about a year since Sean's retirement. Characteristically, Sean preferred the spotlight not shine on him alone but on his family and the team with whom he had worked for so many years. Jack Dowling and Lisa Thorpe travelled back from their new place in Arkansas, where Jack is thriving as the head of communications at the Episcopal cathedral there. Robin Miller, who headed the Ranch kitchen during most of the Swifts' tenure was also honored, along with many other current and former staff members. The day was a chance to reflect on this amazing era in the Ranch's history, and the incredible growth, expansion, and improvements that this team brought to fruition.

It was one of those beautiful days we all have known at the Ranch, presided over by Mt. St. Helena and the welcoming staff. It was clear that the entire Ranch staff had gone all out to prepare for this day, setting up tents and lights, raking the lawns, making the place shine. Hung on the refectory walls was a detailed timeline of the Ranch and photo collages depicting very young Swifts and

continued on page 3

Honoring Our History by Sustaining Our Legacy

The beautiful thing about the history we all share with The Bishop's Ranch is that within it we find our own stories: stories of family, friendship, adventure, self-discovery, and our connection to God. Over 75 years, through these shared experiences, we have built a beautiful legacy that summons people from all walks of life to visit the Ranch to experience hospitality amidst the beauty of God's creation, where renewal of spirit, mind, and body brings us closer together.

As I have taken my morning walk the past few days, I've been in awe of the sheer force of nature and its ability to create change. This past week, a powerful rainstorm—deemed a “bomb cyclone”—dumped more than twelve inches of rain on our drought-stricken lands. The transformation is incredible. Keepo and Griffin Creeks are running, an otter is swimming in the lake, the grass has turned green, and new life is springing up on the hills and pastures. While we all feel a bit of relief at this reprieve from fire season, this rapid change is a powerful reminder that as our climate continues to warm, fire, drought, and flood are the new realities for the Ranch. As we begin the year-long celebration of our 75th anniversary, we are renewing our commitment to building a resilient future in which we are equipped to respond to The Ranch's emerging needs.



As we enter our 75th year, the legacy of The Ranch is in our hands. I believe this is our work together, to honor our history, to build our future, and to sustain the legacy of The Ranch so that future generations can create and share their own stories. In the pages that follow, you will be inspired by the work that has already begun. I am honored to have the privilege of partnering with you in this work.

Aaron Wright, Executive Director

READ CAMP

by Greta Mesics, READ Camp Coordinator

This summer's READ Camp may very well have been the best yet. Despite the many COVID restrictions--constant masking, maintaining cohorts, etc.--there was a true feeling of JOY in togetherness. All of our READ Campers had endured a long period of school at home via Chromebooks; some had not been in person with peers for over a year. So, the sheer delight of reading, learning, questioning, laughing, and playing games together was extra delightful and very meaningful. We learn better in community, in shared pursuits, and in conversations together. READ Camp is certainly proof positive of that.

We had an excellent crew of enthusiastic counselors and Ranch Hands who were certainly all in when it came to the goals of READ Camp. We were especially fortunate to have 3 volunteers bring their varying skills and interests to our community. Caroline Putnam, long-time friend of the Ranch, brought a stained glass jar art project as well as a real desire to get to know our campers as individuals. Eduardo Garcia (local Latinx Healdsburg community member and Occidental College student) introduced bilingual poetry to our campers in a "Read It, Write It, Recite It" session and Juan Carlos Garcia (Eduardo's older brother, HHS and MIT graduate) brought his passion for both music and skate boarding to our campers. Our volunteers made strong contributions to the shared learning and to the general camp happiness.

Morning at READ Camp was divided into four reading sessions that rotated through each day: RAL (Read A Loud), a listening session where *The Lion*, *The Witch* and *The Wardrobe*

was read to students by a counselor; Campfire Stories, a time to sing, create songs, and listen to stories; Poetry: Read it, Write it, Recite It, a time to explore and create poems; and Reader's Theater, where different stories were

performed with scripts and fabulous costumes. Our counselors and volunteers were active and ardent in their promotion of each of these rotations and our campers were clearly surprised by how much they liked these varied forms of reading and learning.

Afternoon rotations included pool time and swimming lessons, crafts on the Casita porch, soccer, and quiet reading in the Pavilion. The pool was especially popular as the afternoons were dry and warm and because campers simply love the Ranch pool. YIPPPPEE for watery fun and swim lessons!

Breakfast, lunches and snacks were enthusiastically gobbled by campers, counselors, and volunteers. Pancakes, pizza, and snicker doodle cookies were favorite treats. But, new foods were also on the menus and were taste tested and approved by all. So, there was delicious learning going on at the dining table as well as in the reading rotations.

On the last day of READ, each camper received a handwritten note from the leader of their camp cohort, a journal for continued writing, supplies to make more crafts, and a gift certificate to a local bookstore to select a book of their choice.

Throughout the year, as I see students at school or in our community, they share stories of READ Camp and always look forward to next year. Like a really good book, the READ Camp experience stays fresh in campers' minds as they grow in their sense of themselves as readers and learners in community together.

I cannot wait to see what we read and learn together next year!



A camper reads aloud to his peers



READ Campers perform in Reader's Theatre

The Ranch Food Philosophy: Mindful Food Planning for Mindful Eating

by *Kandie Faurot, Kitchen Manager*



Our goal in the Bishop's Ranch Kitchen is to remind you what coming home tastes like.

At the Ranch we serve three meals a day, buffet style. We have two working gardens and various fruit trees. What we can't grow ourselves, we source from local farmers and family owned and operated local businesses. We source our grains and flour from local, organic, and fair trade companies as much as possible.

By using seasonal offerings from our garden, limiting the amount of processed food in our kitchen and in the dishes we prepare, and making as much as possible from scratch, we hope you are transported home with every bite.

Our passion is to nourish you with an abundant variety of foods, balanced with flavors and ingredients. We strive to keep our menus innovative with creative new vegan, vegetarian, and gluten free options coupled with timeless ranch recipes you have come to know and love.

We want our environmental footprint to be as small as possible. We work hard to reduce kitchen waste by saving our prep food scraps and either composting them back into our gardens or sharing them with the neighbor's pigs, always aiming to put back what we take from the planet.

We look forward to your next visit and are excited to welcome you home again.

Swift Family - *Continued from page 1*

Thorpe/Dowlings and members of the Ranch staff throughout three decades. The kitchen staff was preparing a feast in the kitchen.

We gathered in front of the chapel under the Catalpa tree for the ceremony of honoring and thanksgiving. After Laurie Glover began with a poem (see page 7), Hale Foote, Ranch Board president, hosted the proceedings. I spoke of the Ranch's history in the decades before the Swifts arrived and told the story of how Sean first came to this place as a host and aspiring writer. Bishop Bill Swing, who was the bishop when Sean arrived, described Sean as a holy man of integrity whose spirit is embedded in the Ranch. Chaplain Pat Moore held up the team of people who 'breathed together, the co-conspirators: Calen, Brendan, Jack, Lisa, Robin, Cacilia Dale, Sarah McGowan, and Eleanor Nichols, and so many others. Bishop Marc honored the ways in which Sean has made us conscious of our connections with one another and with the natural world.

As a grand finale, Aaron Wright, Executive Director, paid tribute to Sean, and announced that, as the Ranch approaches its 75th anniversary, the soon-to-be-renovated refectory will be named the Swift Family Refectory, to honor their enormous contributions to this place.

The celebrations continued with a social hour, dinner, and enchanting music from a large contingent of the Scottish Fiddlers, musicians who have made the Ranch their home during Sean's long tenure and whose music is practically the sound track of the Swift Era. One of my favorite memories is of Brendan playing both piano and fiddle with these musicians--the community in which Brendan found his musical calling and later met his partner, Imogen.

In its nearly 75 years, generations of people have both given to and received from the Bishop's Ranch, and countless life-giving relationships have been formed and nurtured. Sean has been the longest serving director, by far. During his time, Webb Lodge and Harrison House were built, the Ranch House and Friary were resurrected, new lands were added, the pool was rebuilt, and Swing Pavilion came into being. The numbers of staff, guests, and groups grew exponentially. He hired Aaron as Hospitality Director, with an eye towards the future



Sean's mom, Betty, his grandson, Solomon and Caroline enjoy the Scottish Fiddlers

and a smooth transition. The Ranch we know today was built by Sean and his team. It is so fitting that the renovated refectory will be known as the Swift Family Refectory; I can think of no better tribute.



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Coming Home

A newsletter about life at
The Bishop's Ranch.

Edited by: Laurie Glover

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Coming Home

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Meet John Koch: "You Had Me at 'Hello.'"



A frozen John Koch, at the Barbara C. Harris Center in New Hampshire

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is John Koch (pronounced "cook") and I am the new Assistant Director of The Bishop's Ranch.

It is good to be here!

My career with Episcopal camp and retreat centers spans three decades. I have been fortunate to serve as Executive Director of centers located in the mountains of North Carolina, the Central Gulf Coast, and most recently, rural New Hampshire. While the bulk of my career has been with camp and retreat ministry, I've also found time to work as an airline Customer Service Manager, a winery

Director of Hospitality, and a sheep farmer.

In the fall of 1990, I had my first introduction to The Bishop's Ranch. Since viticulture was a hobby of mine, I was coming to California to take in the grape harvest. I needed a place to stay, so I reached out to Sean Swift and made arrangements for a visit. While I was expecting the grape harvest to be the highlight of my trip, what really became the highlight was The Bishop's Ranch. To steal a phrase from the movie *Jerry McGuire*, "You had me at 'Hello.'" I could not get over how wonderful the Ranch was--the food, the hospitality, the views, the accommodations. I had fallen in love.

That initial visit set the stage for a long and happy relationship with this wonderful place. I started visiting at least once a year, some years, two or even three times. As my relationship with The Ranch deepened, so did my commitment. I joined the Acorn Society and eventually the Legacy Circle. While the other three centers I've managed are equally beautiful and wonderful in their own right, only one truly has my heart--The Bishop's Ranch.

The Ranch is a true "thin space," that place and time where the distance between heaven and earth grows thin, where it is easy to encounter the Sacred. With the passage of time, thin places like the Ranch are becoming rarer and rarer. I hope to use my gifts and talents to strengthen the Ranch and make it sustainable for generations to come.

The Assistant Director position is the natural culmination of my life's work. I look forward to the opportunity to make a difference!

Support the Annual Fund

All aspects of life at the Ranch happen because we are a community. The Annual Fund provides direct support to the operating budget of the Ranch, allowing us to continue as a place where life-changing experiences and treasured memories are born.

When you support the Annual Fund you help us provide summer camps, increase resilience of Ranch lands, reach out to our community, and offer much needed hospitality to one and all.

Donate to the Annual Fund today by using the enclosed envelope or by visiting www.bishopsranch.org/support/ and click DONATE.

Upcoming Ranch Programs

Quiet Days in Advent - December 9-12, 2021

Find peace and solitude in the beauty of the Ranch during Quiet Days in Advent, a long weekend for you to get away. We are so thankful for the time and effort Sister Pamela Clare & Sister Maggie from The Community of St Francis put in over the years to make this a meaningful retreat for so many; they have concluded leading this program. This year, we will be joined by Fr. Brendan E. Williams, CMR, a priest and life-professed solitary monk of the Episcopal Diocese of California. He will offer meditations and lead worship for the retreat. Anne Blanton will lead prayerful movement sessions. We will also provide a booklet with prayers and meditations. Whether you are experienced with quiet retreats or exploring a new practice, we invite you to enter this space of quiet and allow your soul to be fed in this particular way.

Wisdom of the Heart - December 17-19, 2021

Enter Advent through a weekend inspired by Celtic and Benedictine spirituality. Times of silence will be interspersed with music, art, and the poetry of Mary Oliver as we draw on the wisdom of Mary Magdalene, St Francis, and Hildegard of Bingen. There will be a feast of contemplative practices: chanting, Labyrinth walks, Lectio Divina on the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, a candlelit Taizé service, an evening session of sound healing, and the creation of Earth Art mandalas. Deepen your journey during your free time through creating soul collage cards in the art room, hiking the beautiful trails or reading in front of the fire.

Epiphany Reflection Day with Bishop Marc - January 15, 2022

Gather together with other seekers to consider the themes of the season of Epiphany, the season of the revelation of light to the world, which begins in the dark with the story of the wise men following the star to the cave. The season offers a beautiful way to lift our hearts and eyes to the cosmos and to the reality of the expansiveness of divine creative energy at work in both darkness and light.

The School of Earth & Soul with John Philip Newell - February 15-17, 2022

Become a student of Celtic Wisdom. In 2016, John Philip Newell began a teaching initiative, The School of Celtic Consciousness, now called The School of Earth and Soul. Its purpose is to reawaken awareness of the sacred in all things through the recovery of Celtic wisdom for today and to help translate this awareness into compassionate action and justice. The school follows a three-year cycle of teaching and spiritual practice in its annual retreats. Participants may join at any stage in the cycle. This year's session, Celtic Wisdom 2: Sacred Earth, focuses on reawakening to the sacredness of the earth and every creature through the teachings of Eriugena, the Carmina Gadelica, and John Muir.

Spring Hike - March 19, 2022

Join us for an inspirational springtime hike to witness the many types of wildflowers that grow at The Bishop's Ranch. These living gems respond to a universal imperative - blooming in their own time and demonstrating the remarkable movement of nature toward diversity. Be prepared to walk five miles at a rambling pace, with several hundred feet of elevation change, taking time to discuss what we find.

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Preparing for a Changing Climate

by Matt Kissmann, Facilities & Land

In 2015, countries around the world made a pledge to cut 7.5% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Now, the UN Environment Programme has announced that even that cut doesn't come close to the level needed to keep our planet from warming 1.5°C by the end of the century. At the rate we are going, a 2.7°C increase by 2100 is predicted; to hold the increase to 1.5°C, we would need to cut 55% of our emissions over the next 19 years. Yet, even during the pandemic year of 2020, when everyone was staying at home and traveling far less, the levels of warming gases in the atmosphere hit record highs.

We're already feeling the effects of climate change here at the Ranch: a longer fire season that starts earlier, hotter summers, less overall rainfall but paradoxically larger and more destructive storms. We know we need to take action to reduce our emissions footprint. We are already looking at ways to change Ranch culture so that we use fewer resources; we are increasingly choosing more energy efficient appliances and equipment, looking for new ways (and places) to install solar, and our charging station supports EV vehicles traveling to the Ranch. In addition, we have to respond to the environmental changes we already are seeing as well as prepare for possibly even more severe changes.

Over the past year or so, we've made some great progress in our preparations to make the Ranch more resilient.

We're adapting the Ranch to the new fire regime. Last year, we cleared the underbrush, low branches and ladder fuels from about five acres forested areas south and east of our main campus. These were mechanically removed and either brought to a composting

facility or chipped for use here at the Ranch. Four months later, after cleared areas had had a chance to resprout, we brought in a herd of over 200 sheep & goats to browse what was reemerging, including the invasive plants growing on the forest floor. Removing the fuels by which fire could reach the forest canopy has created a buffer zone intended to give fire crews valuable time to protect Ranch buildings if needed.

As California entered yet another drought, we cut well-water usage by at least half by reducing irrigation to our lawns and landscaped areas. Eventually, through a new Healdsburg Municipal Utility Department (HMUD) project, we will be able to return irrigation to these areas while keeping our well-water usage low. HMUD is building a pipeline that will deliver recycled water to our northern neighbor, The Bucher Dairy. Once we develop new infrastructure to move this water from the dairy we'll be able to tap into this seemingly endless supply of recycled water to irrigate what we need at the Ranch.

As lovers and inhabitants of this wonderful planet, we need to do more to stem the tide of climate change. However, we can't lose sight of what's happening to our environment now and what's likely to happen in years to come, and so we must continue to increase the resilience of the Ranch.



200 + goats and sheep working a hillside at the Ranch.



A curious goat from the herd brought in to clear invasive plants and flammable underbrush from the forest floor.

A New Treehouse for The Bishop's Ranch

Over the past few months, we have been working with the Men of Grace, our master planner, Jane Marx, and architect Robert Leys to develop a plan to build a replacement for the much loved former Treehouse, a very special place at the Ranch.

With the unfortunate threat of Sudden Oak Death potentially killing any tree rather quickly, and any attached treehouse meeting the same fate as our former treehouse, we have decided to build a free-standing structure near the location of the former tree house. This site offers visitors a bird's-eye view of the land.

We are finalizing designs and working with a contractor to determine the cost of the project. If you loved the old treehouse or are just excited about creating this special place at the Ranch for everyone's enjoyment, we welcome you to help us build it! You can donate online at www.bishopsranch.org click "donate online" and select "Treehouse Project Fund."

As one of our Acorn Society members recently said, "After the year we've all had, we all need the joy of a treehouse in our lives." We wholeheartedly agree!



Hear the Sound of Each Other Moving Through the Universe

by Laurie Glover, friend of the Ranch

We all as priests must live in liminal space.
If the moon isn't enough to get you out there,
turn your gaze on all who dwell upon the earth.
We are never fully someone until we are someone
in relation.

If the moon isn't enough to get you out there,
are you willing to make the effort to see the holy?
We are never fully someone until we are someone
in relation.
If you don't believe that part, let the community
say it.

Are you willing to make the effort to see the holy?
The Christ permeates the Earth, it's how the
acorn gets to the tree.
If you don't believe that part, let the community
say it.
I move in and then move out after feeling exposed.

The Christ permeates the Earth, it is how the
acorn gets to the tree.
The Ranch is a chamber in the heart of Christ.
I move in and then move out after feeling exposed.
The sacred ground that this is, is still generating.

The Ranch is a Chamber in the Heart of Christ.
Turn your gaze on all who dwell on the Earth.
The sacred ground that this is, is still generating;
We all, as priests, must live in this liminal space.

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 and the final stanza contains lines from the first. Each of these lines here were spoken by Ranch friends, collected at Acorn Society meetings in pantoums from 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2019. These are your words.




The Bishop's Ranch

of the Episcopal Diocese of California
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Flourless Chocolate Torte Recipes from The Bishop's Ranch Kitchen

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

12 oz. dark chocolate (70 - 73% cacao)
1/2 cup unsalted butter
1/3 cup canola oil
1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
1/2 teaspoons chipotle powder *
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
6 room temperature eggs
1 cup sugar

Confectioners sugar for Garnish.

*We use up to a tsp of fresh ground ancho
chili powder

Coat a 9-inch springform pan with cooking spray or
butter and parchment paper.

Melt the butter & chocolate in a double boiler over
barely simmering water, stir until smooth. Remove
from heat and stir in oil, vanilla and almond extract,
cinnamon, salt, and chili powder.

While chocolate is heating, beat eggs and sugar in
a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high
speed until light and fluffy. Fold in the chocolate
mixture. Pour the batter into the prepared pan.

Bake the cake until the top is just set and begins
to crack, about 30 minutes. You want the center
to be soft and moist, take care to not overcook this
delicate cake. Let completely cool in the pan on a
wire rack, about 1 hour.

Dust with confectioner's sugar and whipped cream if
desired. Or we like to make flavored whipped cream
too.

Adapted from Eatingwell.com