

The Grapevine

The Newsletter of George Ranch

April, 2006



An example of the photographic artistry of James Huff

President's Letter

By Harold Marsh

Although it seems hard to believe (given our March weather), spring is just around the corner. Trust me. To me, spring is a time to look forward. From the Board's perspective, looking forward means completing the water tank project, approving a budget, including setting dues for the next fiscal year, and finishing a number of Association governance projects.

The water tank project should begin this month. We had hoped to start work on April 3rd, but because the weather has not cooperated it now looks like the week of April 10th. The tanks are being manufactured, and we expect to have them available in April for installation. However, the project now rests on the excavation contractor promptly completing the waterline trenching and tank site preparation. Many thanks to Peter Poullada, Allen Jones and David Sawi for working with me on this important project, and helping me stay on top of critical timelines.

In our March 18th Board meeting, we discussed our preliminary budget for

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We Should Have Built an Ark

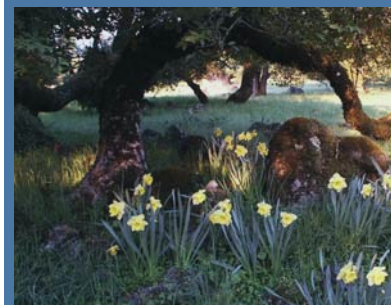
by Casey & Alycia

Had we known it was going to rain 40 days and 40 nights, we would have started gathering species, 2 by 2. Forever optimistic, we started construction in the fall of 2005 and the rain started. And it hasn't stopped. Concrete trucks, pumpers and other service vehicles have had a difficult time getting up and down our driveway, and construction has been a huge challenge. Our last lumber delivery was made down by White Alder, and it took 3 guys 8 hours to haul the lumber up to the garage!

While we've heard a few complaints from our subs, we haven't heard a single complaint from any of our neighbors and for that we are grateful. Thank you for your patience! It continues to be frustrating for us, but one of these days spring will arrive, the sun will shine, and we'll be George Ranchers again, hopefully this year, if not next year. In the meantime, if you feel like trudging up the hill, please feel free to stop by and check our progress (walls are finally going up - yeah!!). But wear your mud boots!

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Springtime Daffodils on George Ranch

President's Letter (Continued.)

fiscal year 2007 (beginning July 1, 2006), as well as a draft reserve study for the Association and the Water Company. It appears that our operating expenses can be held to the cost of inflation (although we don't yet know the cost of our insurance policies — a large expense in our budget.) However, the early look at our reserves for future capital expenditures indicates we are short, particularly in the Water Company (this because we are using reserve dollars to complete the water tank project). Thus, while we have not concluded our final analysis, nor has the Board approved anything, it appears we will need to raise both the Association annual dues and water company rates next year to address the reserve shortfalls. I should

recognize Peter Poullada (our tireless Treasurer as well as Water Project stalwart), John Brady and Steve Pease for their efforts in helping the Board with the budgets and reserve studies.

We have now cleaned up all outstanding issues related to our Association Governing Documents, except for one last important project underway to address the George Ranch Rules. Karen Ury, and her team of Pam Klonsky, Jan Stanley and Andy Massie are reviewing our current George Ranch Rules, and seeking input for any changes or issues which should be addressed. We invite all Homeowners to participate and provide input. We would like to conclude the review by late summer and approve the revised George Ranch Rules at the Annual meeting in September.

Lastly, we have a special spring social event planned. Diane Kahler and her Social Committee of Florence Garvie and Nancy Sheppard are planning a spring regatta party to bless our fleet of (soon to be) two paddle boats. The paddle boats are being given to the Community by Dick and Diane Kahler; again, we all owe them our deepest thanks. Diane will set a date when the second boat arrives and it is safe to go outside. (If this weather continues, she has threatened to name them Ark I and Ark II.)

I do hope the rains end soon and spring steps forward.
Kind regards,
Harold Marsh, President

Day Trippin' by Libby Brady

Hi Neighbors,

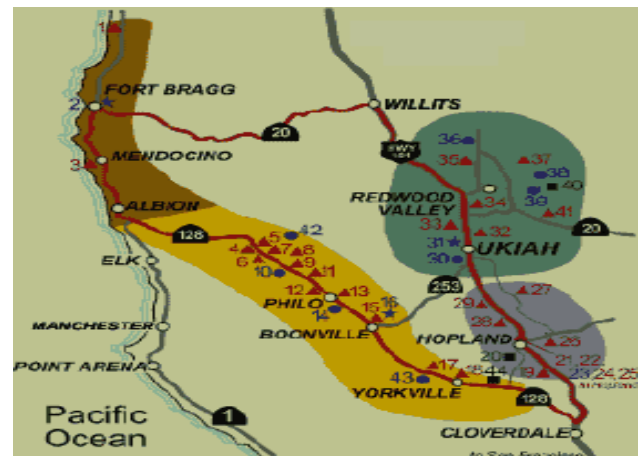
Well, we've been day trippin' again. This time was actually an over-nighter to the Anderson Valley. You can do it in a day, but with two days, you can see so much more and taste so much more wine.

From #101, take highway #128 toward Boonville. We had lunch in Boonville at a tiny café that had been open only a week, so it didn't have a sign in front, but it is attached to a small mercantile shop with gifts and some nicely chosen items made by local artisans. (The town is so small you'll find it.) Anyway, the café had a limited menu but delicious soups and paninis.

On to wine tastings...we tried two champagne houses, Scharffenberger (yes, the chocolate people) and Roederer. Then we stopped at Husch and Goldeneye Wineries. Both made good wines, and Goldeneye serves you at comfy sofas with small food tastings with their wines. Navarro and Handley Cellars and several others are in the Anderson Valley, too, but four stops were plenty for us...we DO have our standards.

We found our Inn for the night...Anderson Creek Inn. Pleasant with fireplaces in our rooms (we went with another couple), but we found an even better spot the next day which we will try in the future. Out for dinner at the Boonville Hotel...Thursday night is their Fixed Price dinner for \$30 with no corkage fee...really lovely food...pork rilette on toast with a green salad, paella and a rhubarb tart. We brought a couple of bottles we had purchased earlier in the day. Yum.

The next day, after a hearty breakfast (smoked salmon



quiche, fruit compote and blueberry-lemon scones) we were off to explore more of Anderson Valley. We drove northwest on #128 to Greenwood Road in Philo to Hendy State Woods State Park filled with big, beautiful redwoods and nature trails to follow along the Navarro River. A little further up Greenwood Road is the Apple Farm, a totally charming setting of the actual apple farm and several cottages for overnight guests (where we'll stay next time). They have cooking classes there and several apple products for sale. The owners let us peek in the cottages and they were all really beautifully done.

Two wineries that were recommended to us were Esterlina and Lazy Creek, but they were up dirt roads and we were there on a rainy day and thought it would be muddy...next time!

Do YOU have a favorite day trippin' spot?

Preserving Our Trees!

by James Huff

Last years loss of the magnificent valley oak located at the cottage has prompted a more systematic look at the health of our trees in general. Its loss was close, way too close. I'm finding that other residents have had recent experiences of sudden catastrophic losses of full grown oaks due to root rot. None of these trees involved issues of irrigation or adjacent non-native plantings. Though I frequently see evidence of sudden oak death and/or various secondary fungal infections, these factors are not involved in recent losses.

I've also seen areas of death in the crowns of our bay trees. The bulk of the tree survives but the regrowth is atypical and not well formed. Some of these observations have been noted in patterns of concentration and that concerns me.

Our forest is unusual. It is primarily populated by old growth specimens. This is due, in part, to its ranch heritage, i.e., the new growth has been grazed by cattle. I also suspect that our large deer and turkey populations are continuing to keep young trees from gaining footholds. Other than unpalatable scrub species, there is little new growth. This is also an issue of concern.

Our forest is one of our greatest assets as it provides beauty, cover, erosion control, privacy, recreation, etc. Please contact me with the particulars of any tree losses on your properties. Furnishing information to build a database is the first step in planning a course of action.



The Cottage Oak -- before we lost it..



The fallen Oak from our parking lot

Vendor Compliments

Nancy Peterson recommends Glen Andi of Creative Habitat Designs. He is a licensed contractor who lives in Sonoma. His specialties are remodeling kitchens and cabinetry but he will take on anything, large or small, that interests him. Nancy says she's seen wonderful fireplace mantels, bookcases and headboards come from his shop. Phone: (415)806-9246. E-mail: creativehabitate@earthlink.net

John Brady says a fellow named Colin recently cleaned and replaced gutters for him. His references were good, the price was reasonable, and the work was excellent. A problem with a supplier delayed the project a day or two, but that didn't matter to John. Phone: 823-3382. Email: colinm33@hotmail.com

Allen Jones recommends Sandy's Paints in Sebastapol. He says, "Steven is great, lives in Sonoma so he can stop by, and did a great job matching a stain color for us. Great service, capabilities and price". 870 Gravenstein

Highway, Phone: 823-6434

The Peases recommend Sonoma Tailoring & Formal Wear, 500 W. Napa, Sonoma Phone: 935-4475. This guy does some great work. He relined a leather jacket for Steve and did a superb job at a great price!

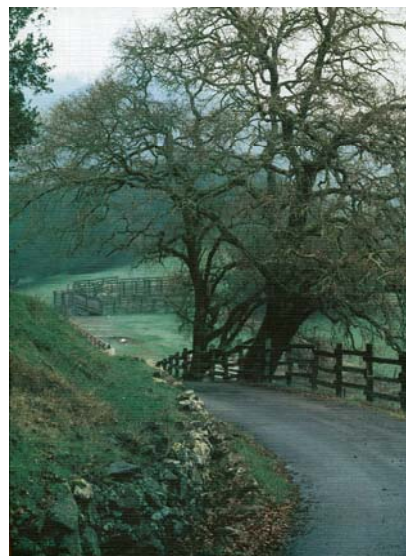
Peases have used Glen Sherrow to drive them to and from S F Airport many times. Glen recently merged his company into California Pacific Limousine. With that, Glen picked up a new Lincoln town car with lots of leg room. Pleasant and professional, Glen arrives for the pick up 15 minutes early, and he is always waiting when we land, whether the flight is early or late. Glen says he and his partner ,Paul Elizarraraz, hope to keep their rate at \$175 each way. Paul's Web address is: paul@calpacimo.com, or call 888 838-5668 toll free.

Zoo News (Who Knew?)

For those of us with children and grandchildren, I've just become aware of one of Sonoma's best-kept secrets. It's the Sonoma Developmental Center's Eldridge Farm. Years ago, it was actually a working farm but that program ended in 1966 and two years later the 40-acre farm reopened as a petting zoo to serve both clients and the community. Among the residents is a rabbit named Louis who makes his home with a couple of pot-bellied pigs, a goose named Hermione whose best buddy is

Deuce, the pig, and a chatty parrot named Pedro who greets those who visit the main barn .

The Eldridge Farm is located on the grounds of the Sonoma Developmental Center. It is open seven days a week, year-round, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 pm, with evening hours in the summer. Admission is free although donations are welcome. Hayrides, tours and parties are available by reservation. For more information call (707)938-6349.



Before George Ranch was developed, this view of White Alder, near Maria Biasetto's property, was made into a popular postcard

Events in Sonoma – April to late June

April through October (every Tuesday evening) **Sonoma Farmers' Market**

Food, crafts, local fresh produce and seasonal flowers. On the Plaza. Live music sponsored by the Sonoma Community Center.

Fee: Free **Time:** 5:30 pm to dusk
Phone: (707)538-7023

April 1 to June 10 – **Sonoma Overlook Trail Hikes**

The three mile hiking trail is a modest climb to enjoy outstanding views and an excellent place to picnic. Meet at 9:45 am near the entrance to Mountain Cemetery on 1st Street West, north of the Veterans Building parking lot. Wear sturdy shoes, wear sunscreen and bring drinking water.

Fee: Free **Time:** 9:45 am to 12:00 pm
Phone: (707) 939-7069

April 2 to May 21 (every other Sunday) – **Viansa Wetlands Tour**

A winter and spring treat for visitors to Viansa is the tour of their 91-acre wetlands. Gives nature lovers a chance to see a wide array of migratory waterfowl and other wild life. The two hour tour begins promptly at 8:30 am, and participants are encouraged to wear sturdy walking shoes.

Fee: \$18 tour, \$30 tour and lunch
Time: 8:30 am **Phone:** (800)995-4740

April 15 – **Easter Egg Hunt on the Plaza**

Children (with an adult) can participate in age-specific hunts.

Fee: Free **Time:** 10:00 am **Phone:** (707)996-2736

April 16 – **Easter Sunrise Service**

The public is invited to the annual Easter Sunrise Service, held at the amphitheater in the Plaza.

Fee: Free **Time:** 6:00 am **Phone:** (707)996-2736

April 22 and 23 – **Wine and Cheese Pairings at Bartholomew Park**

Colette Hatch, "Madame de Fromage", leads cheese tastings paired with Bartholomew Park wines. 1000 Vineyard Lane, Sonoma

Fee: \$15 **Time:** Call for information.
Phone: (707)935-9511

April 23 – **Wildflower Hike to the Chapel and Beyond**

Lace up your hiking boots for a grand tour of the Nicholson Ranch! Your efforts will be rewarded with a gourmet lunch under the Grandmother Oak. Nicholson Ranch Winery, 4160 Napa Road, Sonoma.

Fee: \$50 adult, \$25 youth **Time:** 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Phone: (707)938-8822

May 6 -- Ravenswood Seis de Mayo Mexican BBQ

Ravenswood Summer BBQs start off with "Seis de Mayo - ¡Hola! Mexican BBQ". Tickets includes BBQ meal, glass of Zinfu Zin and live local Latin music by Dave Correa and the Cascada duo. Reservations suggested. 18701 Gehricke Road, Sonoma.

Fee: \$25 or \$20 Wine Club **Time:** 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm
Phone: (888) NO .WIMPY or (888) 669-4679

May 6 -- Cinco De Mayo at Robledo Family Winery

The celebration, rapidly becoming one of Wine Country's premier events, features food by family matriarch and executive chef Maria Robledo, wine tasting, mariachi bands and release of 2004 Los Braceros Red Blend, a of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. Made entirely from grapes grown in Sonoma Valley. The Valley benefited greatly from the historic Bracero Program, a World War II Federal program which enabled thousands of Latino laborers to work in California agriculture while the local labor force fought the war. 21901 Bonness Road in Sonoma.

Fee: \$25, \$15 for wine club members **Time:** 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Phone: (707) 939-6903

May 7 -- Hanna Boys Center's Spring Open House

Celebrate Hanna's 56th Anniversary with a day of tours, family activities and fun! Learn about Hanna's life changing program that has helped over 3,300 at-risk boys and their families. Hanna is a non-profit education and treatment center supported by generous donations. It receives without any funding from the government or church. 17000 Arnold Dr, Sonoma.

Fee: Free & Open to all ages **Time:** 11:00am to 2:00 pm **Phone:** (707) 996-6767 or (877) 994-2662

May 20 - 21 -- Chateau Sonoma's French Flea Market

Proprietor Sarah Anderson has chosen her favorite Bay Area French importers to be on hand to sell French antiques, garden furniture and accessories. Parisian dealer, Laurenc Lenglar, will share what's hot in Country French Antiques. 53 West Napa Street, Sonoma.

Fee: Free **Time:** 10:30 am to 5:30 pm **Phone:** (707) 935-8553

May 25 - 28 -- Sonoma Jazz + Festival

A four day celebration of world class music, food, and wine steeped in California Wine Country ambiance matching the region's greatest chefs and vintners with diverse world-class performers. Main Stage Acts, including: Natalie Cole, B.B. King, Herbie Hancock and the Steve Miller Band, at the Field of Dreams, in downtown Sonoma, four blocks from the Plaza. **Fee:** Varies **Time:** Varies **Phone:** (866) 468-8355

First Friday after first Tuesday/monthly -- Art Opening

Museums & Exhibitions, Reception: The Arts Guild of Sonoma, a non-profit organization, located at 140 E Napa Street in downtown Sonoma holds monthly art openings featuring local artist members. Everyone is invited, snacks and drinks provided by the artists. Come enjoy the fun. Our hours are: Mon, Wed, Thurs 11-5pm, Fri 11-9pm. Sat

10-9pm, Sun 10-6pm. Closed Tuesdays.

Fee: Free **Time:** 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm **Phone:** (707) 996-3115

June 3 - 4 -- [Valley of the Moon Art Association's Annual Arts and Crafts Show](#)

Museums & Exhibitions: Over 100 California craftsmen, artists and musicians. For adults and kids. Selected art will be sold as a fundraiser for local art programs. Sunday includes Community Center Ox Roast. Sonoma Plaza, Sonoma. **Fee:** Free **Time:** 10:00 am to 5:00 pm **Phone:** (707) 833-4085

Year Round Ongoing Events

Every Friday morning – **Sonoma Valley Friday Farmers' Market** Farmers' Market at Depot Park on First Street West, Sonoma. **Fee:** Free **Time:** 9:00 am to 12:00 noon **Phone:** (707)538-7023

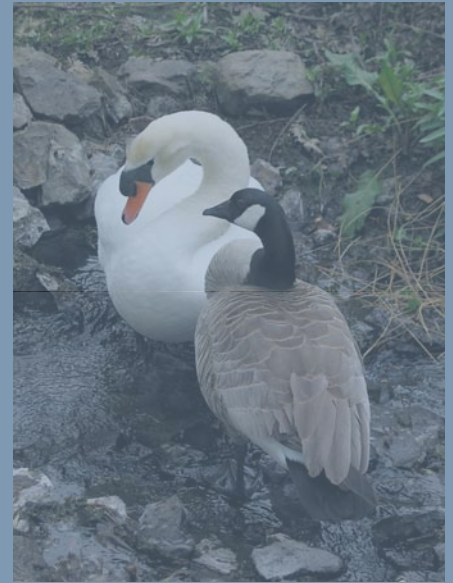
Ramekins

Sonoma Valley's unique facility dedicated to educating the home cook. Renowned chefs, authors and culinary experts teach their styles and techniques with class participants. Located just off the Plaza, Ramekins features all types of cooking and wine classes year 'round. 450 West Spain Street, Sonoma. Go to ramekinsclasses.com to view their catalog. **Fee:** \$35 - \$80 per class **Time:** Varies, call for schedule **Phone:** (707)933-0450 x3

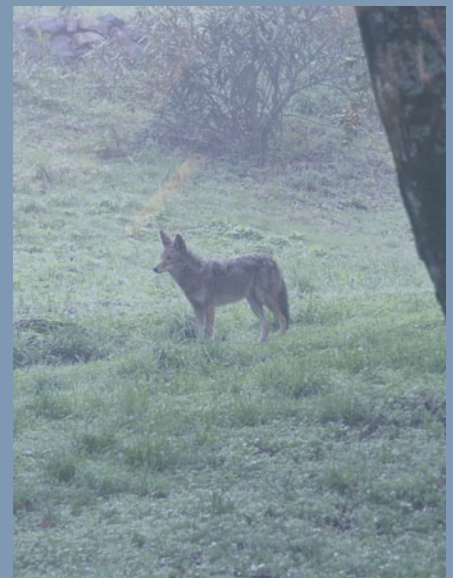
Feelin' Soggy?

As Casey and Alycia noted above, George Ranch feels a lot more like Seattle these days than California. Year to date, we have recorded 54" of rain versus the 40" average of the last twelve years.

March contributed 11.5", a whopping 250% above normal. But for those interested, we are still well behind the 1997/98 season when we had a total of 71" of rain. Of that, 23.5" came in February 1998!



We are blessed with critters of all kinds on George Ranch (top photo compliments of James Huff)



"Sarah"



Captain Bill



Always wanted to be published? You can! Write an article for The Grapevine!.

Launching Sarah

(The craftsmanship of Bill Garvie)

Those of us fortunate enough to visit the home of Florence and Bill Garvie have always known Bill is not only a wonderful gentleman, but also a master craftsman. Last July 7th the Garvies launched the most recent proof of his talents. "Sarah" is a 38 foot 1890's yawl designed for the waters of Long Island sound. She took eight years for Bill to design and build, using a 50 year old magazine article, its few line drawings, and special varieties of wood purchased from British Columbia, Oregon and New Hampshire.

When it was time, granddaughter Sarah, one of five Garvie granddaughters, had the honor of launching her namesake. Good job Bill, one down, four to go!

A George Ranch Thank You

A huge "THANK YOU" to Dick Finaly, Dick Kahler and Fred Klonsky for the beautiful job they did redoing our mailboxes. They look great!

George Ranch History

On Thursday, May 11th, docents of the Sonoma League for Historical Preservation will meet at Maria Biasetto's house. Because Harold Marsh will be addressing the group on the history of the George Ranch, the League is extending an invitation to all George Ranch residents. The meeting begins at 11:00 am and those planning to attend should take a lunch and drink with them

Sarah launching "Sarah"



Tell us About What's Happening In Your Family:

Got a vendor who you think is particularly good?

Let us know and we will share it with your neighbors.

Send your ideas, thoughts and questions to Joyce

*Pease at
www.jpease@vom.com*



George Ranch Community Assoc
20000 Elderberry
Sonoma, Calif. 95476

