



# Newsletter

"...When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." ... Aldo Leopold (1886-1948), *American Forester*

## Cliffhanger Saves Redwoods

By Sandy Sharp

**B**odega Land Trust is very pleased to announce the donation of a "forever wild" conservation easement on approximately 5 acres of old growth and second growth redwoods a few miles west of Occidental. It includes a vernal creek that drains into Salmon Creek. The property is owned by Diana Owyang and George Silberschatz.

The easement prevents any construction within the groves and all commercial uses, while allowing low impact recreational uses such as hiking and nature study, and the enhancement of the groves through the planting of species native to the area.

A conservation easement not only benefits land-owners by preserving their land, it also provided tax benefits. The appraised value of an easement that is donated counts as a charitable contribution, and the value of the property is reduced by the value of the easement, thus reducing the owner's property taxes.



Photo by Steve Killey

I first talked with Diana in early October, 2002. She said they wanted to file by the end of the year. What with Thanksgiving and Christmas coming up this didn't give us much time. The Board approved the project and we got to work on what turned out to be a cliffhanger. Diana was extremely pro-active and quick to respond to whatever needed to be done next. We worked through several drafts, but by December 18, when I had to leave for Nova Scotia we still weren't quite done, and the mortgage holder had still not sent the required Letter of Subordination! Finally George got on the phone to the mortgage holder and insisted the letter be sent by overnight courier. Diana emailed me on Christmas Day to say it had arrived but I didn't get the message until the 27<sup>th</sup>. There followed a couple of hectic hours working on what had to be our final draft. The next morning I had to fly to New York. From there I emailed them my final suggestions and referred them to our president Mary Biggs for her signature. It was our 8<sup>th</sup> draft. On New Year's Eve they took the completed easement to Mary's office, and then filed it at the Recorder's Office themselves. They had beaten the deadline by two hours. In this case it was the landowners' perseverance and dedication that made it happen their way. Thank you, Diana and George! 🌲

Bodega Land Trust

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Member: Land Trust Alliance



# Watershed Day 2003 May 17

By David Shatkin

**W**atershed Day 2003 promises to be the best yet! Sponsored by the West County Watershed Network, this year's event will be held on Saturday May 17, 10 A.M.- 4 P.M., on the beautiful Salmon Creek Middle School campus. Following the successes of previous Salmon Creek Watershed Days and last year's expanded West County Watershed Day, a decision was made to expand the geographical reach of the event even further, beyond the West County. This year the following members of the West County Watershed network are participating: the Dutch Bill Creek Watershed Council, the Stewards of Slavianca, the Atascadero-Green Valley Watershed Council, the Blutcher Creek Watershed Council, and the Ebabias Creek Watershed Group.

We will have three main presentations: Supervisor Mike Reilly; Deputy District Attorney Jeffrey Holtzman speaking on "The prosecution of environmental crimes in Sonoma County"; and a panel discussion on "Groundwater Management". Participating in the panel will be Peter Dellavalle

of Kleinfelder Assoc., Duane Starnes of Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department, and Andy Rodgers of the Petaluma Watershed Foundation and Chair for the Water Resource Element of the County's General Plan 2020.

In addition, shorter presentations will be held throughout the day on Fire Safe Councils, Governmental Logging Reviews, Information Management for Local Watershed Groups, National Marine Sanctuaries, and Fluvial Geomorphology. In addition, a morning workshop will be held on "Detoxifying Our Homes and Gardens – Sustainable Alternatives for a Healthy World".

Students' watershed work will be displayed. There will be creekside activities for children, musical and poetry presentations, and a family musical activity. Local watershed groups and environmental groups will have informational tables. Food and coffee will be available.

For more information call 876-9329 or [dshatkin@sonic.net](mailto:dshatkin@sonic.net)



## DFG Grant to Study Salmon Creek Watershed

By Ann Cassidy

**T**he Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District (GRRCD) in collaboration with the Salmon Creek Watershed Council (SCWC) has been awarded a grant from the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) for a watershed assessment and restoration plan for the Salmon Creek watershed.

Public participation through public meetings, distribution of informational material, and individual landowner contact will be stressed in order for the plan to reflect the concerns, ideas, and recommendations of watershed residents.

The grant will produce a thorough evaluation and assessment of watershed conditions that will be used to help formulate a watershed restoration plan that would improve coho and steelhead habitat. The plan will identify conservation projects for future funding.

A steering committee composed of members from GRRCD, SCWC, DFG and Prunuske Chatham Inc., an Occidental ecological restoration firm who will provide technical assistance, will ensure the project is successfully completed.

The assessment stage will include information on stream flows, water quantity and quality data, a sediment source inventory for erosion control projects, evaluation of instream habitat, a land use inventory, watershed maps depicting the information collected, and water quality and erosion control training for residents. The contract is expected to be finalized in May with work to begin soon after.

# Dante Calvi, Versatile Sheepman

By Hazel Flett (interviewed by Hazel Flett and Anne Greenfield)

"I had a lot of choices, and this is what I chose," said Dante Calvi of Calvi Ranch on Bay Hill Road, Bodega.

When he came out of the Navy at the end of World War II, Dante was a machinist, with many opportunities. But he knew where he wanted to come back to. "I like livestock, I like growing things, I like open spaces." Dante looked round at the open spaces of the land he has ranched for almost half a century: 550 acres of open grassy hills, vivid green this time of year, with few trees except some planted eucalyptus; steep hills, deep canyons, wide open views of the ocean. A biting March wind blew, keeping the urban blue haze well to the east.

Since 1960 Dante has run sheep on these fields, raising a purebred Corriedale flock that became nationally famous. He had intended to raise cows, but cows were expensive the year he bought the ranch, and it happened that a beautiful flock of 180 purebred Corriedale ewes was up for sale at the Silver Shoon Ranch outside Santa Rosa, one of the longest established Corriedale flocks in the US. Dante bought them and started a program of selective breeding, repeatedly choosing the largest, fastest-growing sheep to be the parents of the next generation. He found that the larger sheep were also more likely to have twins. In a business where animals are sold by the pound, size, rapid growth and tendency to throw twins, are important traits to ranchers. Rams with these traits make a big impact on a flock (since each ram can breed about thirty females). I can remember the effect the beautiful Ferdinand, from Dante's flock, had on our flock in Bodega in the eighties – an effect that lives on through generations of sheep.

Working with UC Davis, Dante created a ram testing station on his ranch. Breeders from various areas of the state each consigned their best ram lambs, and after three months of full feed the top weight gaining lambs were mated to ewes. The resulting offspring were grown out on pasture alone until slaughter time, when they were evaluated for weight and quality. In this way Dante found some of his best sires.

As part of his breeding program Dante replaced 20% of his ewe flock every year with the

most promising of his ewe lambs, replacing not just elderly ewes but also the less impressive ones.

Corriedales were developed in New Zealand from the Lincoln and Merino breeds to be a dual-purpose breed, that is, for both meat and wool. Their wool is beautiful to spin, soft and curly. Since wool quality is also a highly inheritable characteristic, of course Dante also selected for good fleece when he was choosing which lambs to keep for his flock.

Dante's breeding stock (especially rams) were sold to improve flocks all over the US and also in South America. Until ten years ago Dante was on the show string. His rams were champions eight years out of ten at the Cow Palace in San Francisco.

As Dante improved his pasture (see p. 5) so he increased the size of his flock. Along with the show animals were the sheep that produced meat lambs and wool. He ran up to 900 ewes on the ranch. For 25 years Dante did his own shearing, handling 900 ewes and their lambs over a period of two and a half months in spring and early summer. Wool used to be a valuable crop, ranchers being paid as much for the short, dirty wool from the sheep's bellies as they are paid now for the best wool.

Market considerations for both lamb and wool are one reason that sheep are in decline nationally and locally. Coyotes are another. Instead of 900 sheep Dante now runs 35, and thinks he will probably sell out this year. These thirty-five bed down near the house. "Coyotes have trained them to come in at night; I'd never have expected it." A large percentage of his sheep have bells and if a coyote comes near, Dante will hear the ruckus; he is a good shot. He also studies the pattern of kills, figures out where the coyotes are and watches for the next attack.

As fewer and fewer people stay in sheep ranching, coyotes focus on fewer and fewer flocks. "After the Hagemann's (next door) sold their sheep, coyotes were hitting here three times a week."

These days Dante runs mostly cattle on his land for his son-in-law. Even though sheep



are more efficient with feed, cows are big enough to withstand coyotes and will chase them. Dante has also raised meat goats, alongside the sheep, and recently considered going with goats alone (but, at 81, decided it was too late). The goats, Boer crossed with Saanen, provided very lean meat and were especially popular with the Mexican community. Dante took the young goats to Panizzera's in Occidental for butchering and sold them through the Mexican meat market in Santa Rosa. He ran a flock of 300, using them partly to clear brush on his land.

Although more profitable than sheep, goats are also vulnerable to coyotes – in some ways even more so than sheep, because whilst ewes normally bring their lambs with them, goats will leave their kids on a sunny slope while they browse up to a mile away. That is when coyotes get them. Goats also require tighter fencing.

Coyotes have their own characteristic patterns. One that was killing round here would just take a few bites out of the hip, and leave the rest of the carcass. Coyotes are one of the biggest changes in local sheep ranching: until ten or fifteen years ago there were scarcely any around.

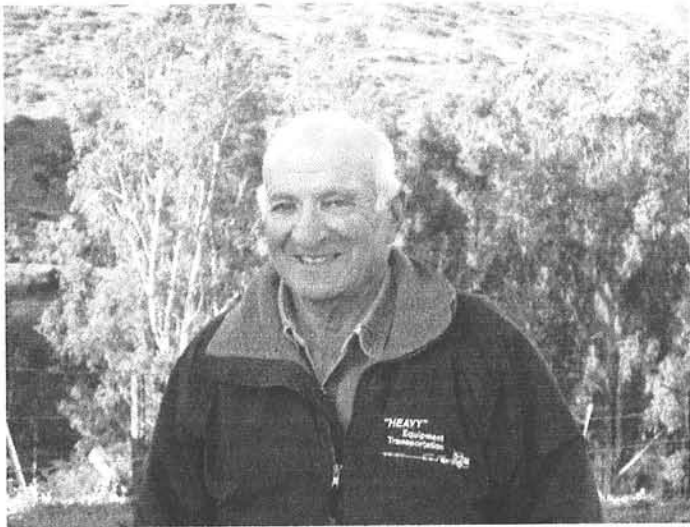


Photo by Eli Bynum

Dante was born eighty years ago on a ranch on Willow Creek Road, the eldest of five children. His parents came from the Lake Como region of Italy a century ago. The Willow Creek ranch was a diversified family farm; they raised dairy cows, sheep, goats and pigs. They grew oat hay for their animals, using horses to pull the equipment

Dante says when he was a boy all the ranches around here were dairies. They used to be the size the land could support; 25 to 50 cows could

be supported by oat hay grown on the land. "We have the best climate for cows." But nowadays dairies depend on alfalfa grown in the (Central) Valley where the soil is deep and the heat allows five to six cuttings a year. Having to pay for trucking the alfalfa here gives the Valley a competitive advantage in dairying. Now there are no cows on the coast, until as far north as Carmet, and surviving local dairies (like Perucchi's in Bodega) are big, bringing in alfalfa.

Years ago (before Dante's time) ranchers grew potatoes on the ridge tops here – on about 100 acres of this ranch. Then they raised oat hay. The plowing was not done on the contour and some serious erosion resulted.

Ranchers were mostly self-sufficient, in terms of food, ranch inputs and skills. Dante was raised to do everything that needed doing on a ranch, as his family never had the money to hire others. This resourcefulness stood him in good stead. After three and a half years in the Navy in Okinawa Dante came back and ran a sawmill with his brother in Occidental for fifteen years, while also ranching. They also built small dams; they had the equipment. He built the spring-fed ponds on his ranch to provide water for his livestock and to irrigate a large garden that once produced all his vegetables.

Another skill Dante developed was water dowsing, or electromagnetic pinpointing of water, as he now calls it. Dante has been doing this for fifty years. He can find water and depth for a well by using a thick wire of steel alloy and counting the electrical jolts that come up it. He found water on many water-scarce pieces of land and knew that his method worked but did not understand why. He experimented on his own land, drilling a horizontal well to the place where he had pinpointed water, then figured the relationship between the distance below the surface and the reaction of the wire. As he studied geology further he concluded that his method works by agitation of the magnetic field causing a bounce off of the water strata. On one property nearby he watched 50 owners come and go, and finally learned that they couldn't find water there; he went up there and found it. Dante now works from a more scientific basis and pinpointing has become his main work; he has even become a trouble shooter for one well driller.

Dante's experimentation carries over to the care of his land. He did a lot of reseed

when he first bought the ranch, and was the first local rancher to seed with subterranean clover. He worked to bring pastures back into good condition by cross-fencing the land to make more pastures and grazing the pastures in rotation. With more fences sheep could be persuaded to graze less popular kinds of grass while young and palatable, which both utilized all the grass and prevented the less palatable grasses from dominating the pasture. He also found that goats were very effective in clearing brush to create new pastures. He would pasture the goats in an area, rotate them out, then return them after a short period of plant regrowth, thereby weakening the plant roots. Goats could convert brush to pasture within three years. In these ways Dante increased the carrying capacity of his land. Dante feels that goats would work better than burning to clear gorse or broom, a local problem.

Erosion control has been a concern of Dante's. Two dams constructed at the bottom of his ranch slow down water flow, settling the silt out and eventually completely filling in the pond. In another project, it worked very well to taper the edges of a low canyon, seed it with wiregrass (*Juncus* sp.) and fence out livestock. Dante feels that covering any bare or newly planted surface with a light layer of straw is a simple and effective way of controlling erosion.

What does he see as the future of his land? "There are so many things you can do with land.

You can grow so many different kinds of things." His ranch is currently preserved for agriculture under the Williamson Act. He has thought about agricultural easements but has not made up his mind. His daughter could run this ranch, he says, she loves ranching. He also wonders about quarrying on the land, which has a big deposit of rugged blue rock, used for roads. "It could be helpful locally and the quarry would be out of sight."

The future of sheep? "Right now it doesn't look good. Coyotes are the problem."

The future of agriculture locally? "It's a tough way. Commercially it's hard to compete with the Valley. But I think it will go for one's own use. Back to nature, that's where we're headed. We can't stand too much of the artificial."

Outside his 1880s redwood barn quail, turkeys and pigeons were pecking at the grain Dante had thrown down for them. He likes to watch them. He is currently working on the garden at his Fitzpatrick Lane place; he has transplanted lilacs from his garden on the ranch and also has crepe myrtle to plant in this warmer, more sheltered spot. He is using old manure from his barn for the garden. As we were leaving he jumped on his four-wheeler and drove up the ramp into the barn to continue mucking out.

Photo by Eli Bynum



## *Dreaming Clouds*

By Lucy Aron

Led by its pink wrinkled  
lightbulb head  
the buzzard cruises the wind  
with wings the span  
of a man spread  
in a shallow vee  
a thousand feet high,  
sweeps the sky  
in cirrus arcs,  
woven to the wind  
yet stone still  
with barely a flap  
of its monk's-breath wingbeat.  
A dark serene float  
tracking death's footprints  
across these dusty hills.  
The head tilts down,  
indifferent eyes see  
only me looking back up,  
bound to the warp  
and weft of this ridge,  
dreaming clouds.



Photo by Anita Armstrong

A lamb that visitors met at the BLT outing at lambing time in January at Bodega Pastures.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Listen to KFNX 1100 AM radio** at 10-11 A.M. Wednesday mornings! Patty Karlin of the Bodega Goat Ranch is hosting the 13-week show called "Sustainable Agriculture in the New Millennium". It runs through June 11. Topics include dry farming, farmers' markets, sustainable water, bio-diesel, and permaculture among others.

### **Spring outings for Landpaths –**

- ❖ Friday evening, May 16, McCormick Full Moon – a moderately strenuous hike, enjoying the Santa Rosa Creek headwaters by moonlight.
- ❖ Saturday, May 17 – Laguna Stewardship – helping to weed and clear out a riparian restoration project.
- ❖ Sunday, May 18 – Mountain to Market – a full day hike traversing local hills from Santa Rosa Avenue to Kenwood.
- ❖ For more information call 707- 524-9318 or email [landpaths-outings@sonic.net](mailto:landpaths-outings@sonic.net)

### **Second call for recipes for our new cookbook --**

Work is progressing on BLT's second cookbook, following on the success of BLT's "Potluck Cookbook". Submit your recipes for breads, soups, salads, hot dishes, or desserts to PO Box 254, Bodega, CA 94922. Or better still, go to our website at [www.bodeganet.com/landtrust](http://www.bodeganet.com/landtrust) and submit your recipe on line. The "Potluck Cookbook" is now in its fourth printing and is available in Bodega at Artisans' Co-op, Made in Bodega, and Cup of Mud; in Occidental at Hand Goods; and in Sebastopol at Copperfield's Books, Frizelle-Enos, and Quicksilver Mine Co.

### **Learn easement monitoring!**

We need volunteer monitors for this summer and especially a volunteer coordinator. You can get involved by calling 876-3422 or 876-1806.

### **Updated Catalog of Federal Funding for Watershed Protection now available --**

The EPA has recently updated the Catalog of Federal Funding Sources for Watershed Protection. This Catalog is now available on-line at <http://www.epa.gov/watershedfunding>. The website offers information for watershed practitioners and others on 84 Federal funding sources that may be available to help fund watershed-related projects. The website is an update of EPA's Catalog of Federal Funding Sources for Watershed Protection (EPA 841-B-99-003), 1999. This website was developed by the EPA's Office of Water Finance Work Group with representatives from the Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds, Office of Wastewater Management, and Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water. For more information or to order the catalog call 1-800-490-9198.

**Please send us your email address for our files.**

Thank you.



# OLIVES FOR THE WEST COUNTY?

By Anne Greenfield

Olive trees filigree the green slopes of the McEvoy Ranch six miles west of Petaluma. Surrounding hills check the creeping coastal fog to create a warm microclimate that proves congenial habitat for olive trees.

Northern Italian (Tuscan) varieties of olive can thrive near our coast. Olive trees do need full sun and a prevailing fog condition can keep the fruit from ripening. Nan McEvoy, proprietor of McEvoy Ranch, found a niche that has been able to produce a rich and pungent olive oil, a flavor unique to a coastal climate.

Spring winds are beneficial to the wind-pollinated olive trees. However, if an area receives heavy spring fog, olive bloom may remain too wet for opening. Extreme spring heat or late frost can also hinder the bloom. Early autumn frost can seriously damage the fruit, but McEvoy avoids this problem by cultivating early maturing varieties or picking the olives early, when they are just beginning to turn color.



Olive in flower  
and fruit.

McEvoy Ranch first planted olives in 1992; their 80 acres are now at 50% production, yielding 3000 gallons of oil last year. Since 1997 their operation has been certified organic. The only pest problem at McEvoy's, Peacock Spot, is controlled with a copper spray. Non-chemical weed control methods are employed: after a first year of hand weeding, mowing and sheep grazing are used to restrain the weeds. To compensate for the remaining weed competition the trees are fed and watered more: legumes are cover-cropped,

organic pelletized fertilizer and compost applied and mature trees watered 20 to 30 gallons per week. Six ponds collect winter rain to provide the irrigating waters. The coastal soil, leached of minerals and turned acidic by rainfall, usually needs mineral amendments.

McEvoy prunes their trees to maintain open centers and a low crop that can be harvested from the ground. Hand-held pneumatic cones pull fruit gently to underlying tarps. Sixty men are employed for a short 2-3 week window of prime harvest time. Olives are picked clean (undamaged), and milled immediately, preventing the heating, fermenting and loss of anti-oxidants that ensue from overlong storage in bins. Milling equipment is on-site and includes high-tech mechanical crushing and the gentler stone crushing used on 90% of the olives. A centrifuge separates solids, oils, and water. Orchard manager Shari DeJoseph's description of their fine oil brings to mind the verbiage of vintners: "McEvoy oil is a finishing oil, you can definitely cook with it but it's meant to be the final zest applied in a small amount to a vegetable dish, a broiled meat, a delicate salad."

Trained at UC Davis, in Soil Science and Vegetable Crops, Shari happily found her position with McEvoy 9 1/2 years ago. As most farmers and ranchers, she relishes her outdoor way of life and the satisfaction of working with living and growing things. Proudly she expresses the McEvoy intention of "producing flavor" and describes how dependent that is on the perfect timing of harvest.

A backyard gardener may want to plant a few olive trees for olives, oil, or sculptural landscaping. A one-gallon olive tree will bear a light crop in 3 years, a full crop in 5-6 years. One mature tree yields between 3/4 and 2 1/2 gallons of oil. McEvoy Ranch sells 1-gallon and 5-gallon trees, and will mill olives for outside customers. Their gift shop includes books on growing olives as well as oil and olivewood products. Other information on growing olives can be obtained through The California Olive Oil Council and Olive Oil Source. Shari very generously offers her knowledge and can be contacted at 769-4100 or [mcevoyranch@iscweb.com](mailto:mcevoyranch@iscweb.com)

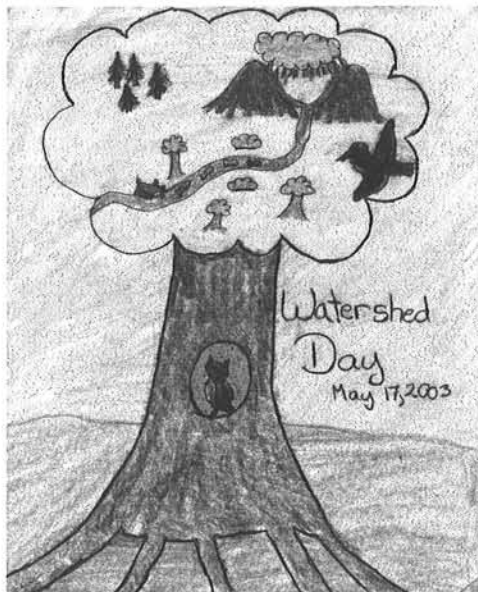
# WEST COUNTY WATERSHED DAY MAY 17!



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Marylou Downing



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