

# MALT News

## Marin Agricultural Land Trust

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### About MALT

Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) is a member-supported nonprofit organization created in 1980 by a coalition of ranchers and environmentalists to preserve farmland in Marin County, California.

With financial support from individuals, public agencies and private foundations, MALT has permanently protected nearly half of the working farm and ranch land in Marin County. MALT also encourages public policies that support and enhance agriculture.

To learn about Marin's working farms and ranches and the food they produce, visit [malt.org](http://malt.org).

Photo (above): Corda Ranch © Paige Green

Photo (back cover): George Lucas and Robert Berner © Paige Green

## Corda Ranch

Fifth-generation family ranch is protected by MALT

Fred Corda sits in the kitchen at the ranch that his great-grandfather bought and hands out homemade cookies to his young grandchildren: "This house was built for my grandfather when he got married—it's close to 90 years old." The breadth of generations here is not lost on Fred or his family—the Cordas are part of this land, and they are thankful that these young ones will have a chance at working and living here in years to come.

When Giuseppe "Joe" Corda arrived in Hicks Valley from Switzerland in 1884, he reportedly had fifty cents in his pocket. His hard work was realized in the eventual ownership of six ranches in Marin County, assembled with the future in mind. Joe and his three sons, Alfred, Henry and Frank, worked diligently to build one of the county's notable family dairy operations. Three Corda ranches were located along San Antonio Creek, the other three in the Hicks Valley/Novato area. Until recently, one could walk from upper Novato Creek to the Petaluma River and only once have to step on land not owned by a Corda.

The 1,214-acre Fred Corda Ranch on Novato Blvd. was the result of Joe Corda's partnership with neighbor and fellow Swiss immigrant Domenico Grossi. They split the large Valencia Ranch, providing Joe with a

beautiful and undeveloped valley in which he could build a modern dairy from scratch. First a fine milking barn, then the other necessary improvements, and finally, in 1923, a comfortable house, all tidily laid out and well maintained for the next 90 years.

Joe's son Alfred took over this ranch and handled the business side of the family partnership. He wasn't seen much in the barnyard, as Fred recalled: "My grandmother used to milk the cows more than he did!" Alfred and his wife Evelyn Sartori raised four children on the ranch, including Joe, who was Fred's father.

Fred Corda grew up here with his brother Gary and sisters Jolene and Mary Ann. He attended the one-room Burdell School until it burned down, and met his future wife, Nettie, in high school in Petaluma. Nettie also

...continued on page 2

## Corda Ranch

grew up on a local dairy ranch, but the extended Corda family was so big, “I didn’t know who everybody was!” The young couple settled in at the ranch while Fred helped his father and grandfather on the dairy and Nettie was busy with their three children and ranch chores. Fred’s siblings went out in the world but Fred wanted to remain forever. “I always wanted to be on the ranch,” he claimed. “I got my first paycheck here when I was six years old, and until I retired it was the only place I ever got a paycheck.”



Three generations of the Corda family on the ranch.

© Michael Woolsey

Fred and Nettie’s children, Joe, Jeff, and Janeen, also grew up on the ranch. The kids were deeply influenced by their grandparents and great-grandmother, all of whom lived at the ranch until their deaths, and continued a generations-old tradition of passing ranch work and ownership down the line. “I started working when I was around 5, washing out the calf pens,” Jeff recalled. “As soon as I was able to carry a couple of five gallon buckets of milk, I started feeding calves, helping out with whatever my dad or grandfather told us to do.”

When the dairy herd was sold in 1994, the family leased the pasture to neighbors and took jobs outside, but never wavered in their determination

to keep the ranch. Fred’s father, Joe Corda, was interested in a MALT easement but time passed and then the economy went sour.

MALT had been working with the family for several years to acquire an agricultural conservation easement to protect the ranch. The project was made difficult by the state budget crisis and resulting bond act freeze, as well as the recession and downturn in the real estate market. It was an unexpected helping hand from the Lucasfilm Foundation that helped put the last pieces together for the project. A generous \$2,000,000 grant from

the Lucasfilm Foundation, along with gifts from other MALT supporters and a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) enabled MALT to purchase the easement and allowed the family to hold onto the property and continue ranching. “We’re

lucky to have it, lucky that MALT could help us out,” said Nettie. “It’s amazing that people care that much to donate money so you can keep your place in agricultural production.”

Jeff, who like his brother Joe works for North Marin Water District, would some day like to return to his agricultural roots. Jeff and Sara Jane’s thirteen-year-old daughter Caitlin loves the ranch: “There’s a lot of space I can run around in, I like the cows, and I can have chickens!”

Through five generations the Cordas have been thoughtful about their ranches, but times have changed. “In the old days,” Fred recalled, “with 120 cows you supported three families and bought five ranches; now with 120 cows you can’t support one person. And Grandfather used to say, ‘They don’t make no more land.’”

All but one of old Giuseppe Corda’s ranches remain in the family—there is much regret at letting that one slip away—and his descendants are honored to have such a rare legacy on the land in Marin County. “It’s just part of me, the best place on earth,” Fred said. “I’ve been here all my life and I’m hoping that one day these little guys will be sitting here where I am.”

— Dewey Livingston



### DIRECTORS’ BARBECUE 2011 GOOD FOOD, GOOD MUSIC, GOOD PEOPLE

Each fall, MALT’s Board of Directors hosts an annual barbecue to thank and celebrate our donors at the Directors’ Circle level (\$500 and above). This year, we are also extending the invitation to our Partners for Preservation—those who have included MALT in their estate plans.

Thanks to the hospitality of the Corda family, we’re pleased that this year’s festivities will take place at the Corda Ranch. We look forward

to seeing you, so mark your calendars for this annual gathering of MALT supporters. Invitations will be mailed in late August.

#### PLEASE SAVE THE DATE:

Saturday, September 24 from 11-2 pm. For more information on MALT’s Directors’ Circle or our Partners for Preservation program, contact Director of Development Kristine Ball at 415-663-1158, ext. 318, or [kball@malt.org](mailto:kball@malt.org).





# Harmonizing at Fresh Run Farm

Peter Martinelli blends  
organic farmland with wildland



Peter Martinelli with farm employees at Fresh Run Farm.

© Michael Woolsey

**J**ordan Martinelli, a Marin Superior Court judge, loved riding his Indian motorcycle on the back roads of West Marin. On one ride in 1915, he discovered the land on Horseshoe Hill Road that was to become the Martinelli Ranch and his new passion.

The first thing you notice on a visit to Fresh Run Farm is the seamless weaving of a small organic farm into the lush coastal landscape of Paradise Valley. It feels like nothing is out of place here. The rows of potatoes curve along the valley in symmetrical design. The main fields are painted with vegetable varieties that Peter Martinelli has selected from years of patient trial and error. Two farm employees work the rows under blue skies.

“There’s such a hunger among young people in the community to learn about sustainable agriculture and gardening and Marin is just the right place to incubate new farmers—they practice and learn fundamentals,” says Peter. “I’m happy and honored to play a role in starting the Marin apprenticeship program this past year, thanks in part to a letter by my intern to the state Department of Industrial Relations. They visited my farm to discuss the possibility of an apprenticeship program and the idea took off.”

Besides being a mentor to new farmers Peter is also a pioneer of a diversification effort that began in the mid-90s. Serving on the founding board of Marin Organic was a natural fit. “Marin producers are lucky to be so close to a huge local market. I sell 75% of what I grow within 20 miles of the farm and the rest in the Bay Area.” Peter adds a word of advice to new farmers: “Be patient. Get yourself out there and get to know folks in the ag community—land or growing opportunities will follow.”

Fresh Run Farm is embedded in a wilderness setting, with coastal oak forest on one side and Pine Gulch Creek on the other, with grassland swaths here and there. This ideal environment provides a rich endowment of beneficial diversity, which Peter mimics in his farming practices. For the past several years Peter, along with Warren Weber at Star Route Farm, and Sandy and Dennis Dierks at Paradise Valley Farm, have partnered with resource staff from the National Park Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Game to develop off-creek water sources in the Pine Gulch Creek watershed. “We are close to obtaining a green light from the Army Corps on our design to build off-creek reservoirs that provide

water for our farming operations and keep water in the creek for threatened salmon species.”

When asked about MALT’s role in agriculture Peter replies, “I’m pretty passionate about the future of agriculture and I believe that MALT is perhaps the most effective means to ensuring that future for the next generation.” Peter sums it up by adding, “Having farmed and grown up here I’m extremely aware of how special and amazing this land is—as far as food production is possible—it is an asset that belongs to Marin County and should be available in perpetuity.”

— Ellie Rilla

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# A Donor, a Foundation, and MALT

## Working together to save Marin County's grasslands



(L-R) MALT Stewardship Director Patricia Hickey, donor Charles Gresham and rancher Sally Gale. © Paige Green

**W**e would like to thank Charles Gresham, a MALT donor and

Partner for Preservation, and the Marin Community Foundation for their generous financial support of MALT's collaborative efforts to protect the health and biodiversity of Marin County grasslands.

MALT's Stewardship staff has been working with easement landowners and partner agencies and organizations to respond to the potential ecological and economic impacts of global climate change and invasive noxious weeds on Marin's agricultural land. We are quickly learning that it will take more than an agricultural conservation easement and grazing animals to permanently protect the county's open grasslands.

These lands and the agricultural operations they support contribute over \$49 million annually to the local economy. They provide benefits such as wildlife habitat for numerous threatened and endangered species, and critical habitat for many species of migratory and nesting birds. Our grazing lands sequester large amounts of carbon, control flooding, and recharge groundwater and summer flow in streams.

Over the last few decades, a number of aggressive invasive species have begun to severely degrade the ecological and economic values of Marin County grasslands. Woolly distaff thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*), in particular, poses a serious threat to grassland productivity and biodiversity. This species outcompetes most other grassland species and forms large, dense stands that both livestock and wildlife avoid. Agricultural operators in the county have been struggling for years to find ways to control and/or eradicate this invader.

In Marin County, Sally and Mike Gale have led the charge in calling attention to the threat of this species. Since the early 1990s, the Gales have devoted themselves to restoring their 586-acre ranch in Chilen Valley, investing their life savings in miles of new fencing, stream restoration projects, new orchards, and a complete restoration of their Victorian home. The ranch is considered to be a model farm, and has been protected with a MALT easement since 2000. Despite all efforts, woolly distaff thistle is now threatening the long-term viability of their ranch. Close to 40% of their pasture productivity is currently threatened due to the infestation.

Fortunately for the Gales and MALT, Charles Gresham enjoys visiting the ranches he has so loyally helped fund to protect. It was during a simple pasture walk with Sally and Mike that he saw the impact woolly distaff thistle was having on the Gale's beautiful ranch. That day he decided to do something about it. Charles' generous donation of \$20,000 specifically for woolly distaff thistle control efforts has now been matched by a \$25,000 grant from the Marin Community Foundation to fund a countywide control strategy and management plan.

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**“ Giving to MALT is more satisfying than making an investment in the stock market. Investing in people and organizations where I can see real results is much more rewarding.”**

-CHARLES GRISHAM

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To ensure the greatest likelihood of success for this control effort, we have formed a public-private partnership with other county agencies and organizations including the Marin Resource Conservation District, Marin County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, Marin County Farm Bureau, Point Reyes National Seashore, and numerous county agricultural operators. This new partnership will allow us to coordinate efforts to prevent and control the spread of woolly distaff thistle and other aggressive grassland invaders.

To learn more about this important initiative or to contribute to MALT's new *Charles Gresham Grasslands Restoration Fund*, please contact Kristine Ball, Director of Development, at 415-663-1158 ext. 318, or [kball@malt.org](mailto:kball@malt.org).

—Patricia Hickey





### Walker Creek Ranch Birding & Ranch Habitat Hike Saturday, 9/10

Join MALT Stewardship Director Patricia Hickey, a bird expert from PRBO Conservation Science, a restoration specialist from STRAW (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed) and a naturalist from Walker Creek Ranch to explore diverse bird habitats on this 1,700 acre MALT-protected ranch.

**Time:** 9:00 am – 1:00 pm **Place:** Marshall **Difficulty:** Moderate  
**Cost:** \$40 MALT and PRBO members / \$50 non-members  
**What to Bring:** Water, picnic lunch, hiking shoes, layered clothing, bird books, binoculars  
**Preregistration is required**

### Hog Island Oyster Co. & Straus Dairy Tuesday, 9/13

Join local oystermen for a tour and oyster tasting, and enjoy your picnic overlooking Tomales Bay. Then carpool to the Straus Dairy to see their organic operation, the methane digester, and the other clean energy techniques they use. You'll see the cows being milked and enjoy a delicious Straus product tasting.

**Time:** 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm **Place:** Marshall **Difficulty:** Easy  
**Cost:** \$35 MALT members / \$40 non-members  
**What to Bring:** Water, picnic lunch, shoes that can get dirty, layered clothing **Preregistration is required**

### Toluma Farms Goat Dairy Family Tour Saturday, 9/17

Created as a goat dairy in 2007, Toluma Farms currently supplies Redwood Hill Farm and Creamery with grade A, certified humane goat milk. Learn how to milk a goat, make organic chevre, and taste goat milk yogurt. We'll take a tractor ride or hike to the top of the property to savor the views.

**Time:** 11:00 am – 2:00 pm **Place:** Tomales **Difficulty:** Easy  
**Cost:** Adults – \$20 MALT members / \$25 non-members Children – \$10 MALT members / \$12 non-members  
**What to Bring:** Water, hiking boots, picnic lunch, snacks, sun protection **Preregistration is required**

### McEvoy Olive Ranch Friday, 9/23

Visit Nan McEvoy's 550-acre organic olive ranch in a spectacular valley near the Marin-Sonoma Border. Tour the pressing facility to learn how oil is extracted from the olives. Taste the oil, and if you like, purchase items made with this wonderful farm product.

**Time:** 9:45 am – 12:00 pm **Place:** Point Reyes/Petaluma Road **Difficulty:** Easy  
**Cost:** \$30 MALT members / \$40 non-members  
**What to Bring:** Water, walking shoes **Preregistration is required**

### Historic A Ranch (Nunes Dairy) Family Tour Sunday, 9/25

Meet three generations of the Nunes Family at the A Ranch just before the lighthouse on the Point Reyes Peninsula. This spectacular property overlooks the Pacific Ocean on one side and Drakes Bay on the other. We will learn about the dairy operation, feed the calves, watch the cows being milked, and visit the old granite quarry.

**Time:** 11:30 am – 2:30 pm **Place:** Point Reyes National Seashore **Difficulty:** Moderate  
**Cost:** Adults – \$20 MALT members / \$25 non-members Children – \$10 MALT members / \$12 nonmembers  
**What to Bring:** Water, picnic lunch, hiking shoes, layered clothing **Preregistration is required**

Photos: (right) © Michael Woolsey ; (following page) © Helen Ferlino



### Nicasio Valley Farms Pumpkin Patch

Open daily, 10/1 – 10/31

Bring the kids to this MALT-protected farm for pumpkin picking, hay rides and mazes, farm animals, farm stand, and the bouncy house and slide. Nicasio Valley Cheese Co. will be open Thursday – Monday and delicious BBQ and ice cream will be on hand every weekend. **PLUS:** educational exhibits and activities supported by **MALT's Farm Field Study Sponsors:** Bank of Marin, Clover-Stornetta Farms, Earl's Organics, Good Earth Natural Foods, Veritable Vegetable, and Straus Family Creamery.

Special weekend events include:

- October 2, 9, 23: Children's musician Tim Cain (11 am – 12 pm)
- October 2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23: 6-piece band Manzanita Moon (12:30 pm - 4:30 pm)
- **October 9, MALT Day** (10 am – 4 pm): Kids' games and crafts, local food booths, Iron Springs Brewery beer and educational booths. **10% of pumpkin sales this day support MALT!**

**Time:** Daily 10:00 am – 6:00 pm

**Place:** Nicasio Valley Farms

**Cost:** Admission is free. Call 415-662-9100 for weekday school group rates.

**No preregistration required**



### 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Black Mountain Hike

Saturday, 10/1

Join MALT staff, volunteers, ranchers, historians, and naturalists for a strenuous hike to the top of this West Marin landmark—one of the largest properties protected by a MALT easement. The mountain provides spectacular views and supports an active beef cattle operation.

**Time:** 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

**Place:** Carpool from West Marin School, 11550 Hwy. 1, Point Reyes

**Cost:** FREE

**Difficulty:** Strenuous

**What to Bring:** Water, picnic lunch, hiking shoes

**No preregistration required**

### Paradise Valley Farms Soil Microbe Workshop

Sunday, 10/23

Dennis Dierks has been farming in Paradise Valley in Bolinas for 35 years, and is a master at cultivating microbes to build healthy soil. He will teach us about collecting, propagating, and using beneficial indigenous microbes to "grow" soil and produce nutritious and tasty food.

**Time:** 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Place:** Bolinas

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Cost:** \$70 MALT members / \$85 non-members

**Preregistration is required**

**What to Bring:** Water, snacks, shoes that can get dirty, layered clothing, garden gloves

### Marin Artisan Cheese Tasting at The Fork with Slow Food Marin/Petaluma

Saturday, 11/5

Join Cowgirl Creamery founder, cheesemaker, and MALT board chair Sue Conley and other cheesemakers for a talk and a tasting of award winning cheeses produced on MALT protected dairies, including: Cowgirl Creamery, Point Reyes Farmstead, Nicasio Cheese Co, Barinaga Ranch sheep cheese, and Andante goat cheese. The Fork is on the Giacomini Dairy overlooking Tomales Bay. We will also tour the ranch, see the milking, and sip local wines.

**Time:** 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**Place:** Point Reyes Station

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Cost:** \$75 MALT and Slow Food members / \$100 non-members

**Preregistration is required**

### Linking Farms, Food & Health—Making it Happen! Thursday, 11/10

Join Dr. Preston Maring, the physician who brought farmers' markets to Kaiser Permanente, in conversation with organic farmer Peter Martinelli, and restaurant professional Frank Klein, who worked with the National Park Service to offer sustainable healthy foods at Muir Woods. They will share the challenges and opportunities of getting healthy food into homes, hospitals, restaurants, and parks.

**Time:** 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

**Place:** Cavallo Point, Sausalito

**Cost:** \$10 MALT members / \$15 non-members

**Preregistration is required**

#### LEARN MORE ABOUT MARIN AGRICULTURE

**COLLEGE OF MARIN:** An in-depth study of local agriculture offered by Dr. Paul da Silva together with MALT, UC Cooperative Extension, and the farmers and ranchers of Marin. This COM course (Biology 148—Section 81845) includes local producers, guest speakers, and field trips. Starts 8/17. Register at [www.marin.edu](http://www.marin.edu).

**BIONEERS FARM TOUR:** Join MALT Education Director Constance Washburn to explore the Marin Civic Center Farmer's Market, followed by a bus tour to three innovative farming operations in Marin County: Giacomini Dairy & Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co., Red Hill Ranch, and County Line Harvest. October 13, 9 am – 5 pm. For more information or to register: [www.Bioneers.org](http://www.Bioneers.org).

|| Register online at [www.malt.org](http://www.malt.org) ||  
or call 415.663.1158

# Donor Profile: Peter Davis

**L**ondon born Peter Davis can trace his deep-rooted love for the land back 70 years.

As a young child, Peter walked and cycled everywhere but remembers London feeling “closed in.” During World War II, Peter was part of the massive evacuation of children from London to the countryside. What for many was a traumatic experience, Peter has only fond memories of “living rough” and connecting with the land in a way he had only dreamt of before. For the first time in his young life, he gazed out at vast openness and the beauty of productive agricultural land.

Twenty years later, Peter’s love for the land deepened when he arrived in Marin County. Hiking in West Marin, he was immersed in the farms, ranches, and open space that had first captured his heart in the English countryside.

Now a resident of Tiburon, the retired investor has been very savvy about making planned gifts that reduce his tax burden while supporting causes close to his heart. Peter set up a



Charitable Remainder Trust with appreciated stock which allowed him to realize significant tax savings, receive lifelong income from the trust, and make a lasting legacy to MALT, assuring future generations can enjoy the land he loves.

To learn more about creating your legacy, please contact Director of Development Kristine Ball at [kball@malt.org](mailto:kball@malt.org) or 415 663-1158 ext 318

—Kelly Brown



## Moving? New Zero-Cost Way to Support MALT

We’re partnering with My Broker Donates to help you generate a big donation for MALT—at zero cost to you—the next time you move.

My Broker Donates introduces our supporters to experienced real estate professionals who agree to donate 15% of their fee to help promote the preservation of farmland throughout Marin County.

Donations generated by My Broker Donates can be significant: A \$500,000 sale or purchase would create a gift of more than \$2,000. The donation is guaranteed by My Broker Donates, costs you nothing, and it’s made in your name by your broker. Even if you have an existing relationship with an agent or broker, My Broker Donates can help you create a donation. Just visit [MyBrokerDonates.com](http://MyBrokerDonates.com) for more information.

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## LUCASFILM FOUNDATION GRANTS \$2 MILLION TO MALT

A Lucasfilm Foundation grant in May enabled MALT to acquire an agricultural conservation easement valued at \$2,913,000 on a 1,214-acre ranch located just west of Novato, California. The remainder of the acquisition funds were provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

MALT's conservation easement will help preserve the property as a working cattle ranch, prevent future subdivision, preserve existing natural habitats, and protect the headwaters of Novato Creek, an important part of Novato's water supply.

*Full story on page 1.*

