

MALT News

31 Years Preserving Marin County Farmland

Thornton Ranch © Michael Woolsey

Historic Ranch Protected, Forever

3:02 a.m. Time to milk the cows. Gary Thornton wakes up without an alarm clock as he has every morning for the past 35 years. Only the milk cows are long gone, sold off over a decade earlier to pay off inheritance taxes on his Tomales ranch. But Gary doesn't lose sleep over sentimentalism; rather, he's already hard at work exploring the future of this 160-year-old family farm.

MALT's partnership with Gary to save the ranch, known locally as the "Marshall Brothers Home Place," stands as a triumphant marriage of practicality and ingenuity. When Gary's father died in 2000, enormous estate taxes nearly forced Gary to sell part of the property to developers in order to protect the rest. It would have been an inglorious demise of a farm with such rich history. As Gary said, "once it's covered over, it's not so easy to pull up asphalt and concrete."

Gary's encyclopedic knowledge of his family's history may have provided the seed for his initial conversation with MALT co-founder Ellen Straus about his inheritance dilemma.

Gary's ancestor, Hugh Marshall, sailed from Ireland around Cape Horn to California in 1852, homesteading in what is now West Marin. They started dairy farming the next year, after his four brothers drove milking shorthorn cattle all the way from Kentucky. The Marshalls' original land holdings were vast, stretching from Bodega Bay all the way to the town of Marshall, which they themselves founded (the Keys family, their neighbors, founded the town of Tomales). They built the original Marshall Hotel (which fell into the bay during the 1906 earthquake) and the Marshall wharf, from which they shipped freshly churned butter to San Francisco.



Gary Thornton at the Ranch

© Paige Green

Gary's encyclopedic knowledge of his family's history may have provided the seed for his initial conversation with MALT co-founder Ellen Straus about his inheritance dilemma. Faced with insurmountable debts during the Great Depression, Joseph Marshall (Gary's great, great grandfather) discovered

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Thornton Ranch

a way to save the ranch. Deed records show that on May 2, 1932 Marshall sold the entire ranch to a trusted friend and then, just a few hours later, purchased it back. That brief transaction successfully erased the ranch's entire accumulated debt from the bank's ledger. Perhaps, Gary thought, MALT might provide a solution to his current dilemma and also solve the inheritance issue once and for all.

The partnership that subsequently evolved proved unique in MALT's 31-year history of working with ranchers. Together, Gary and MALT navigated complex legal and tax options over nearly a decade and, in the end, successfully protected the ranch in perpetuity in August 2011. And what a ranch! The 1,013-acre Thornton property maintains a sense of remoteness rarely experienced in today's Bay Area. The emblematic rolling green hills are accessible by a narrow, 1.8 mile-long road that stretches and winds past towering eucalyptus and fields of lambing ewes and Black Angus cattle. On a clear day the ranch commands sweeping views reaching the Pacific Ocean to the west, and to the northeast, the geothermal steams of Geyserville. Gary keeps the ranch immaculate, with perfectly straight fences and a 1946 John Deere that shines as if brand new.

When asked what the ranch's future holds, Gary immediately turns to his youngest daughter Marissa. Recently graduated from college, Marissa is clear that the ranch has not just been saved *from* development, but *for* agriculture. Partnering with



Gary Thornton with daughters Brianna (left) and Marissa (right) © Paige Green

her father, Marissa—the 6th generation to steward this land—is already bringing new ideas. They've begun selling grass-fed local lamb to a few Whole Foods stores (though Gary hasn't bothered to check out his portrait hanging above their meat counters). Marissa is taking steps toward renovating the milk facilities—either to make farmstead cheese or to sell milk to other local cheese makers. She's even experimenting with planting barley, a grain grown by the original Marshall brothers, for a local brewery. His oldest daughter Brianna might also have ideas for the future of their historic ranch.

MALT's protection of the Thornton Ranch marks the near completion of an 8,000-acre agricultural "green belt" around Tomales. But more than that, the Thornton ranch will be around for generations to come. Maybe that knowledge is what helps Gary fall back asleep each night.



To view more photos of the ranch, go to www.malt.org.



Lambs at Thornton Ranch

© Michael Woolsey

The complex, innovative partnership between MALT and Gary Thornton spans nearly a third of the organization's history. The struggle to save the Thornton Ranch showcases some of the challenges facing family farmers and ranchers. It also underscores the critical role MALT's donors and public funding partners play in ensuring Marin's agricultural land, way of life, stunning landscape and the food it provides are preserved forever.

2000

Gary Thornton inherits the family ranch from his father Gordon.



2002

Thornton meets with Bob Berner and Ellen Straus in Ellen's kitchen. Discussion of an agricultural conservation easement to save the ranch begins.



2004–2005

MALT works with Thornton on the many details necessary to purchase the easement.



2006

MALT and Thornton discover that an IRS tax code provision will prevent sale of the easement until 2010 and ask the IRS to consider a different interpretation of the code.

2008

The IRS issues an adverse ruling confirming that MALT will not be able to purchase the easement until 2010.

2011

MALT is awarded Department of Conservation CFPP Grant of \$410,000 and finalizes details of the project. The remaining \$1,039,500 is provided by individual supporters of MALT.

August 2011

After nearly a decade, MALT purchases the agricultural easement to give permanent protection to Thornton Ranch. Thornton pays the remaining estate taxes with the proceeds of the sale.



Photos © Michael Woolsey

MALT Releases New Documentary



Phyllis Faber and Ellen Straus

© Art Rogers/Point Reyes

Haynes Lindley, Jr. was captivated and inspired. As he sat in the audience listening to MALT Co-Founder Phyllis Faber talk about the struggle to save farm and ranch land in Marin, he decided this story should be captured on film. It was the fall of 2010 and he approached MALT with a generous offer to fund a documentary. He wanted Phyllis to sit down in front of the camera and "just let it roll."

Over the past year MALT worked with documentary filmmaker Dave Fix and Phyllis to complete both a 45-minute archive interview and a short documentary. We are grateful for Haynes' gift and are pleased to announce that the short film is now available to view online at www.malt.org.

Sadly, Haynes, a former MALT Board Member and Partners for Preservation donor, passed away before the film he commissioned was completed. Through his generosity he has helped capture the story of the founding and success of MALT through the eyes of someone who knows it like no one else.

Haynes knew something about living an interesting life. In addition to serving on MALT's board, the longtime Marin resident was both an architect and an attorney. He worked as a litigator for the Department of Trial Counsel of the State Bar of California and as a Deputy Public Defender in Los Angeles. He then shifted to a private practice as a lawyer and investor and among other things served as a Trustee of the Claremont Graduate University, a member of the Board of Directors of the Family and Children's Law Center in Marin County and Trustee and President of the Haynes Foundation.

"It was my privilege to serve on the MALT Board of Directors with Haynes," says friend and fellow emeritus Board member Anne Flemming. "We carpoled to the Board meetings each month and our conversations during those drives were always lively, topical, witty, and informational. I miss those conversations, as I miss him."

We are thankful to Haynes and his family for their support of MALT and of this important documentary project.



To find out more about MALT's Partners for Preservation planned giving program, please go to www.malt.org or contact Director of Development Kristine Ball at 415-663-1158.

RANCHES & ROLLING HILLS

1997 • 15TH ANNIVERSARY • 2012

LANDSCAPE ART SHOW AND SALE

MAY 19TH, 2012, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

MAY 20TH, 2012, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

PREVIEW LUNCH, MAY 19TH, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

DRUID'S HALL, NICASIO



Tom Wood paints for the 15th anniversary art show at the Moore Ranch.

© Michael Woolsey

Breathtaking landscape paintings of the American West lured immigrants to California more than 150 years ago. The development that ensued transformed the state and especially the Bay Area where a burgeoning metropolis of 7 million people continues to grow.

For the past 15 years, a group of acclaimed artists have worked to save this source of inspiration here in Marin. Each winter and spring painters fan out across MALT-protected lands to capture on canvas the farms, ranches, hills and waterways that appear much the same as they did when their predecessors first propped up their easels on California soil. The sale of their paintings during the annual Ranches & Rolling Hills Landscape Art Show & Sale has raised more than \$1 million to preserve this miraculous slice of the American West.

The *plein air* paintings illustrate a place where cattle and sheep still roam grasslands that stretch over hills and into valleys for miles, where commuting to work still means saddling up a horse, and where farmers and ranchers who work this land can proudly pass on their skills to the next

generation. The work of these artists has done much to ensure that this way of life will continue and that these storied landscapes continue to provide inspiration.

There is much left to accomplish. More than half of the farm and ranch land in Marin remains at risk and along with it a way of life and infrastructure that sustains it. Join MALT and these special artists to celebrate the 15th year of an extraordinary body of work that continues to inspire the preservation of Marin's at-risk farms and ranches.

MALT thanks the following business partners for their generous support of the 15th Anniversary Ranches & Rolling Hills Landscape Art Show and Sale:

Autodesk, Edible Marin & Wine Country, Cowgirl Creamery, Marin French Cheese Company and United Markets Grocery



To learn more about business partnership opportunities, please contact Development Associate Michael Woolsey at 415-663-1158.

Marin Artisan Cheese Tasting at The FORK with Slow Food

Saturday 3/17

Join MALT and Slow Food Marin/Petaluma to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a tasting of Marin artisan spring cheeses paired with local wine and beer. Cheese makers will present award-winning cheeses that show off bright and herbaceous seasonal milk produced on MALT-protected dairies. We will also tour the Giacomini dairy overlooking Tomales Bay.

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Place: The FORK at Giacomini Dairy, Point Reyes

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

Preregistration is required

Leiss Ranch Wildflower Walk

Saturday 3/31

Hike over pastures and through woods where wildflowers grow in profusion. Botanist and MALT co-founder Phyllis Faber will help us identify the flowers, along with Nancy Chaffin and Betty Nunes, who both grew up on the ranch and learned the wildflowers from their mother, Gladys Leiss. More than 45 different wildflowers have been seen on the ranch.

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Place: Chileno Valley

Difficulty: Moderate

Cost: \$30 MALT members / \$40 non-members

What to Bring: Water, picnic lunch, hiking shoes

Preregistration is required

Joel Salatin, Farmer and Author: A Talk and Book Signing

with Point Reyes Books and Marin Organic's Food for Thought Author Series

Sunday 4/15

Joel Salatin, hailed by *The New York Times* as the "high priest of the pasture," is author of nine books including "The Sheer Ecstasy of Being a Lunatic Farmer" and his most recent book, "Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World." Books will be for sale at the event. Join us for a taste of local food and an inspirational presentation.

Time: Reception 5:00 p.m. / Talk & Book Signing: 5:30 p.m.

Place: Dominican University, Guzman Hall

Cost: \$35 book and reserved seat / \$20 event ticket only / \$15 Dominican students and faculty event ticket only

Tickets go on sale February 15. For more info go to www.malt.org.

Preregistration is suggested

McEvoy Olive Ranch Tour

Friday 4/20

Enjoy the display of 18,000 organic olive trees in bloom at this beautiful ranch. While standing in the orchards scattered with wildflowers you will hear how olives are grown, then walk through the pressing facility and 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 a.m. – noon

Place: Point Reyes/Petaluma Road

Difficulty: Easy

Cost: \$30 MALT members / \$40 non-members

What to Bring: Water and walking shoes

Preregistration is required

Owls in Nicasio: A Family-Friendly Talk & Night Hike

Saturday 4/21

Meet live owls including Barn and Spotted owls and learn about their roles in our ecosystem from Hungry Owl Project staff. We will hear from MALT staff and local organic ranchers about protected owl habitat, the role of owls on ranches and take a nighttime walk to observe owls in action. Hot chocolate and cookies will be served.

Time: 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Place: Nicasio School

Difficulty: Easy

Cost: Talk Only: \$20 MALT members / \$25 non-members / \$10 children

Talk & Hike: \$30 MALT members / \$35 non-members / \$10 children

What to Bring: Warm clothes, walking shoes, water and flashlight

Preregistration is required



Gianni Caiazzo enjoys a snack
at the top of Black Mountain.

© Mia Pelletier

Register online at www.malt.org
or call 415.663.1158

HIKES • TOURS • TALKS

SPRING 2012



ARTISAN CHEESE FESTIVAL AT THE SHERATON SONOMA COUNTY, PETALUMA *Friday – Sunday, March 23–25*

If you love artisan cheese and want to support MALT, join the California Artisan Cheese Festival for a weekend-long celebration and exploration of hand-crafted cheese, food, wine and beer.

For more information and to buy tickets, visit www.artisancheesefestival.com.

POINT REYES BIRDING AND NATURE FESTIVAL *April 27–30*

Celebrate the rich bird life and natural history supported by West Marin's unique coastline, wetlands, forests, grasslands and ranchland during the annual festival. Many of the area's top birders and naturalists participate as guides and presenters in the more than 70 bird walks, talks and lectures, including events for beginners and kids. The event sells out quickly! More information and registration are available at www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org. Event co-sponsored by MALT.

Windrush Farm Family Day

Saturday 5/5

Bring your children or grandkids to watch baby lambs and kids bounding over spring-green fields. Feed the sheep, llamas, cows, and goats. We'll make butter to spread on bread with local homemade jams. Mimi Luebberrmann raises a variety of sheep for wool and spins and dyes her own yarns. She'll show us various fleeces and wool products and teach carding and spinning. Make your own wool bracelets.

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Place: Chileno Valley

Difficulty: Easy

Cost: \$20 MALT members / \$25 non-members / \$10 children / \$55 for a family of 4 or more

What to Bring: Water, picnic lunch, shoes that can get dirty and wet

Preregistration is required

Thornton Ranch Hike & Celebration

Saturday 5/12

This season you can be among the first to hike across the spectacular Thornton Ranch, the newly MALT-protected 1,013-acre sheep and cattle ranch established in 1852. Join MALT Stewardship Director Patricia Hickey, rancher Gary Thornton and his daughter Marissa on a tour, five-mile hike and celebration with bubbly and cookies to go with your picnic lunch.

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Place: Tomales

Difficulty: Moderate / Strenuous

Cost: \$40 MALT members / \$50 non-members

Preregistration is required

Hog Island Oyster Co. & Straus Dairy

Tuesday 5/15

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, a methane digester, and the other clean energy techniques they use. You'll see cows being milked and enjoy a delicious Straus creamery tasting.

Time: noon – 4:00 p.m.

Place: Hog Island Oyster Company, Marshall

Cost: \$40 MALT members / \$50 non-members

What to Bring: Water, picnic lunch, shoes that can get dirty, layered clothing **Preregistration is required**

Ranches & Rolling Hills Landscape Art Show & Sale

Sat. & Sun 5/19–20

Join us for the 15th anniversary of the art show and sale, which has raised more than \$1 million to help MALT protect family farms and ranches here in Marin. Visit www.malt.org for details, and watch for your invitation to the preview lunch in the mail.

8th Annual Marin County Wine Tasting at Historic Escalle Winery

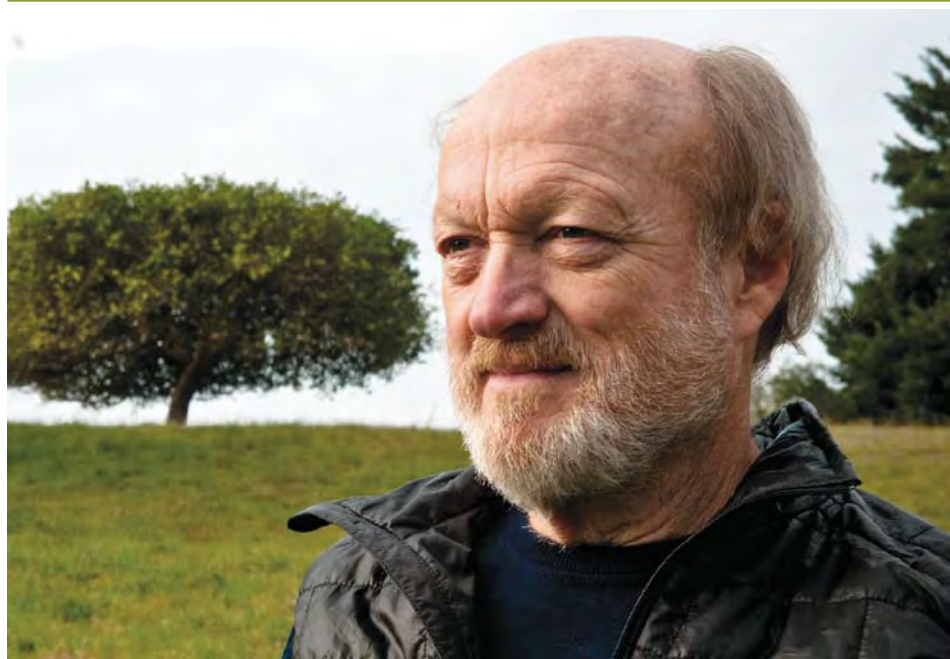
Saturday 6/23

Come learn what all the excitement is about! This popular annual event gives wine lovers an opportunity to taste Marin wine from established award-winning vineyards and from exciting new wineries. Grapes grown on MALT-protected properties are made into many of these local wines. The event is a benefit for MALT by the Marin Winegrowers Association. For more information, please go to www.malt.org.

Photo: © Mia Pelletier

|| Register online at www.malt.org ||
or call 415.663.1158

Burr Henemen, MALT Donor



Burr Henemen

© Michael Woolsey

“There is something reassuring to me about a working landscape,”

says long-time MALT donor Burr Henemen. “It’s like the difference between Fisherman’s Wharf and a port kept alive by its active fishing fleet. The character of our farm and ranch land here is shaped less by the absence of housing tracts than by the presence of families who live closer to the land than the rest of us.”

Burr has led marine conservation efforts as a past executive director of PRBO Conservation Science and at Commonweal in Bolinas, where he directs the Oceans Program. During 50 years in the Bay Area—45 of them in West Marin—he has observed the subdivision and development pressure in this region and MALT’s success in saving nearly half of the working farms and ranches at risk here.

“Thirty years ago it was a daunting, ambitious dream to think that MALT could make a real difference,” he says. “But now almost half is protected. What an accomplishment. That’s what

inspires my wife Janet and me to help MALT maintain and build momentum.”

Donor contributions help sustain this momentum, Burr notes, and will play a critical role in protecting farmland threatened by development and other pressures into the future.

“The privately owned farmlands are at risk. The county’s agricultural zoning has been the first line of defense, but it won’t last in the long run without a vibrant agricultural economy,” he says.

“For so many Marin ranching families, MALT has been the strategic partner in enlivening that economy. MALT easements have provided the capital for families to stay in ranching and make the investments needed to adapt to changing realities. For the rest of us, the result of this 30-year revolution is local, high-quality meat, cheese, milk, and produce—and the lasting character of the working landscape.”



To find out more about ways to support MALT’s farmland conservation work, please go to www.malt.org or contact Director of Development Kristine Ball at 415-663-1158.

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Land Trust

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“Once it’s covered over,
it’s not so easy to pull up
asphalt and concrete.”

~ Rancher Gary Thornton



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.