

SARDELLA RANCH: FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

In the summer of 2013, a fire came through the Sardella Ranch. Where most would see devastation, Michael Sardella, owner of the Sardella Ranch in Tuolumne County, saw an opportunity.

Sardella has been a resident of the Sonora area his whole life. Since his family settled onto the ranch in 1957, he has witnessed firsthand the effects that population growth and development have on small towns in America.

"It started with a Burger King, and it just grew from there," Sardella recalled. The area around the Sardella Ranch was previously bordered by ranches similar in size to his, but now, most of the surrounding area has been subdivided into lots ranging in size from five to 40 acres.

These areas, once open and teeming with oak trees and wildlife, have been converted to residential neighborhoods and commercial properties. Sardella on the other hand stands proud with a fully intact ranch that is protected in perpetuity through a conservation easement with the California Rangeland Trust.

To maintain the beauty and health of the land, cattle are used to graze the property, but like any other ranch, each year brings a small but continuous build-up of noxious weeds, tough shrubs, and overgrown areas, even despite grazing.



Mike Sardella partnered with the California Rangeland Trust in 2013 to conserve the Sardella Ranch in perpetuity. Along with a grazing management plan, he partners with Cal Fire to maintain the landscape through prescribed burning.



Cal Fire utilizes the Sardella Ranch for the C-234: Intermediate Firing Methods class.

These heavy-brush areas have led to less space for the cattle to graze and wildlife to roam. In turn, the presence of these types of flammable fuels coupled with dry conditions and limited rainfall increase the risk of wildfires that can ravage through ranches and destroy nearby communities.

When the fire came through the Sardella Ranch in 2013, the fuels burned hot and fast. Not only did the fire threaten the ranch but also the surrounding subdivisions. But thanks to the handy work performed by Cal Fire, they were able to keep the flames at bay, save the nearby community, and save Sardella's ranch and with it the basis for his livelihood.

(Continued on page 4)



Sardella Ranch, Tuolumne County

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

LEADERSHIP LETTER	2
GIFTS OF APPRECIATED INVESTMENTS	3
SARDELLA RANCH STORY CONT.	4
DONOR SPOTLIGHT	5

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO SERVE THE LAND?	5
THANK YOU DONORS	6
IN MEMORIAM	7
A WESTERN AFFAIR 2021	8



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LEADERSHIP LETTER

Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of summer in California, it is unfortunately already shaping up to be another year filled with devastating wildfires. Each time another fire is reported, I, like many of you, get a sinking feeling in my stomach. Knowing that so many Californians, especially ranchers, are facing tough losses is heartbreaking.

As a rancher myself in Mendocino and Lake Counties, I know firsthand the pain and financial impact fires can have on a ranching operation. In 2018, the Mendocino Complex Fire ravaged through the land my family has run cattle on for generations. Along with it, the fire took some of our cows and nearly all of the grasses we depended on as feed for our herd. There were no more birds chirping or sightings of deer and elk running along the hillside. Everything was black. But I'm here to tell you that as difficult as that experience was for my family, we got through it. We survived, and so did our rangeland.

The wonderful thing about rangelands is that they are extremely resilient. A year after the fire, the grasses and trees sprouted up through the ashes. We saw the return of wildlife – deer, bears, and turkeys dotted the mountain; the birds' cheerful melodies were music to our ears once again.

Watching the rejuvenation of the land that provides so many benefits to all of us is a powerful sight. Whether it's your own ranch recovering from a wildfire or simply a working landscape you drive by on your commute into the city, seeing everything come back to life after a devastating loss can heal even the deepest burn scars, not only on the land itself but on our hearts as well.

Rangelands are the lifeblood of our state. They provide so many benefits – everything from food and fiber production to clean air and water to peaceful viewsheds that fill our souls and offer inspiration. It's why the California Rangeland Trust does what it does helping ranchers conserve their private, working lands. And it's why people from all walks of life donate their hard-earned funds to enable conservation dreams to come true.

As Californians, we all have a responsibility to ensure our state's rangelands remain vibrant and available both now and into the future. Thank you for your role in helping to conserve these special landscapes, the benefits they provide, and the healing powers they possess. We couldn't do this important work with you!

Sincerely,



Michael Delbar
CEO

GIFTS OF APPRECIATED INVESTMENTS PROVIDE A WIN-WIN OPPORTUNITY

By design, investment portfolios fluctuate throughout the years. If you opt to sell investments that are worth more than what you originally paid for them, you must pay capital gains tax. Consider donating them to California Rangeland Trust instead.

Your gift of appreciated investments enables you to save on three types of taxes:

- ★ Avoid all capital gains tax (which can be as much as 20%)
- ★ Avoid state income tax on capital gains
- ★ Receive a federal income tax deduction for the full present value of the stock

There are several types of assets where you may be vested:

- ★ Stocks
- ★ Mutual Funds
- ★ Index Funds
- ★ Closely-held securities

Making a gift of invested securities to support rangeland conservation is as easy as instructing your broker to transfer the shares to our organization.

Using assets other than cash also allows you more flexibility when planning a future gift, and there are even more potential benefits if you plan your gift creatively. For example, if you aren't ready to give up these assets during your lifetime, a gift of securities through your will or living trust allows you the flexibility to change your mind at any time. You can continue to receive dividends and participate in shareholder votes, and the securities are still yours if you need them for other expenses.

We can help clarify and document the steps to donate appreciated assets to us. Simply contact Shannon Foucault at (916) 444-2096 or sfoucault@rangelandtrust.org to see how this gift can be a win-win.

The information in this publication is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax advisor. State law may further impact your individual results.



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Between meetings and raising awareness of the California Rangeland Trust, the Legacy Council is hard at work.

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SARDELLA RANCH CONT.

The fire wiped out most of the heavy-brushed area toward the back of the ranch, but it did not completely clear out the overgrown areas. "[Cal Fire] almost did too good of a job," Sardella joked.

After the fire, Sardella sang Cal Fire's praises in a letter to the editor in the *Union Democrat*. This letter made it to Jeff Sanders, who at the time was the Cal Fire Tuolumne-Calaveras division fire chief. A year later, in the summer of 2014, Sanders stopped by to thank Sardella for his kind words. Sanders asked Sardella if there was anything else that Cal Fire could do for them, and Sardella shouted, "Burn it again!"

From there, a partnership was born. Sanders went back to his superiors and came up with a plan that would be mutually beneficial for the Sardellas, Cal Fire, the environment, and the local community.

With Sardella's persistence and knowledge about his land, Cal Fire has been able to utilize the Sardella Ranch for the C-234: Intermediate Firing Methods class. Adam Frese, the current pre-fire division chief for Cal Fire, explained that the class aims to teach fire professionals different burning techniques to protect and get the most out of prescribed burning.

The Sardella Ranch has been the primary location for this class for the last six years. The training focuses on a 100-acre area of land in the back of the property that is easily accessible to the fire crews. The goal of the project is to clear out the overgrown areas and minimize noxious weeds, like Medusa Head and Tarweed.

Lately, California has seen a dramatic increase in the number of wildfires that occur. According to Cal Fire's incident archive, last year, nearly 10,000 fires burned over 4.2 million acres – more than 4% of the state's roughly 100 million acres of land – making 2020 the largest wildfire season recorded in California's modern history. Each year, the fire season starts earlier and becomes more and more detrimental. Many Californians have come to fear the word "fire," but when it is done the right way, it provides ecological benefits.

For Cal Fire, working on ranches, like the Sardella Ranch, has been a valuable tool for educating and preparing the area for wildfire season. "Fire, when utilized properly, is a natural part of the environment. By reintroducing low-intensity fire to this area, we are able to increase the productivity of that land," Frese explained.

Since welcoming Cal Fire classes on the ranch, Sardella has seen a positive and dramatic difference on the landscape. "You can walk through that area again," Sardella explained. "It is so nice to see the variety of wildlife that have made their way back through the ranch."

With the combination of prescribed burning and a proper grazing management plan, Sardella's ranch is truly a sight to see. His neighbors get the benefit of marveling at the variety of trees and lush green grasses covering the hillsides in the spring and when blessed with a little rain, the vibrant colors of wildflowers carpeting the pastures. A local realtor once told Sardella that his ranch adds value to the properties around him because each place comes with an expensive view.

Sardella wants his ranch to be viable and productive forever. By maintaining the health and resiliency of his land through grazing and prescribed burning, along with protecting the ranch through a conservation agreement with the Rangeland Trust, he is working hard to ensure his ranching legacy will carry on for generations to come.

As Sardella puts it, "Everybody wants to strive for a legacy; they want to be rich and famous, but this land is my legacy."



The Sardella Ranch is truly a sight to see. Spring rains bring with it beautiful carpets of wildflowers.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT ON BRUCE HART



Bruce Hart was born in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Born and raised in San Francisco and educated at Stanford, he's now a retired businessman who lives in Glen Ellen. His passion, however, is riding his horse in wide open spaces throughout California and helping to work cattle on his friends' ranches. Given the chance to choose his birthplace and time, he likely would have picked a rural California ranch circa the early 20th century.

He was introduced to the California Rangeland Trust by friends who knew he'd connect with the mission. "I've always believed that our forefathers, the pioneers who came out West across the prairies, were inspired by those wide open spaces to innovate and create," says Hart. "So, growing up in California I've understood how important it is to conserve these

lands. Then, to learn from the Rangeland Trust of the additional benefits – including local food, clean air and water, carbon sequestration, fire fuel suppression – it's critical that we preserve these working ranches."

This understanding led him to engage more deeply in the Rangeland Trust's work, and today, he is a mega-volunteer. He serves on the Legacy Council where he lends his marketing expertise. He is a member of the Finance Committee where his business acumen is invaluable. He is the Co-Chair (along with Devere Dressler) of the Major Gifts Committee, putting his efforts toward finding new sources of funding to advance the organization's mission.

Apart from supporting the Rangeland Trust with his time and talent, Hart is also a donor. He is a firm believer in supporting his passions through his philanthropy. He is a Board Member of the Herbst Foundation in San Francisco and has encouraged that organization to provide major and significant support to the Rangeland Trust over the last decade.

Bruce sums up his involvement with the Rangeland Trust this way: "When I drive into the City I think of all the things I have to do. My heart and mind race to keep up with all the tasks and commitments. But when I'm riding my horse out on the range, I'm invigorated and think of all the things I can do, and the opportunities are endless. At the same time, I am relaxed and at peace. The Rangeland Trust is working to conserve those inspiring spaces throughout California."

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO SERVE THE LAND?

Your contributions through the Rangeland Trust are enabling ranching families to continue to care for the lands that they know, love, and honor. You are entrusting these people with the land you love, and in turn they are managing these open spaces so that we can all have healthy landscapes and biodiversity, livable cities, food security, better climate resilience, and stronger rural economies.

Together, we are working for the good of rangelands – donors, through your advocacy, sincerity, and financial investment; ranchers, through your steady and thoughtful care of our natural resources; and the Rangeland Trust, as the conduit to keep us connected and moving forward.

Because of your role in this partnership, the conservation of rangelands continues and all the things we love about them can continue to thrive. In the face of extreme drought, devastating wildfires, viral pandemics, and economic uncertainty – you know that there is something solid and stable because of your contributions: the land.

Thank you for your role in ensuring a future for working lands and the people who care for them.

Please, keep giving where your heart is and where you are truly making a difference for people, wildlife, and the landscapes that sustain us. Every gift matters.

THANK YOU DONORS

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FRANKLIN LOCKWOOD "WOODY" BARNES JR. IN MEMORIAM



A third generation native of Julian, CA, Franklin Lockwood "Woody" Barnes Jr. passed away peacefully Sunday, July 25 at the age of 86. His family was able to spend the last hours by his side.

A trained botanist, Woody was born in San Diego and attended Julian Elementary and High School, Pomona College, and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Woody and his father, Franklin, operated the largest apple and pear orchards in Julian, a family business since 1906. The family built the iconic Manzanita Ranch store in Wynola—literally from forming the cement blocks to laying the roof. Although he worked seven days a week, Woody quipped that when you love what you do, you never work a day in your life.

In July of 1962 Woody married his beloved fiancée from Pomona College, Jane Caroline Mathis from El Toro, CA, with whom he shared many adventures, including travel to Europe, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, South America, Russia,

and most of the 50 states. The couple owned and managed cattle ranches in Northern California and Oregon, moving their Angus crossbred herd back and forth with the seasons.

Kind and gentle, full of wisdom and grace, Woody possessed an inner toughness that could inspire awe. In an iconic incident, taking too many risks while driving a wheel tractor, Woody rolled it down an earthen dam, bouncing left and right, tumbling the tractor head over kettle, until he found himself trapped by his seatbelt twenty-five feet underwater. He managed to free himself by remembering that the tractor had been made in India—the belt fastened on the left side not the right. He undid the buckle, swam to the surface, changed his clothes, and attended two functions that same day.

In addition to fruit, Manzanita Ranch grew lilacs, lily of the valley, peonies, tulips, and other flowers. Woody once wrote, "My parents Alice and Franklin were married Christmas day at the Julian Hotel (in 1924). Mom and Dad raised fruit and flowers and by the 1930s were selling lilacs as cut flowers to vendors in San Diego. I fell in love with lilacs early on. In addition to my family influence, my first 'paying job' was for a Julian neighbor, taking care of his pigeons, chickens, horses, dogs, and yard for 50 cents a week. The yard included a long row of lilacs." With the International Lilac Society, Woody developed and registered a beautiful dark-purple lilac named after his parents, the "Alice-Franklin."

Woody was very active in agricultural organizations and in his community, including 18 years with the Julian Volunteer Fire District, and many years with the California Cattlemen's Association and Julian Community Planning Group. He was one of 30 California farmers selected in 1970 to the first class of the California Agricultural Leadership Program. He served on the boards of the San Diego County Farm Bureau (including one year as president), the Council of California Growers, the California State Board of Forestry, and the **California Rangeland Trust**. He remained on the Julian Planning Group and **on the conservation committee of the Rangeland Trust until his final breath.**

Woody was just selected by the San Diego Planning and Development Services as one of the 2021 County Volunteers of the Year.

Woody is survived by his wife, Jane, his sister Mary Alice "Jo" Geary (Jim); two children, Franklin Lockwood "Barney" Barnes III (Diane), and Scott T. Barnes (Grace); grandchildren Chelsea (Lance), Emmalee, Weslee, Elizabeth, and Kaylynn; and three nieces, Mary Lynn Cravey, Karen Conely, and Julie Kemp (Mike).

Many of Woody's memories have been preserved in the book *Woody Barnes—A Farmer's Life in Julian*. Of the agricultural life in Julian he said, "It's an era that's completely gone, and I'm probably the only one who remembers most of it." Well Woody, we will remember you. Always.

*Submitted by: Scott T. Barnes,
son of Woody Barnes*

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A WESTERN AFFAIR 2021

RANCHO MISSION VIEJO | SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1ST

COWBOY SUNDOWNER

5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Join us for a pre-party at Cow Camp, a private and secluded location known as the “spirit of the ranch.” During this event, you will hear stories from Rancho Mission Viejo’s Chairman and CEO, Tony Moiso, along with other descendants of some of the earliest California ranching families.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2ND

A WESTERN AFFAIR

5:00 pm – 10:00 pm

In true western style, A Western Affair 2021 will gather California’s rancher conservationists from across the state to celebrate our ranching roots. The evening will bring the spirit of the West to life with a delectable dinner, a live and silent auction, and dancing to live music from the James Kelly Band.

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS

A WESTERN AFFAIR (SATURDAY ONLY)– \$300 PER PERSON*

COWBOY SUNDOWNER AND A WESTERN AFFAIR (FRIDAY & SATURDAY)– \$550 PER PERSON

**Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, we are pleased to offer discounted tickets at \$195 each to our valuable landowner partners and the next generation of rancher conservationists (35 years old and under).*

Make reservations before we sell out by calling Natalie Cunha at (916) 444-2096 or visiting:
www.rangelandtrust.org/a-western-affair-2021

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