



# EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

P.O. Box 842 • Sonoita, Arizona 85637-0842 • (888) 364-2829

[www.empireranchfoundation.org](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org)

## Members Are Key

May marks the start of our membership drive for the Foundation's 2014-2015 membership year. I urge you to renew your membership, or join us if you are not already a member! Your support is key to continuing important work to preserve the Empire Ranch and share its heritage with future generations. This issue of *ERF News* provides many examples of the accomplishments of the Empire Ranch Foundation and the benefits of membership, from events such as the Trail Ride or Heritage Discovery Day to opportunities to help out during volunteer days.

In February, ERF was honored to meet with Steve Ellis, BLM Deputy Director of Operations, during his visit to Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. He was greatly impressed by the beauty and history of the Empire Ranch and asked me to convey his appreciation for all that ERF members and volunteers have accomplished in partnership with BLM. It's delightful to see this interest at the federal level as we push forward with Empire Ranch preservation.

If you haven't visited the Empire recently, plan to do so to view the new Cowboy Life Exhibit. The Empire Ranch House is open any time during daylight hours. We also invite you to our docent-led tours, now held at 11am on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of every month.

Saving the Empire takes the hands of many—join us for upcoming Volunteer Days (June 14 and August 16). Be sure to respond to this membership appeal—our members are the key to our success.

Happy Trails and Thank You!  
Ron Martin, ERF President



Horseback and wagon riders head out (top); honoree Steve Boice with Faith Boice & Ron Martin.

## Riding the Empire Ranch

The Sonoita spring winds were gently blowing, skies were clear and the temperature was perfect for those who attended the 2014 Spring Trail Ride on April 5th. The father and daughter trail boss team of Steve Boice and Faith Boice led two rides with 56 riders who enjoyed the wonders and beauty of Las Cienegas National Conservation Area.

Gail Corkill and Steve "Bunker" deFrance entertained the participants in the morning wagon rides with tales about the rich history of the Empire Ranch as they explored a route north of Empire Ranch headquarters. Gerald Korte provided tours of the Empire Ranch House and shared stories of his experiences as an Empire cowboy in the late 1940s. A casual barbeque lunch was served in the shade of the Stone Corral, with musical entertainment provided by Maria McArthur (fiddle) and Laura Barry (guitar).

After lunch ERF President Ron Martin presented 2014 Trail Ride Honoree Steve Boice with the Heart of the Empire Award and shirt. Steve was honored for his many contributions including helping to found ERF (1997), serving multiple terms on the Board and as President (1999-2001). He began the Trail Rides at the Empire Ranch, has been a key organizer and supporter of the Roundup & Open House, and has unfailingly worked to preserve and protect the Empire Ranch. When accepting the award Steve, who grew up on the Empire Ranch learning ranching traditions from his grandparents Frank and Mary Boice and his father Frank ("Pancho") Boice, spoke

*(continued on p. 2)*

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## Trail Ride (cont'd from p. 1)

of his love of the Empire Ranch and horses and thanked the many volunteers who make the work of the Foundation possible.

Throughout the day guests also enjoyed visiting the Cowboy Life Exhibit and shopping in the Visitor Contact Station Gift Shop. We are so grateful for the many volunteers who made the Trail Ride possible.



Trail ride vittles served by Joe Balden and Susan & Ed Smedley.

## Tucson Rodeo Parade

ERF was pleased to participate in the 90th Annual Tucson Rodeo Parade on February 26, 2014. The wagon decorations, designed by Board Member Lucinda Iverson, featured several historic Empire Ranch photos along with colorful paper flowers. We greatly appreciate the volunteer efforts of Marti Conroy, Steve "Bunker" de France, Lucinda Iverson, Cari Lee, Ron Martin, Drayanna Masingale, and Doug & Sally Pyne who decorated the wagon.



Nice job, wagon volunteers!

## Celebrating Empire Vaqueros & Cowboys

A long term ERF and BLM goal was realized on February 8th when Gerald Korte, Empire Ranch cowboy, 1946-1949, officially opened the permanent Cowboy Life Exhibit on display in Rooms 3 & 6 of the Empire Ranch House.

About 200 attended the festive event to view the exhibit, enjoy the entertainment, and participate in the day's activities. Gerald Korte and Eddie Gardner, whose great grandfather and grandfather were Empire Ranch vaqueros, fielded questions about cowboy life.

Many children and their families enjoyed the activities, including music, and dance performance hosted by ERF and its education program, Wild About the Grasslands (WATG). Local 4-H members Colt and Clay Lyman taught calf roping. Stick horse decorating, led by Lucinda Iverson, was a big hit. The Vail Preservation Society presented children's pastimes, such as playing marbles and jacks. WATG alumni Grace and Cole McGuire led children on letterboxing and scavenger hunt adventures. Guided tours of the Heritage Discovery Trail by Jeffrey Cooper and the Empire Ranch House by docent Lois Kolesar were also popular.

Thirteen girls from Peña Blanca Elementary School's Ballet Folklorico group delighted everyone with their intricate traditional dances. The Busted Cowboy Band kept everyone's toes tapping, as all enjoyed a lunch of chili & fixins' prepared by Amelia Barrios and family and delicious Dutch oven apple cobbler made from scratch by Tim Corkill.

We are most grateful for the generosity and collaboration of the following organizations and individuals:

### Financial Support:

Arizona Humanities Council  
Wade & Alison Bunting  
Bureau of Land Management  
Empire Ranch Foundation  
Amanda & Dennis Ritchie

### Exhibit Content & Design:

Mary Melcher (Curator)  
Alison Bunting (Research)  
Ormsby & Thickstun Interpretive Design  
(Graphic Design)

### Exhibit Stands & Cases:

Steve Coleman & Hector Lopez, Patagonia



Former Empire Ranch cowboy Gerald Korte, standing by the vintage bed he donated for the exhibit.



Folk dancing, stick horse decorating, and roping lessons also were part of the festivities.

Union High School (Exhibit Stand Design & Construction)

Doug & Sally Pyne, John Weiss (Exhibit Case Refurbishment)

Mike Rocheford (Flip Book Stand Design & Construction)

### Cowboy Item Donors:

Christine Auerbach, Skip Bailey, Steve "Bunker" DeFrance, Neale Duncan, Douglas Dunn, Irma Kern, Walter Kolbe, Gerald Korte, Nancy Vail C. Rorty, Bill Schock, John Scott



*Volunteers prepare the sleeping porch for paint; BLM's Chris Schrage patches walls.*

## Preservation Work Continues

Preservation and stabilization efforts by ERF volunteers, BLM, and contractors continue at Empire Ranch. At the April 19 Volunteer Work Day, important progress was made in continuing to repair and replace wood elements on corral fences and gates, and to repair and repaint interior and exterior ranch house surfaces, and tracks and rolling doors on several ranch outbuildings. With a good work plan in hand, a project to rehabilitate and restore the rusted areas on the metal cabinets in the "blue" kitchen got underway.

The project to stabilize the Adobe Hay Barn is in the design review phase, under a Federal contract administered by BLM. The contractor, Statistical Research Inc. (SRI) of Tucson, has a long history of preservation work at the Ranch. SRI has submitted a partial design for review by BLM and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Once it's been approved work will begin. We still hope for completion—and potential use of the space—for the 2014 Empire Ranch Roundup.

The results of the testing of soils and adobes for compression strength and moisture retention of the Ranch House bricks

## Heritage Discovery Day

More than 100 people attended the Empire Ranch Heritage Discovery Day on March 8th, hosted by ERF and its Wild About the Grasslands (WATG) education program. The event celebrated 2014 Arizona Archeology and Heritage Awareness Month.

A standing-room-only audience was fascinated by the "History of Mining in the Empire Mountains and the Total Wreck Mine," a presentation by author, historian, public interpreter and researcher William Ascarza.

Also joining in on activities for the day were 33 Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts from Sierra Vista who enjoyed learning basic compass skills and the sport of letterboxing from Grace McGuire, Cole McGuire, and Gail Corkill. And all enjoyed guided tours of the historic Empire Ranch House led by docents Amanda Ritchie and Lois Kolesar.



*Girl Scouts sport their new ERF safari hats; scouts and leaders pose on the front porch.*

were discussed by BLM and SHPO; BLM is now working on a revised stabilization plan that will incorporate suggestions made. Once it is been reviewed and approved, the agency can issue a request for proposals to implement the stabilization plan.

There's a lot going on at the Ranch in 2014—please come out, have a look, and join us at one of the Volunteer Work Days—the next will be held on Saturday June 14th. Thanks again for supporting our efforts to preserve, protect, and interpret the Empire Ranch.

## Coming to The Loft Cinema...



### "El Dorado"

**7:00 p.m., Thursday, August 7th**  
3233 Speedway Blvd, Tucson

Save the date for ERF's 4th annual fundraiser event "Western Movies at The Loft Cinema in Tucson," on Thursday, August 7. Our featured movie this year is the 1966 classic "El Dorado," starring John Wayne and Robert Mitchum. It was directed by Howard Hawks and filmed mainly at Old Tucson with some country scenes shot around this valley, where it's hard not to land on something once part of the Empire.

Our special guest is Cindy Mitchum, daughter of Robert's brother John, who followed his movie-star brother to Hollywood and became a character actor in scores of movies and hundreds of television shows. The two Mitchum brothers were the subject of an insightful 1989 memoir written by her father titled "Them Onery Mitchum Boys." Cindy will no doubt have her own tales to tell in a panel discussion prior to the showing.

There are other local connections to El Dorado including appearances by two of our greatest supporters, actor Don Collier and the legendary Bob Shelton himself (remember the piano scene in the saloon?). The movie score is by the great Nelson Riddle, known for his classic arrangements for Frank, Nat, Dino and Linda Ronstadt.

Tickets are \$20 for ERF members, \$25 for non-members; \$30 at the door. Call 888-364-2829 to purchase, or visit [www.empireranchfoundation.org](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org). This event is generously underwritten by the Green Valley Pecan Company and Strategic Issues Management Group.

## Departed Friend



Miriam Hamilton Boice died on March 27, 2014. Miriam moved to the Empire Ranch in 1950 when she married Bob Boice after they graduated from the University of Arizona. Their first home was the Huachuca House, also known as "Bob's Casita." Two of their four children, Mary Elizabeth and Robert Grantham "Grant" were born during the time they lived on the Empire Ranch. Martha Hamilton and Peggy Frances arrived after the Boice family expanded their operation to include the Slash S Ranch, south of Globe, Arizona in 1955.

Miriam participated fully in ranching life, including cooking for the crews at the Slash S. She was an active volunteer in Globe, serving as the Treasurer to the Gila County Cattle Growers and compiling the organization's history. She also volunteered as the clerk and organizer of the Gila County Fair Junior Livestock Auction and for the American Field Service. Miriam was especially helpful and generous to the Empire Ranch Foundation by providing access to photos and participating in oral history interviews that have enriched the Foundation's historical records.



## Exploring the Empire Ranch and Beyond

Students from Global Community Communications Schools, Tubac, gathered at Empire Ranch Headquarters on March 20th to explore the rare habitats and biomes of the Las Cienegas NCA, as part of the Foundation's Wild About the Grasslands (WATG) education program.

The day began with a tour of the Ranch House and an orientation to the importance of the Empire's biologically diverse landscape and its cattle ranching history. After instruction in basic compass and binocular skills, and naturalist journaling techniques, Gail Corkill and Jeffrey Cooper led the students and their teachers on an extensive hike to areas such as the Empire Gulch and Oak Tree Canyon.

Along the way, the young birders spotted a Red-tailed hawk, Zoned-tail hawk, Vermillion flycatcher, Black-throated sparrow, and two Great Horned owls. They were astonished to detect tracks of coyote and deer, bobcat scat, witness Chiricahua leopard frogs jumping into the creek, and see for the first time Giant Sacaton grass and Emory Oak trees.

"The children are really loving this experience," said lead teacher Blue Evening Star. "We can't wait to come back."

The WATG program is part of the Hands on the Land network of field classrooms to connect students, teachers and families to the outdoors. To schedule a custom outdoor classroom field trip, contact [admin@empireranchfoundation.com](mailto:admin@empireranchfoundation.com)

[Left] Bob & Miriam Boice, circa. 1957. (photo: Arizona Memory Project)

## Working Calendar

*Location: Meet at Visitor Contact Station, Empire Ranch Headquarters, unless otherwise noted. To volunteer, or for more information, call (888) 364-2829.*

### May

- 7 *Legacy Day at Empire Ranch*, outreach for Elgin & Patagonia schools.
- 10 *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am, free, open to all.
- 17 *ERF Board Meeting*, 9am to noon, Tucson.
- 24 *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am, free, open to all.

### June

- 14 *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am, free, open to all.
- 14 *Volunteer Work Day*, 8am to noon. All welcome! RSVP 888-364-2829
- 28 *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am, free, open to all.

### July

- 12 *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am, free, open to all.
- 19 *ERF Board Meeting*, 9am to noon.
- 26 *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am, free, open to all.

### August

- 7 *El Dorado fundraiser at The Loft Cinema*, 3233 E. Speedway, Tucson, 7pm (see article, p. 3)
- 9 *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am, free, open to all.
- 16 *Volunteer Work Day*, 8am to noon. All welcome! RSVP 888-364-2829
- 23 *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am, free, open to all.

Save the Date! Saturday, November 1  
Empire Ranch Roundup & Open House

## 2014/2015 Membership Reply

*Yes, I want to help save the Empire Ranch for future generations!*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please enter name(s) in your preferred format for acknowledgments.)

Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed    Charge to:  MC     Visa     Discover     This is a new address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Credit Card Number    Exp.Date.    CSV Code    Signature

This donation is also in memory/appreciation of \_\_\_\_\_

This is a gift membership from: \_\_\_\_\_

### EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION

- (\$50 & under) Homesteader
- (\$75) Total Wreck Miner
- (\$100) Wrangler
- (\$250) Vaquero
- (\$500) Jefe
- (\$1,000) Patron
- (\$2,500) Majordomo
- (\$5,000) Cattle Baron
- (\$10,000) Territorial Governor
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other

**Please Mail To: Empire Ranch Foundation, P.O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637**

The Empire Ranch Foundation has an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit classification; donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.