



# EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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

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

## A Shared Commitment

I'm so grateful for the contributions and collaboration of our volunteers who in 2021 supported and strengthened the Foundation. Every challenge faced was met with innovative solutions.

When we could not offer in-person activities due to COVID-19, we enhanced our virtual activities. Over 400 historical vignettes were shared via Facebook and email. A virtual tour of the Empire Ranch House was posted on the ERF website, and we launched an online gift shop. Without the revenue from holding events we could not fund our administrator position, so a small cadre of volunteers collaborated to handle the Foundation's day-to-day operations.

When we could resume workdays, volunteers responded enthusiastically. And when we celebrated National Day of the Cowboy and hosted the 20th Empire Ranch Cowboy Festival over 2,600 visitors participated in both events.

Please take a moment to read the letter enclosed with this newsletter requesting your support for our New Ranch House fund. I hope you will contribute to this important capital campaign. The enclosed return envelope can be used to send a check or you can donate quickly and securely on our website ([www.empireranchfoundation.org](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org)).

The strength of any organization is its people. ERF supporters, members, and volunteers are simply the best! You share my love for the historic Empire Ranch and my commitment to preserve it for generations to come.

Thank You!

*Faith Boice, President*

## A Cowboy Festival To Remember!



It was wonderful to see the historic Empire Ranch come alive again for the 20th Empire Ranch Cowboy Festival on November 6-7th. For the first time the Festival was expanded to two days, and over 2,400 excited participants enjoyed the beautiful weather and wealth of activities.

B Troop 4th U.S. Cavalry Regiment (Memorial) started off each day's Arena events with the presentation of colors, followed by exciting precision riding performances. Lanny Leach, Joel Eliot, and George Masek demonstrated horsemanship and cattle handling techniques. Sarah Ogilvie showed the amazing skills of working cattle dogs. The BLM Wild Horse & Burro performances were enjoyed by all. Demonstrations by the Spanish Barb Horse Association allowed a close look at these historic horses. And the skilled and colorful riding of the Charros y Modelos de Tucson and Copper State Renegades Drill Team never cease to impress.

Toes were tapping and hands were clapping at the Music Stage. On Saturday, Dan McCorison, the Broken Chair Band, and Randy Huston performed. On Sunday, the Dance Group of Tucson performed traditional Mexican dances, and

*(continued, p. 2)*



*Published by the Empire Ranch Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management. The purpose of the Foundation is to protect, restore, and sustain the Empire Ranch historical buildings and landscape as an outstanding western heritage and education center. Donations to the Foundation may be sent to: P.O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637-0842.*



## Cowboy Festival (cont'd)

Messenger and Way Out West provided music.

Western skills demonstrators included Bill Schock (branding), Osuna Boots (boot making), Phil Parks (leatherworking), Dick Schorr (reata braiding), Brad Faulkner (saddlemaking), Byrd Moss (silversmithing), and Jeff Eppley (vintage engines). Nine authors and 17 vendors reported brisk sales, and 18 nonprofit organizations provided wonderful exhibits and educational opportunities.

The Cowboy Conversations were led off by author Nancy E. Turner & musician Janice Deardorff. Their presentation, *These is my Words & Music*, featured Nancy's stories of her great grandmother, Arizona pioneer Sarah Agnes Prine, and Janice's songs inspired by Sarah. Bunker DeFrance, Marty Freese, and Gene Freese spoke about Western movie making and the movies filmed in Empire Ranch territory. Authors and podcasters H. Alan Day and Russell True entertained all with their Cowboy Up stories. Faith Boice and Ian and Addie Tomlinson provided personal perspectives on Empire Ranch history. Local history stories were shared by Charles Hancock (Buffalo soldiers) Doug Hocking (train robberies), and JJ Lamb (the story of Vail, AZ).

### Cash Sponsors

**Gold Level (\$1,000):** Croppers Nogales Auto Center • Deus Church • ERF Board of Directors • Schouten & Sullivan • Vera Earl Ranch, Inc. **Silver Level (\$500):** Barker Steel Construction • Copper Brothel Brewery • Gebben Miles Sporting Clays Academy • Hamstra Heating & Cooling • Mega Trend, Inc. • Rachel B, Tierra Antiqua Realty • Robert Alexonis Group • Smith Ranch & Steel LLC • Peggy Theibert **Copper Level (\$250):** Andy's American Glass • Animal Health Express • Bernd & Erika Brand • Susan Vail Hoffman • Long Realty Sonoita/Patagonia • Pinnacle Peak Steakhouse • **Friends of the Empire Ranch (\$100):** Elizabeth Layton • Rosetta Ranch • The Maverick

### In Kind Sponsors

All Around Trail Horses • Steve Boice • Chris Durnan, Visual Design Services • Horse'n Around Rescue • Intents Structures • Jem's Feed and Farm Co. • Old Pueblo Theatrical Solutions • Santa Cruz County Fair & Rodeo Association • Southwest Solutions

### Silent Auction/Raffle Donors

Linda Anderson • Anonymous • Arizona Cabinet & Countertops • Babaco-mari Ranch Co. • Faith Boice • Briar Patch Market Place • Broken Chair Band • Rita Bryant • Alison Bunting • Tammy & Dave Carter • Susan Fry • Gray Barn Bou-tique • Christine Haaksma • Heart of a Cowgirl • Susan & Ronald Hoffman • Horsecamp Design Studio • La Fiesta de los Vaqueros • Lone Saguaro Ranch • Lucky Horse Cinches • Kathie Maynard • Byrd Moss • Nature Healthier Alterna-tive • Nick Olmsted • Carol Patrone • Peace in Pine Quilt Works • Doug & Sally Pyne • Elyane Rocheford • True Ranch Hospitality • Tumacacori Mesquite Sawmill • University Pet Clinic • Anna Welch



Memories from two days of action and learning at the ERF 2021 Cowboy Festival (photos: N. Damian, K. Deardorff, A. Hooper, C. Leon)

Rex Dalton's EZ Cattle Company Cow Camp Café & Chuckwagon demonstrated chuckwagon cooking during the day and served up a wonderful steak dinner on Saturday evening to 150 guests. Joel Eliot serenaded the dinner guests with his guitar and Western songs. On Sunday morning Pastor Larry Whitney of the Mustang Mountain Cowboy Church led the Cowboy Church service. Music for the service was provided by the Broken Chair Band.

Livestock exhibitors included Horse'n Around Rescue Ranch (Steve Boice & Theresa Warrell), Susan Shea's mini horses, Dinky Donkeys, Forever Home Donkey Rescue & Sanctuary, and the Sahuarita 4-H Club. And 119 riders enjoyed the 45 minute trail rides of Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. Throughout both days visitors toured the historic ranch house and participated in the silent auction and raffle.

Over 200 presenters, demonstrators, authors, and volunteers participated in the 2021 Cowboy Festival. We are always thankful for the assistance of the Sierra Vista Girl Scout Troops 104, 419, 1224.

Please join us in thanking the sponsors and silent auction donors (listed to the left) for their generous support.

## Dedicated Gifts

The Empire Ranch Foundation gratefully acknowledges gifts recently received *In Memory of:*

Bob & Miriam Boice,  
Mary Vail Boland, Steve Culler,  
John Ford, Dusty Vail Ingram,  
Gerald Korte, David Allen Ladd,  
Doug Pyne, Edward Newhall Vail,  
Mary Brownie Vail

*In Honor of:* Faith Boice



# Empire Ranch Corporate Era

## Part 2—Anamax Mining Corporation

In January 1975 the sale of the former Empire Ranch holdings owned by Gulf American Corporation since 1969 to Anamax Mining Corporation was announced.

“The purchase price of the Empire Ranch, sold nearly three weeks ago to the Anamax Mining Corp., was \$12,808,000, according to a deed filed this week with the County Recorder's Office. GAC Properties of Arizona, Inc., the seller, bought 27,000 acres in 1969 from the Frank Boice family for \$5 million and bought four other contiguous parcels since then. Anamax officials have no immediate plans for developing the ranch, they say, and will continue to operate it as a cattle ranch. Anamax officials said the property may be used as a source of water for an intended copper mine in the Helvetia area, about three miles from the ranch boundary. Boice and Co. holds a grazing permit on the property for 1,500 cows. The permit must be renewed annually under terms of an agreement between Anamax and Boice.” [Arizona Daily Star, 1/1/1975]

Anamax was a partnership of Anaconda and Amax mining companies. Their primary interest in the Empire Ranch property was its water supply. Anamax contracted with Dr. John Harshbarger to evaluate the water resources. An Anamax spokesman noted:

“Our testing so far has indicated that we've got enough water on the ranch so extraction of water for our mining activity won't take most or all of it. It made everybody (Sonoita-Elgin area) happy to know it was going to be retained as a ranch.” [Arizona Republic, 3/16/1975]

In 1975 Anamax discontinued the Boice grazing lease and entered into a lease agreement with rancher John Donaldson to manage ranching operations. John's son Mac and Mac's wife Billie moved to the Empire Ranch to partner with John in 1978.

In 1985 Anamax discontinued its copper mining operations on its Twin Buttes property “when the company decided it could not make a profit.” Anamax also listed for sale:

“its extensive land holdings in the area, including Bull Farm, 2,500

acres north of Green Valley; the Helvetia copper deposit in the Santa Rita Mountains; and the Empire and Cienega ranches, totaling 70,000 acres in the Sonoita area. [Arizona Daily Star, 8/13/1986]

Throughout 1987 the Pima County Board of Supervisors explored various options to acquire the Empire and Cienega property to create a park. At year's end a new deal was announced:

“The Empire and Cienega ranches, coveted by Pima County for more than six months, will become federal property, officials said yesterday. The Bureau of Land Management will acquire the properties in exchange for federal land in Maricopa County. Under the BLM deal, the Empire and Cienega ranches would be left to what the county had long sought public open space.” [Arizona Daily Star, 12/4/1987]

In March 1988 the land exchange was finalized:

“The Empire-Cienega ranch trade has been signed,” said Rep. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz. “I believe it is one of the most important, if not the most important, land acquisitions in recent years for Southern Arizona,” said Kolbe, who was instrumental in arranging the land swap between a private investment firm and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.” [Arizona Daily Star, 3/25/1988]

In 2000 the Empire Cienega Resource Conservation Area was redesignated Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.”



Empire Ranch windmill being serviced by the pump department of Ronstad Hardware, 1970s (photo: P. J. Halloran)

## Departed Friend: Gerald Korte



Gerald Korte accepting special recognition from ERF President Faith Boice for his outstanding volunteer contributions to ERF, March 3, 2018 (photo: J. Lowery)

With great sadness we share the news of the death of Gerald Korte, age 92, on September 9, 2021.

Gerald's initial involvement with the Empire Ranch began in 1946 when at age 17 he was hired by the Boice family. Gerald worked as an Empire Ranch cowboy until 1949 after which he worked on a ranch in the Oracle area. In the 1950s he returned to the Sonoita area to work at the Cienega Ranch, formerly part of the Empire Ranch, and owned at the time by Jack Greenway. He worked at the Cienega Ranch until 1969 when he moved to Tucson to pursue a successful career as an accountant.

After BLM acquisition of Empire Ranch in 1988, Gerald was instrumental in the establishment of the Empire Ranch Foundation (ERF), serving as its first President (1997-1998) and financing the writing of the ERF Bylaws. He served on the ERF Board of Directors (2000-2005), played a key role on the Preservation Committee, and served on the Advisory Committee until his death.

Gerald was probably best known to ERF members and supporters for his willingness to share Empire Ranch history and stories during tours, educational sessions, and the Cowboy Conversations at the Cowboy Festival. A celebration of Gerald's life will be held at Empire Ranch Headquarters on March 12, 2022.



## Working Calendar

*Note: Please check our website to confirm event details ([empireranchfoundation.org](http://empireranchfoundation.org)).*

*Location: Meet at Visitor Contact Station, Empire Ranch Headquarters, unless otherwise noted. To volunteer, or for more information, call (888) 364-2829. or email [admin@empireranchfoundation.org](mailto:admin@empireranchfoundation.org)*

### December 2021

- 4** *Volunteer Work Day*, 8am-12pm. To volunteer call 888-364-2829 or email [admin@empireranchfoundation.org](mailto:admin@empireranchfoundation.org)
- 11** *Christmas at the Empire Ranch*, Empire Ranch House, 10am-2pm. Free, open to all.
- 11** *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am-12pm. Free, open to all, no reservations req.
- 17** *ERF Board Meeting, 9am-11am.* All welcome! Call 888-364-2829 for location.

### January 2022

- 8** *Volunteer Work Day*, 8am-12pm. To volunteer call 888-364-2829 or email [admin@empireranchfoundation.org](mailto:admin@empireranchfoundation.org)

**8&22** *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am-12pm. Free, open to all, no reservations req.

### February 2022

**5** *Volunteer Work Day*, 8am-12pm. To volunteer call 888-364-2829 or email [admin@empireranchfoundation.org](mailto:admin@empireranchfoundation.org)

**12&26** *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am-12pm. Free, open to all, no reservations req.

**18** *ERF Board Meeting*, 9am-11am. All welcome! Call 888-364-2829 for location.

### March 2022

**5** *Volunteer Work Day*, 8am-12pm. To volunteer call 888-364-2829 or email [admin@empireranchfoundation.org](mailto:admin@empireranchfoundation.org)

**12&26** *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House*, 11am-12pm. Free, open to all, no reservations req.

**12** *Celebration of Gerald Korte's Life*, 10am, Empire Ranch Headquarters, all welcome.

*Save the Date!*

**Spring Trail Ride  
April 2, 2022**

## Christmas at the Empire Ranch

Join us for our 2021 Christmas at the Empire Ranch event on

**Saturday, December 11th,  
from 10am to 2pm.**

The Empire Ranch House will be decorated for Christmas, and we have lots of fun activities planned for the day.



Plan to do some Christmas shopping at the Foundation gift shop and local vendors. Enjoy a chuckwagon lunch. And be sure to bring your Christmas wish list to share with Santa. See the enclosed flyer for more detailed information.

