

MARIN AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST NEWS

Preserving Marin County Farmlands

A WOMAN OF VISION & COURAGE: A TRIBUTE TO ELLEN STRAUS

ELLEN STRAUS, A CO-FOUNDER of MALT, passed away at her home in Marshall, California, on November 30, 2002, after a brief battle with cancer. Few have done more to preserve the land and culture of western Marin County, where Ellen settled in 1950 to start a family with her beloved husband Bill. She will be particularly remembered by fellow farmers and environmentalists as a determined optimist who brought opposing parties together to protect and revitalize Marin's agricultural greenbelt.

Ellen's tireless efforts won widespread recognition, which she used as opportunities to gently encourage others to find their own ways to get involved. "Her excitement for new ideas was contagious, giving her children and neighbors confidence to live out their own dreams," remembers her son Michael. "Whether it was organic farming, community gardens, cheesemaking, or fighting every massive development scheme that appeared before the planning commission, she led by example."

MALT Executive Director Bob Berner worked closely with Ellen for 17 years. "She brought a level of experience, judgment, and diplomacy to her work with MALT that helped forge an unprecedented alliance among agricultural landowners, environmental activists, and political leaders. Thanks in large part to Ellen, MALT has permanently protected 32,000 acres on 47 family farms and ranches. It's a permanent legacy for Marin and a model for farmland preservation throughout the nation."

Ellen understood the intricacies of land conservation and was able to serve as an ombudsman between MALT and ranching families interested in selling an easement on their land, but it was the warmth of her personality that first drew people to her. Those of you who met her or visited with her during a MALT tour of the Straus Ranch will remember her welcoming smile, her generous spirit, and perhaps, a slice of her special cake which she so often shared with visitors.

You may also know that Ellen was a person who wanted nothing to do with being in the lime-light unless, of course, doing so could help preserve farmland. In that spirit, we have decided to honor her vision not with the public event we first imagined, but by continuing her work to the very best of our abilities and with your help. That, we think, is what Ellen would have wanted.



Suzanne Parker

We have collected in this issue the memories of some of those who had the privilege of knowing and working with Ellen Straus, MALT's co-founder

REMEMBERING ELLEN

BY JORDAN FISHER-SMITH

IN THE SPRING of the year I turned eighteen my own mother died and Ellen Straus and her husband Bill sent for me, and for some weeks I was a ranch hand at their dairy on the great sweep of prairie hills along the eastern shore of Tomales Bay north of San Francisco. There was work and a soft bed, and at the big meals Ellen put out at the kitchen table, the talk

was of the condition of the herd and fences, and the struggle to keep farming in West Marin.

Dairy farmers were faced on the one hand with the skyrocketing value of their land; on the other with marginal profitability between costs and long hours and the price of milk. One by one, farms went under. Ellen worried. She loved her way of life, those



Elisabeth Ptak

A VISIONARY FARMLAND PRESERVATIONIST

BY ELISABETH PTAK
MALT'S ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

I think I would like to write the story of this whole valley, of all the little towns and all the farms and ranches in the wilder hills.

— JOHN STEINBECK

IF JOHN STEINBECK HAD CHOSEN to write about West Marin instead of the Salinas Valley, his stories surely would have included the town of Marshall, the Straus organic dairy farm located there, and the matriarch of that family, Ellen Straus.

Ellen died at the age of 75 in the two-story frame house in which she had lived for 50 years and where she and her husband Bill raised their four children. The 1864 white wooden home nestles in a grove of trees at the foot of some of the wilder hills she worked so hard to protect. But it is her life, rather than her death, that would have inspired the writer whose subject was so often the struggles of farmworkers against great odds.

Ellen Prins was born in Amsterdam in 1927. She emigrated to New York with her parents to escape the Nazi campaign and the Holocaust that would destroy 90 percent of the Dutch Jews. Her future husband Bill Straus, who was born in Germany, left his homeland, too. As a Jew, he has said, he would never have been allowed to own land. The story of a family inheritance, a small piece of California property, brought him to Berkeley to study agriculture and animal husbandry. The land turned out to be worthless, so Bill purchased a dairy on Tomales Bay, and there began to shepherd his first small herd of milk cows, each named for a friend or a family member.

By then a Bard College graduate, Ellen had to think hard before agreeing to marry the handsome dairyman with the winning smile who briefly left his farm and travelled east to court her in 1950. Ellen always said it wasn't until he showed her pictures of his Marshall dairy that she agreed to follow him to the tiny coastal community where she would live for the rest of her life.

Here is where the story takes a course very different from that of Steinbeck's Dust Bowl immigrants. Most of them never achieved farm owner-

ship. Rather than finding salvation in their dreams of fertile land, their eventual economic security came from the shipyards, arms plants, and airplane factories built to aid the war effort. In a trend that continues today, small farms were paved over or gave way to corporate farms that eventually made California our most important agricultural state.

There were few exceptions to the rule that bigger is better, but West Marin and its tradition of family farming was one of them. If neither Bill nor Ellen were ranchers by heritage, they both took quickly to the rural life, difficult as it was, and came to love it. The landscape of western Marin County became such a touchstone for Ellen that when she and Bill heard of plans to build a city of 150,000 people along Tomales Bay, they were some of the first people to oppose the development.

They also stood up for the continuation of agriculture and the farming tradition to which, admittedly, they were newcomers. They advocated for establishment of Point Reyes National Seashore, when many other ranchers didn't. They supported restrictive zoning which designated the entire central portion of the county for agriculture, an unpopular stand at the time.

When Ellen realized zoning laws could change, she and her friend biologist Phyllis Faber created MALT, the first organization of its kind to give permanent protection to the working landscape through the purchase of development rights from willing ranchers. The legacy of these efforts is what we who now live here have the privilege to call home. For those who simply visit the area, it is a marvel of beauty that offers a respite from more crowded places. Elsewhere, others have seen the achievements as models for their own conservation work.

Certainly, Ellen was the kind of person books will be written about, but she was more than that. A devoted wife, a proud mother, a doting grandmother, an innovative dairy rancher, a visionary environmentalist, she was, finally, an instant friend to everyone she ever met, even those who didn't agree with her. And she will be missed.

“Ellen’s optimism and indefatigable commitment to preserving agriculture in Marin County are the lights that have led us since she helped create MALT 22 years ago. We will continue to be inspired by her vision for many years to come.”

— BOB BERNER

A GOOD FRIEND AND A PERSONAL HERO

BY RALPH GROSSI

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES DESCRIBED HER as a Jewish girl from the Netherlands without a farming background who went on to save Marin's dairy industry from property developers. *The New York Times* called her "a passionate environmentalist and co-owner of the first organic dairy farm west of the Mississippi River. . . and a pioneer in the purchase of development rights from farmers to save the land from being turned into tract housing and shopping malls." Quite a legacy for a woman whose life began under the threat of Nazi terrorism.

I remember Ellen not only as an extraordinary leader in the farmland protection movement, but as the woman who had the courage to take on the status quo in our community in the early '70s. Ellen, more than anyone, helped convince both ranchers and environmentalists that there was a future for agriculture in Marin County—a crucial turning point in the early fight to protect the working landscape. And she also took this young dairy farmer under her wing, a move that permanently shifted my life from production agriculture to a career in farmland protection.

I cannot thank her enough.

When Ellen and Bill came to Marin County over 50 years ago, they weren't quickly accepted into the predominantly Italian-Swiss and Portuguese farming community. So they turned to the Democratic Party and the Marin Conservation League.

In the early '70s, during the very contentious debate over the proposed new Countywide Plan, Bill

and Ellen courageously stood before the Board of Supervisors to urge stronger agricultural zoning.

That successful effort led to the now famous and unprecedented partnership between Marin's ranchers and environmentalists. Eventually, it led to the creation of MALT. Ellen used her considerable personal skills in helping create the land trust, served on its board until 1990, and was its chairwoman from 1999–2001.

In 1998, American Farmland Trust honored Ellen as that year's Steward of the Land, a national award given to one individual or family each year for both the stewardship they demonstrate on their own farm and for their leadership role in their community.

I have lost a good friend and a personal hero in Ellen Straus, and the farmland protection community has lost a champion. But her legacy lives on through thousands of acres saved from the developer's bulldozer, through the innovations in value-added farming that she fostered, through many conservationist farmers whose lives she touched and, most of all, through the four children that she and husband Bill have instilled with the same values that made her the wonderful, courageous, heroic woman she was.



Elisabeth Prak

Ralph Grossi, a former Marin dairyman, was one of MALT's founding directors. He now serves as President of American Farmland Trust, a national farmland conservation organization.

REMEMBERING ELLEN CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

hills, and the little fingers of laurel woods following the creeks down to the bay, where the wind sculpted the trees into sinuous curves.

By the 1960s and '70s, Ellen and Bill had come out in support of the National Parks' acquisition of Point Reyes and worked for 60-acre minimum county zoning, to discourage subdivision of the farms. Ellen understood that at certain points farmers had to see their land as a financial asset—when farms passed from one generation to the next incurring inheritance taxes; when partners needed to buy each other out; when new barns or machinery were required to stay in business. She just wasn't sure yet what to do about it.

In 1980, Ellen and her friend

Phyllis Faber started what is believed to be the first land trust in the nation specifically designed to keep farms in business, using money from private donors to buy development rights in exchange for an infusion of cash to farmers.

Ellen knew the difference between things that last and temporary things. Acrimony with neighbors from the brave positions she took mellowed with time. The red carpet in her 1864 farmhouse is the same as when I stayed there, clean but worn. On it she raised four exemplary sons and daughters who carry on her work. Today the Straus Creamery produces organic dairy products out of a sparkling new plant, and the landscape around it looks as it did

when I was a boy.

We have measured civilization in construction — from the Ziggurat of Ur and the great pyramids to the World Trade Center. But these things don't last forever, and now the measure of our wisdom will be in the things we don't build, the spaces between, the things we allow to survive. In a recent five-year period, 82,000 acres of California farms went under concrete.

Ellen is absent from the kitchen table, as if, as so often happened, she has been called to testify at some meeting. At such times she would say, hurrying out the door, "The environment calls. . ." Now the call is to us — to preserve rural landscapes and support human life-ways that allow other lives.

Jordan Fisher-Smith grew up to be a park ranger. His book on the American River will be published by Houghton Mifflin in the spring of 2004.

STEWARDSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAM Helps Improve Water Quality

BY TONY NELSON
MALT'S STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR

"WE ARE VERY THANKFUL TO MALT for all the support we are receiving to improve this beautiful land." These words from Jorge Presser, owner of a ranch near Tomales that has been subject to an easement since 1989, remind us that MALT continues to play an important and rewarding role in protecting agriculture and the environment long after an easement is acquired.

The Presser ranch has historically relied on access to a spring and a portion of Walker Creek as important sources of water for livestock. Over time, the resulting impact to these sensitive areas included loss of soil through erosion and close contact of animal waste with waters that flow into Tomales Bay.

Concern over the condition of our waters has increased dramatically in recent years. While water quality in West Marin is very good relative to many areas in California, fish populations are a fraction of what they once were; Tomales Bay is now listed as an impaired body by both federal and state regulators. Recreational, residential, and agricultural uses are commonly implicated sources of degradation.

In many cases, problems arise from methodologies that are outdated or from facilities that have outlived their usefulness. Devising solutions to these problems is sometimes difficult, and nearly always expensive. The Marin agricultural community has risen to the challenge of "cleaning up" operations by cooperating closely with University of California researchers to develop and analyze better livestock management options and by undertaking water conservation projects.

Recognizing the economic burden this challenge places on our landowners, MALT's Board of Directors committed up to five percent of the funds raised in our recent *Campaign to Save Marin's Farmland* to help reduce water pollution and enhance riparian corridors on agricultural lands subject to conservation easements. Last fall, the Presser ranch received one of the inaugural grants from our new Stewardship Assistance Program (yes, that's SAP!) through which the funds are administered. With this grant, the owners are developing alternative water sources so that they can exclude livestock from the spring and creek. When the work is completed, sediment and animal waste pollution to Walker Creek and Tomales Bay will be minimized, and livestock and forage management will be more efficient.

Under the program, each property subject to a MALT easement is eligible for up to \$25,000 for projects that will primarily benefit water quality. The range of eligible projects includes fencing and re-vegetation of riparian areas, building new barns to house animals during winter, and stabilizing eroding gullies. Our second annual call for applications will be mailed to easement landowners soon. We hope to continue collaborating on such vital projects as long as there is a need. This modest investment by MALT can have significant impacts for the landowner, for public health, and for the future of agriculture. Contact tnelson@malt.org or 415-663-158, ext. 4 to learn more about the program.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board in December recognized fourteen Marin and Sonoma dairies for their efforts at livestock waste management and improvement of water quality on their ranches. Among them were (left to right): Robert Giacomini, founding MALT board member; Albert Straus, MALT easement landowner; and Sharon Doughty, former MALT board member.



Tony Nelson



J. Thomas Spliesz

RANCHES & ROLLING HILLS Landscape Art Show

Want to take home a bit of the beauty of West Marin's stunning open spaces? Attend the 6th Annual *Ranches & Rolling Hills* landscape art show and sale on Saturday, May 17, and Sunday, May 18, at the Druid's Hall in Nicasio. Some of the Bay Area's and California's most prominent plein air artists participate in the show to support MALT and the preservation of Marin County farmlands.

The special Saturday preview sale and luncheon that kicks off the weekend is always a sell-out, so be sure to watch your mailboxes in late March for the announcement that tickets are on sale. Following the preview, the show is open to everyone at no charge from 1-5 PM on Saturday and 10 AM-4 PM on Sunday. For information, call 415-663-1158 or visit malt.org/hp/events.

spring 2003
Hikes & Tours

MARIN AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST HIKES & TOURS

Marin Agricultural Land Trust invites you to join us this spring in a series of hikes, tours, and special events. From fresh milk to grass-fed beef, from wine grapes to organic fruits and vegetables, Marin agriculturalists produce high quality, fresh food in many forms. The spring season offers many opportunities to sample Marin farm products and to get to know the people who produce them.

Farmers and ranchers open their land and give their time and experience in support of this popular program. One of the most vigorous participants was MALT co-founder Ellen Straus. She personally welcomed our tours to her home and ranch until just a few months before her death. She believed that "... We, as individuals, are responsible for what is happening in our communities and ... we must become activists."

How can we walk in Ellen's footsteps and continue her work to save Marin agriculture? This spring we introduce the first in an ongoing series of educational programs designed to help you become more involved in the movement to preserve family farms.



WHY BUY LOCAL? A LOOK AT OUR GLOBALIZED FOOD SYSTEM

Thursday, March 27

Knowing where your food comes from is fundamental to the preservation of family farms. The food on our crowded grocery store shelves may be low-priced, but it can be very expensive in terms of our health, the environment, and the hardships it brings to family farms and rural communities. Join Debi Barker, Executive Director of the International Forum on Globalization and a sustainable farming advocate, as she reveals some hard truths about our food system. Debi was a contributor to *Fatal Harvest, the Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*. She currently serves on the boards of the Center for

Technology Assessment and the Sustainable Cotton Project. She will be joined by fourth-generation West Marin rancher, Dave Evans, who raises grass-fed beef and by Bolinas organic grower Peter Martinelli. Includes a reception featuring local food. Co-sponsored by the College of Marin Biology Department and Marin Organic.

TIME: 7 P.M. reception; 7:30 P.M. talk

WHERE TO MEET: College of Marin's Olney Hall, near the corner of Magnolia & Sir Francis Drake

COST: Free

NUNES DAIRY TOUR & WILDFLOWER WALK

Saturday, April 12

Join the Nunes Family for a tour of its historic dairy near the tip of the Point Reyes

Peninsula. For five generations, the family has worked on this spectacular property which overlooks the Pacific Ocean on one side and Drakes Bay on the other. Wildflowers grow in profusion on the ranch. We'll identify them with the help of Lisa Bush, former MALT land steward. Then we'll get a hands-on demonstration of the care and feeding of a cow as we tour the dairy and watch milking in progress. A great tour for the whole family! **Pre-registration required.**

TIME: 10:30 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.

WHERE TO MEET: Historic A Ranch, the last dairy on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. before the Point Reyes Lighthouse.

WHAT TO BRING: Water, picnic, walking shoes, warm clothes

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

COST: \$20/\$25 non-members (\$10 for children)

Due to ongoing concerns about Foot-and-Mouth Disease, we ask that individuals who have visited farms outside the U.S.A. up to 10 days prior to events not participate in farm tours. Weather can change quickly in West Marin. Bring a jacket for warmth, a hat for protection from the sun, and a day-pack for food & drinks. Most tours are not appropriate for young children. Please check with MALT. For more detailed directions to a Hikes & Tours meeting place, phone 415-663-1158, Monday-Friday.

Easy: Flat or very little slope in a distance of less than one mile

Moderate: Varied, mild terrain for one-five miles

Difficult: Steep terrain and/or over five miles

Family Tour: Activities appropriate for a family

MARIN AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST HIKES & TOURS Registration Form

I would like to sign up for the following MALT Hikes & Tours:

tour name	# people	date	
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____

Absolutely no pets allowed.

I'd like to become a MALT member.

\$30 Individual \$50 Supporter \$100 Associate
 \$250 Sponsor Other \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Separate checks for each tour are enclosed. Charge my VISA or Mastercard

Name _____ Card # _____

Signature _____ Expiration date _____

Please complete other side of form.



As tours fill up at different rates, please enclose a separate check for each tour, or charge tours & memberships to your VISA or Mastercard.

Registration by mail only.

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**BEFORE THE FREEWAY, BEFORE THE MALL:
RANCHING & FARMING IN EAST MARIN**

Saturday, April 26

Corte Madera's Meadowsweet Dairy was built in 1926. Farmers grazed their animals there and into the saddle now cut by Highway 101 until 1942. Today the cow shed serves as studio and exhibition space for an art collaborative. Join us for a viewing of slides of Meadowsweet and other former east Marin ranches. Historian Dewey Livingston will describe the rise and fall of agriculture in the area, joined by old-timers who remember it when. Dewey has authored several books on West Marin ranching, and is chronicling ranching history in the



Mojave Desert. A reception featuring local foods follows. **Pre-registration required.**

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

WHERE TO MEET: Meadowsweet Dairy, 811 Meadowsweet Drive, Corte Madera

COST: \$12 / \$15 non-members

**GALE RANCH
BURGERS & SONGBIRDS**

Sunday, April 27

Sally Gale, a fifth-generation West Marin rancher, will show restoration projects she has completed along Chleno Creek where it runs through her property. A Point Reyes Bird Observatory naturalist will lead a bird walk along the creek where we hope to observe a variety of neo-tropical song birds. Hutton's Vireos, Lazuli Buntings, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets visit the ranch at this time of year. Then Mike Gale will introduce his cows and explain his natural beef operation. For lunch we will taste some mouth-watering grass-fed beef burgers. This is truly about

learning where your food comes from!

Pre-registration required.

TIME: 9:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.

WHERE TO MEET: Gale Ranch, 5105 Chileno Valley Rd.

WHAT TO BRING: Water, snacks to go with your burger, walking shoes

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

COST: \$25 / \$30 non-members

WINDRUSH FARM

Saturday, May 3

Mimi Luebermann breeds and raises historic Lincoln sheep, prized for their long-haired fleeces. It's spring, so young Lincoln lambs will be frolicking in the fields while Mimi shows us various fleeces and wool products and demonstrates how to card, spin, and dye wool for use in garments. On a walk around the farm with Mimi, we'll meet rabbits, chickens, Jersey cows, and guide dogs and visit her small creek restoration project. Being a picnic and enjoy lunch in the garden or out in the fields. A great tour for the whole family! **Pre-registration required.**

TIME: 10:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.

WHERE TO MEET: 2263 Chileno Valley Rd. (just north of the junction with the Marshall-Petaluma Rd.)

WHAT TO BRING: Water, picnic, hiking shoes

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

COST: \$20/\$25 non-members (\$10 for children)

**HOG ISLAND OYSTER CO. &
STRAUS FAMILY DAIRY**

Thursday, May 8

Learn all about oyster farming as you tour Hog Island Oyster Company with owner Michael Watchorn. Sample oysters and Straus Family Creamery cheeses while enjoying your picnic lunch. Then tour the Straus family's organic dairy at milking time. The dairy will have bio-security protocols in place to protect the animals. **Pre-registration required.**

TIME: 11 A.M. – 3 P.M.

WHERE TO MEET: Hog Island Oysters, Hwy One, Marshall (10 miles north of Point Reyes Station)

WHAT TO BRING: Water, picnic, shoes that can get dirty

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

COST: \$20 / \$25 non-members

MARIN SUN FARMS GRASS-FED BEEF

Saturday, May 10

Hike over green pastures with fourth-generation rancher Dave Evans as he updates us on his year-old business, Marin Sun Farms Grass-Finished Beef. He leases land in Nicasio on the side of Black Mountain with spectacular views of Nicasio Reservoir. The cattle eat only the fresh grass, a technique that leaves the meat hormone-free and very tasty. Dave will give us a talk on cattle grazing and pasture management, then he and friends will prepare burgers from the pasture-fed beef for us to taste as we picnic on the mountainside. **Pre-registration required.**

TIME: 10 A.M. – 2 P.M.

WHERE TO MEET: Nicasio Reservoir turnout across from Willow Rd. on the Point Reyes- Petaluma Rd. (1.5 miles south of Nicasio Valley Rd.)

WHAT TO BRING: Water, snacks to go with your burger, hiking shoes

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

COST: \$25 / \$ 30 non-members

STRAUS DAIRY & CREAMERY

Thursday, May 29

The Straus Family Creamery was the first certified organic dairy west of the Mississippi. This tour will guide you through the unique dairy to the farm on Tomales Bay and through the bottling plant on the nearby S/2 Ranch. You'll sample Straus milk products as you picnic at the dairy. The dairy will have bio-security protocols in place to protect the animals. **Pre-registration required.**

TIME: 10 A.M. – 2 P.M.

WHERE TO MEET: Millerton Point Parking Lot, 5 miles north of Point Reyes Station. Carpool to farm and creamery

WHAT TO BRING: Water, picnic, shoes that can get dirty

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

COST: \$20 / \$ 25 non-members

MARIN AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST HIKES & TOURS Registration Form

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name(s) _____
 street _____
 city _____ state _____ zip _____
 telephone _____ email _____

RELEASE OF LIABILITY: Each participant must sign.
 I am aware that accidents or injuries may occur during hiking and walking activities sponsored by Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT). I am voluntarily participating in these activities. I hereby agree to accept any and all risks of injury on behalf of myself and any of my minor children who may also participate in the activity. As consideration for being permitted to participate in this activity, I hereby release, discharge, waive, and relinquish any and all actions, causes of action, or claims for personal injury or damages that I, my assignees, heirs, and legal representatives may have now or hereafter against MALT or the property owner resulting from negligence or other acts, howsoever caused, by any employee, officer, agent, or contractor of MALT or the property owner arising from my participation or my child(ren)'s participation in the activity.

signature _____ date _____
 signature _____ date _____

Space is limited, and tours fill up quickly. Registration is by mail only. Full payment is required, and all participants must pre-register by five days prior to event. Confirmations will be sent. Refunds are given only if MALT cancels a tour or if tour is already full. Please be prompt. Events are timed around the farm's or dairy's work schedules. We will be hiking and touring on private property. You have permission to enter for the hike or tour only. You may not reenter at another time.

Mail completed registration forms and signed release for each participant with checks made payable to MALT. Marin Agricultural Land Trust, Post Office Box 809, Point Reyes Station, California 94956 · 415-663-1158

AN ELOQUENCE OF ACTION

BY MICHAEL HAYES
MALT'S CAPITAL FUNDING DIRECTOR

AS YOU WOULD HAVE EXPECTED, there was an outpouring of tributes from everywhere following Ellen Straus' passing on November 30. One person said Ellen had an "unconventional charisma." So true. But Ellen also had an unconventional eloquence—an eloquence of action. Ellen moved so many people to invest their time and resources in preserving farmland because of her example, her positive attitude and her actions. How could you not go along with her?

When I arrived at MALT in mid 1998 to staff the *Campaign to Save Marin's Farmland*, Ellen was one of the first board members I met. It was clear she had been a major influence in MALT's decision to conduct a capital campaign to raise money for easement purchases. In our first encounter, Ellen rubbed her hands together and smiled from ear to ear. "When can we start?" she asked. "What do you want me to do? Who can we go visit?"

Lucky me to work with such a presence, such enthusiasm, such passion. Ellen participated in every campaign planning session, every event, formal and informal, and she had everything to do with our reaching our \$10 million goal. But even when the campaign was going extremely well, and it was clear we would be successful, Ellen would ask: "Are we going fast enough? Are we thinking big enough?" I can hear her saying this even now.



Sharon Eager,
Director of
Development

One of her many legacies, I'm sure, will be that all of us working to pre-

serve Marin's farmland will continue to ask these questions in the years ahead.

Donor Ginny Davis of Nicasio and San Francisco worked with Ellen on many projects, including the production of *Farming on the Edge*, a book published by the University of California Press. It relates the story of the near-loss of agriculture in West Marin and the creation of MALT. "Not many individuals are so gifted with the larger vision of what could be," Ginny said. "Fewer yet can overcome hostility and win abiding affection plus support for their ideas. Even fewer can make the impossible happen. I don't know any who could raise the amount of money Ellen has raised with donors smiling at the pleasure of being part of something as wonderful as the permanent protection of the working landscape."

Ellen took at least one fundraising workshop so she could contribute effectively as MALT intensified its search for private funds. But she didn't really need the training. She ended up teaching us all something about how to secure large contributions. For example: Don't wait. Be yourself. Tell the truth. Don't pretend to know everything. Use your gifts. Make it personal. Enjoy it. Be there! Whenever there was an opportunity to raise money to preserve farmland in Marin, Ellen was always there. She always will be.

At the request of the Straus family, gifts to Marin Agricultural Land Trust in Ellen's memory may be sent to MALT, Post Office Box 809, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956. As we go to press, over \$100,000 has been contributed to continue her work.

MAKE AN IMPACT

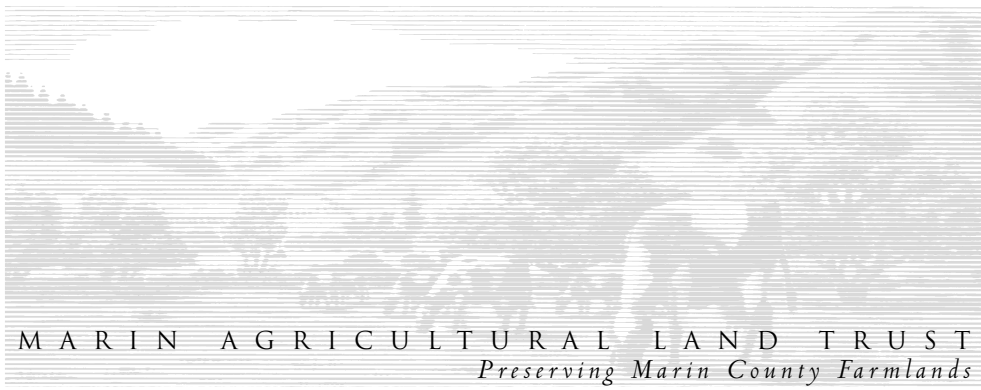
LIKE MANY PEOPLE whose careers include working for a nonprofit agency, Sharon Eager first became involved in one as a volunteer. She began helping in the fundraising department of Big Brothers Big Sisters after acting as a Big Sister mentor for 12 years. That unpaid work evolved into a career in fundraising and development at nonprofits and educational institutions throughout the Bay Area. And last fall it

brought her to MALT where she was hired as our first fulltime Director of Development.

While crediting the work of Bob Berner, MALT's Board of Directors, and her predecessor Sara Pearson for establishing a solid giving program, Sharon envisions further opportunities for helping donors realize what a difference their contributions can make. "My Highway One commute to Point Reyes Station passes through some of the most beauti-

ful farmland I have ever seen. So many of the properties are protected by MALT easements, I can see the mission and meaning of our work on a daily basis," she says.

Sharon learned the meaning of philanthropy at an early age. "I'm the kid who always sold the most Girl Scout cookies," she recalls. "I liked surpassing goals." But her parents let her know the purpose was something more than mere cookie sales. They challenged her to make an impact, and it's the same challenge she plans to make to MALT donors. Sharon can be reached at seager@malt.org or by phoning 415-663-1158, ext. 6.



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Box 809
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California 94956

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

The MALT SHOP

- An Abundant Land: The Story of West Marin Ranching \$ 12.00
(An audio cassette driving tour narrated by Peter Coyote)
- 100% Cotton T-shirt (Adult S, M, L, XL) \$ 18.00
- 100% Cotton T-shirt (Youth S, M, L) \$ 16.00
- 100% Cotton Baseball Cap \$ 16.00
(Spruce green, adjustable strap)

Shipping/Handling: Add \$3.50 per order _____
Total \$ _____

MALT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Robert Berner, *Executive Director*
 Sharon Eager, *Development*
 Julie Evans, *Membership*
 Michael Hayes, *Capital Funding*
 Susan Kester, *Easement*
 Rebecca Lyons, *Membership Associate*
 Tony Nelson, *Stewardship*
 Elisabeth Ptak, *Associate Director*
 Leah Smith, *Volunteer Program*
 Abbie Walther, *Office Manager*
 Constance Washburn, *Education*

I want to help MALT preserve Marin County's beautiful and productive agricultural land. Here's my tax deductible contribution of:

\$30 \$50 \$100 \$250 Other \$ _____

My check payable to MALT is enclosed Charge my VISA Mastercard

name _____ **Marin Agricultural Land Trust**
 street _____ Post Office Box 809
 city _____ state _____ zip _____ Point Reyes Station, California 94956
 telephone: _____ email _____ 415 663 1158
 card # _____ expiration date _____ farmland@malt.org
 signature _____ **www.malt.org**

MARIN AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST is a private, member-supported, nonprofit organization created in 1980 by a coalition of ranchers and environmentalists to permanently preserve Marin County farmlands for agricultural use. MALT eliminates the development potential on farmland through the acquisition of conservation easements in voluntary transactions with landowners. MALT also encourages public policies which support and enhance agriculture.