

STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT ALISAL

We'd like to share some thoughts with our readers from the letters of two high school students who wrote about their Alisal experiences. These stories were sent to us by their families as a way of letting us know just how much their yearly visits have meant to each of them. We were moved by their words and by the lasting influence their Alisal experiences have apparently had in shaping their thoughts while growing up. It honors us that each family was willing to share them with us and with you as well.

One story comes from a young man whose vivid painting of a tale of fishing with his grandpa could be the same experience repeated by many of our guests. His words will put you on the water. Following are some excerpts:

"Wham! All of a sudden the line pulled tight! I thought, "This has to be the largest bass I've ever caught!"...It all happened last summer at a ranch in the hills near Solvang, Ca. My grandparents have generously been taking my sisters and me there since I was seven years old. "The Alisal" is the name of this stunningly beautiful ranch...

My grandpa and I, both avid fishermen, had been waiting for this moment ever since last year and we were thrilled at the thought of going fishing. At the dinner table that evening I could barely think straight, I was so excited. In fact, when my grandpa asked, "What do you want to do after fishing tomorrow?" I responded, "fish some more!"

...Before daylight we were up and dressed. Fishing poles and tackle in hand we strolled past the open pasture where sleeping horses stood. I remember saying, "It sure is pretty out here." Grandpa replied, "It sure is." We both knew "pretty" didn't begin to describe how gorgeous it really was.

...The air was crisp as the whooshing of bald eagles soared overhead. We got into the bass boat and headed out towards a sunken tree. Grandpa knew that bass liked the small insects that collected around the tree. Also, he said, "We're heading here because it's where the bass gather for protection from the eagles."

...We first cast out at about 7:15 in the morning and you could see fish tails breaking the surface of the glistening water. "It's cold out here," Grandpa said. "Yeah, I'm freezing but it's worth it." I replied. At first, the sun looked purplish-red as it rose over the trees then it turned a brilliant fiery orange. It couldn't have been more picturesque on the glassy water, but still no fish. The day grew older and we had only caught two small bass and had a couple of nibbles. I felt a little disappointed. In the past I had caught over fourteen fish in a single day.

...then "kaboom" a colossal fish took my bait, but broke the line! I had all sorts of emotions running through my head; first anger, then sorrow, and finally sheer desperation because Grandpa and I had a bet going on who could catch more fish.

I was just about to give up when I remembered the phrase, "The worst day fishing is better than the best day working." I perked up, retied and cast out again. To my surprise, I could feel a fish nibble my bait and then spit it out. This was frustrating. Then "Wham!" My line pulled tight. I set the hook and the fish started to swim frantically away from the boat. I could feel the bass starting to tire as I was reeling him in but he jumped and thrashed through the air creating large splashes. He was fighting with his last ounce of energy as I grabbed the line and pulled him into the boat...Grandpa remarked, "This has to be at least a five-pounder."

I was so happy all I could do was smile. I held up the bass proudly as my grandpa snapped a picture. Then I gently placed him back in the water and let go. He kicked back to life and swam away as fast as he could. After, I could feel my heart pounding and thought to myself, "I will cherish this day for the rest of my life...and I hope the bass fattens up for next year!" Grandpa, remembering the bet said, "You beat me again, Aaron." I told him, "Well, there's always golf!"

This next writing was accompanied by an introduction from the author's school advisor given before her senior speech which she chose to do on the Alisal Ranch. It lifts us up to read about the effect this place and its people have on others. We know her family is proud of her accomplishments and we are pleased she is one of our longtime guests. Here are her words:

If I reflect on my childhood there is one thing through all the moves and different schools that remains constant. This thing is a wonderful place that sits in the hills of the Santa Ynez Valley. Ever since I can remember, I have traveled to these hills to a place called the Alisal Guest Ranch. Each year I get to go back and take time with family and friends to experience one of the greatest joys in my life. I have made not only lifelong friends at this place, but I have also created some of the most fundamental memories a child could hope for.

Every time I look back, I see the shining lake in the late afternoon sun, or the horses in the morning, sleep still in their eyes. And there sitting on the lake or next to the corral is an eight-year-old version of me. And no matter what year I think of, this version of me never changes. For in my eyes, I always live as an eight-year-old child at the Alisal. Every time I see old faces I haven't seen since the previous year, I feel like a kid again. Time stops, and nothing outside of that secluded place seems to matter. At the Alisal, I get to be a child. I get to experience a childhood's wonderful joys, and in this carefree world, life is simple.

As we grow older, things become more complicated. Life can weave itself a very tangled web, and at times, it is hard to leave this web, take time for yourself, and enjoy what life has to offer. While at the Alisal, I get to do just that. I leave all entanglements behind me, and for four days each year I live in the shoes of my eight-year-old self. The people are still the same, and for the most part, the ranch is still the same. We always stay in the same cabin, number 32, and I remember having pillow fights with the same pillows that still sit there today.

Although time does change some things, to a certain degree I don't believe it can change me at the Alisal...if there's one thing I've learned from the Alisal, it's that everyone needs a childhood place. Everyone needs a frozen time and place where they feel as if the outside world can't touch them. It doesn't matter where it is, it could be the tree house in your backyard, a park near your house, or your grandparents home, but if you can find such a place then it's a wonderful escape to feel like a child again, where the only thing that really matters is the grilled cheese sandwich you're about to eat for lunch.

Emily Davis, 2008

A TOUR OF THE NEW FITNESS CENTER AND SPA

From the welcoming front porch framed by two young Sycamore trees to the relaxing massage rooms named after local flora, our new Fitness Center & Spa is being well received by everyone who walks through its airy front doors. Since it opened in June, the center has become a gathering place for those using its variety of services and enjoying its energetic atmosphere. Most often said about our newest addition to the ranch is that even though the building was constructed from the ground up within the last 18 months, it feels like it has been there a very long time.

Reminiscent of early 1900's barns and local ranch houses, the Fitness Center has blended into its surroundings as envisioned. Marcy Payne, formerly Clevenger, our Activities and Fitness Center & Spa Director wanted guests to experience a welcoming spaciousness when entering the center while at the same time fit a generous number of services and activities on site. She, along with the Alisal's owners and General Manager, and everyone who worked on the project, achieved just that. This was no easy feat given the footprint they had to work within. They were also able to preserve precious parking spaces and add a cushioned surface outdoor basketball court. Let's step inside for a tour of this bright facility brimming with things to do.

From the first step up the stairs onto the wooden sun deck and into the spacious lobby we are bathed with southeast light flooding in through high skylights and abundant front windows. This immediately sets the tone for

an open and airy feeling throughout the Center. The barn loft style of this open-beamed space is enhanced by sunlight reflected off the buckskin toned walls and shiny granite counters, and by the warm, hewn-wood flooring.

First, let's get the lay of the land by pulling out a log chair with hair on hide and seat ourselves at the expansive guest services counter. Here more brightness is reflected in the happy, helpful faces of two familiar guest attendants. Formerly at the front desk in the main office greeting and checking in guests, Joanne Andersen, brings experience and knowledge to her new position as a guest services attendant seeing to a variety of guest needs. When asked what exactly does a guest services attendant do Joanne's enthusiasm for being at the Fitness Center was apparent, "We answer general questions about the whole ranch, not just the Fitness Center and Spa, and we help book most of the activities on the ranch." The service desk's motto is: "If we don't have the answer we will find the answer."

Also greeting visitors with the genuine cheeriness of being thrilled with her new surroundings and duties is Guest Service Coordinator, Judi Turk, whom many of you know from the Reservations Department. "We also schedule the center's classes and massage rooms with one of our top-of-the-line longtime valley instructors, or masseuses, or aestheticians, and we try to help guests in any way we can," Judi adds. "The only activities we don't reserve directly are golf, tennis and horseback riding, but we can call those departments for you. We handle all the lake activities too, including Jason Grupp's guided fishing trips and Dale Combs' archery instruction. We can even book off-ranch wine tours and limos for you."

"During peak times we will have three attendants at the service desk helping guests. This is a high energy place," Judi exclaims, "It just feels good." Looking around at the western appointments and comfortable atmosphere, and sensing that a lot goes on here, we can understand why Judi and Joanne feel this way. This hub of ranch activities is equipped with computerized scheduling charts and printable confirmations for your appointments. Judi and Joanne's familiar faces reassure us that the expertise to facilitate our visit in a friendly and seamless way is right here at the Guest Service Desk, open daily from 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. The Fitness Center Studio and Gym are open for use earlier at 6:00 a.m.

Adjoining the lobby near the front desk is a fully equipped business office available to guests who need a phone for private use or conference calls. There is also a copier, fax, and computer with Internet access as well as a dedicated printer giving users instant results without needing someone's help. If you're vacationing with family yet need to check in on business back home, this homey office offers the privacy to quietly get things done. The office can be reserved exclusively for an hour, or more, depending on usage. We display a 'do not disturb' sign for your complete privacy.

Throughout the lobby are several walls of warm wood shelves displaying tastefully chosen retail items offered for the first time at the ranch. The clothing line includes "Life is Good" shirts, sweatshirts, and caps and a photo of Alisal wranglers t-shirt in many sizes down to the smallest children's. Already popular are Alisal embroidered brushed fleece zip-up hoodies, and plush blankets and spa robes. "At Christmas time we'll have more kids and seasonal things like little kids cowboy hats and vests and gift items," Judi says, "and we'll be adding items as we go." A separate wall is devoted to the skincare products. We decided to carry Pharmacopia from Mill Valley, California, which makes aromatic, invigorating, energizing skin products, along with the New Cell Renewal System of high quality facial products from Ojai, which are 70 percent organic.

Off the back corner of the lobby is our spacious and sunny Fitness Studio lined with a bank of high windows and floor to ceiling mirrors. Exercise balls, steps and mats stored along the walls lend efficiency to this open and pleasant studio for Yoga, Pilates, Step Aerobics and Abs Sculpting classes. According to Pilates instructor Donelle Martin, "You can't find as nice a workout studio anywhere in the Santa Ynez Valley. Classes are great for family and friends to join together who haven't seen each other in awhile. It's a fun way to reconnect." Donelle's passion for her work has made her a natural addition to the Center's team and an example of making your avocation a vocation so you'll never have to work a day in your life. "I really enjoy teaching families and groups and watching them interact," she adds. There are four or five instructors for the variety of classes offered Mondays through Saturdays. Small free weights or bands are available to workout with or guests are welcome to

bring their own weights if they're used to them. You're also welcome to use the studio on your own when no classes are scheduled.

One of the main attractions in any fitness center, the cardio- weight room, or Gym, is located front and center off the lobby. This large room is amply equipped with three flat-screen TV's, three "Matrix" treadmills, two elliptical machines, a recumbent bike, a "spinning" bike and 10 weight-oriented pieces of equipment. With so many to choose from, gym users can work every muscle group and always have something to do without waiting. Of course air conditioning motivates exercisers to come on inside the Fitness Center year round, any time of day and maintain that workout pace. Early risers can get started in the gym before the rest of the family is even up. During the summertime the gym will remain open from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and during the fall, winter and spring until six p.m.

The front corner of the lobby has a warm, welcoming sitting area with plush overstuffed leather couches and chairs layered with Pendleton blankets giving a cozy contrast to the studio's and gym's more utilitarian spaciousness. Central to this seating arrangement is a large river rock fireplace framed by bookshelves which communicate the unspoken but clear invitation to lounge as long as you like. This relaxing living room just inside, and the deeply cushioned rattan furniture under market umbrellas just outside on the front porch, both tempt guests to slow down on their way in or out. They have caused more than one person to remark "I'd go there just to read if nothing else." However, there is a lot more our thoughtfully designed center has to offer. Let's continue our tour.

Past the gym and plush living room, down around the lofty hallway, the spa rooms "Lupine," "Lavender," "Eucalyptus," and "Sage" are outfitted with heated massage tables, the latest in facial steamers, and essential oils blended on the spot into an aloe body cream to individually suit your senses. Mieko, a small company over the mountain in Goleta, handcrafts subtle blends of Lemongrass and Lavender, and Rosemary and Chamomile oils which, according to Judi, "aren't overpowering but are very soothing to inhale when you're getting a massage. They don't jar you awake like some essential oils do. They are just detectable enough to be relaxing and refreshing at the same time." Judi recommends one of our signature treatments such as the 90-minute "Trail Blazer" or the two-hour "Sundowner" which includes a facial.

One of the spa rooms named "Lupine" is more generously sized to accommodate two tables for the ultimate togetherness in relaxation, a couple's spa treatment. The Alisal Hot Stones treatment, included for two in the new Spa Package, is endorsed by everyone who has experienced it as an exotic and effective way to ease tension either as a couple or alone. However, Director Marcy advises, "Don't leave the ranch without trying the Classic Luxury Facial which is really so much more than a facial because it includes massaging the feet, hands, upper back and neck, arms and calf muscles." Whatever your treatment of choice, they all lead to heavenly relaxation.

Before or after a spa treatment guests can indulge in a long steam shower in one of the large marble stalls directly across from the spa rooms. More streaming sunlight in the high ceiling showers and restrooms transforms even these necessities into a therapeutic environment. Lather in the wonderful skincare products provided and roll up in a plush towel or robe to properly finish the spa experience. After being totally relaxed you can quietly slip out the back hallway door and float into your next Alisal adventure.

Toward more earthly needs, if you have some personal clothes washing to do, the door off the corner of the hallway leads to a drink and snack vending room adjacent to a complimentary, fully supplied four washer and dryer laundry room. A separate side porch affords another entrance to both of these service rooms, open around the clock.

After touring this fabulous new facility Marcy's parting thought is, "What thrills me the most after a summer with the Fitness Center & Spa is that it "completes" the Alisal. From the very soothing, relaxing, and rejuvenating to all the varied activities we offer, the Fitness Center and Spa just makes a stay at the Alisal better from start to finish. Coming into the Fitness Center becomes the activity for those times during the rainy season when we don't have

outdoor options.” After seeing the enthusiasm in the staff for all that the Fitness Center & Spa have to offer, this visitor has decided that one visit isn’t enough to satisfy.

‘WRANGLER APPROVED’ SPA PACKAGE... JUST FOR YOU!

Now that we have a beautiful new spa, we must certainly offer a spa package. Of course we do, but first we have to mention, our wranglers here on the ranch almost fell into an identity crisis of herd proportions when they learned we were going to have a spa. Oh no, not that aromatherapy stuff and mud facials here in cow country? But that is what we are happy to offer at last, an Alisal Signature Spa Package with a twist. Now, a few of the wranglers have converted into believing that a massage could be the best way to ease those trail miles out of weary joints and that smelling the wafts of sage drifting around the spa rooms is like riding in the hills, with an added benefit.

The Spa Package has a romantic touch which includes welcoming wine and cheese, a Hot Stone Treatment and full body massage for two which melts stress away from head to toe, a picnic basket with wine to enjoy on one of the ranch’s scenic overlooks, breakfast and dinner daily including wine with dinner, a basket of spa gifts, and of course the activities we are known for including scheduled horseback rides, golf, fishing, boating, and tennis. For two nights and three days, you can relax in one of our lovely accommodations, absorb the soothing natural beauty around you, join any of the activities, or tour the valley. Quite likely you will be able to do many of these things during your stay as well as feel pampered and rejuvenated.

To find out all that this package offers Reservations can be reached at 1(800) 4-Alisal.

ALISAL TRAILBLAZERS

It has been many years since Alisal guests have ridden around the end of a steep, densely vegetated, razor sharp ridge next to the adobe and climbed up into the deep cool canyon under Ronald Reagan’s old ranch. Thanks to the Alisal’s cattle foreman and ranch hand, this brushed-over and washed-out stretch of breathtakingly beautiful wild land firebreak road was recently reopened. Riders wasted no time re-exploring its twists and turns through country frequented only by wildlife. At times pushing through a jungle of branches, swiping them aside, longtime Alisal guests, Carole Campbell, Eden Nesse, Ron and Sue Tatar, and avid riding guests Lynn and Barry Friesen, became adventurers on this first of what we know will be popular longer advanced walking rides into the backcountry, which many of our guests may be interested in.

You loyal riding guests at home can picture this place by conjuring your past panoramic rides along the “Firebreak Trail.” If you were to continue riding east along the firebreak away from the lake and adobe you would find yourself in another world of volcano formed, impenetrably thick and steep habitat, strewn with shale and rock. Under this North Slope we could feel the moisture in the air creating ideal conditions for many water loving trees, shrubs and ferns. The coolness was soothing to both riders and horses on this extraordinarily warm fall day.

Water seeps broke through the surface of the ground making mud spots along the road, and trickling water in the draws belied this driest of dry seasons. Collected in crooks of the land like dust in an elbow, giant exposed boulders lay witness to seasonal torrents of runoff, and thick stands of Laurel, Maple, and the occasional Sycamore spoke to years of life on the water-filled mountain. Fully inhaling the bay scented, ion laden air in the deep canyon folds was pure therapy which hopefully relaxed anyone unnerved by the plentiful bear signs every few yards. When we continued noticing the ample piles of leftover evidence with pits of Hollyleaf Cherries in them which the bears had so obviously been enjoying in their regular diet one creative rider said, “We should call this Bear Scat Trail!” An aptly named trail it would be if this name sticks.

We topped out onto a narrow lookout and stood blowing our horses near a place Jake Copass had pointed out from down below. He used to tell a story about the time he was riding with a few guests gathering some stealthy saddle horses which had been turned out on the mountain for a rest when he said he nearly got killed. Apparently the steepness of this terrain and the speed he rode to head those sneaky horses off from going back into the



canyon nearly sent him and his horse tumbling head over heels. If it hadn't been for the surefootedness of his horse, "White Cloud," he'd said, and the fact that it was so brushy that he had grabbed a tree limb at the point his horse was just getting vertical, it wouldn't have ended so well. Jake said it was one of three times in his life he surely thought he was "gonna die horseback." Providentially, Jake and all the horses made it down off the mountain safely that day. We on the other hand, kept sanely to the cleared road without stepping a single horse's toe over the edge.

As we soaked in giant views of endlessly receding ridgelines into the west, I was thinking Jake could still be running White Cloud down the mountainside and was thankful to finally see the ranch as he had seen it then. The lake shone bright blue against its vast pale surroundings more distant than any of us had experienced before. "We're that far away from the lake? I've never seen it from this angle. Wow!" We all expressed our amazement. The spaciousness of land and sky at this vista was in direct contrast to the dark forested crevices we had come through. Riding completely away from a single piece of civilization save for the dozed road our horses trod on was exactly where we had hoped to go.

After we descended easily on a few switchbacks returning to open grasslands, Eden expressed her pleasure with the ride saying, "I really loved all those beautiful Madrone trees with their smooth red bark. That's something you just don't get to see on the lower lands of the ranch. I can't wait to come back for more." Another guest always game for more riding, Lynn, said, "It was well worth it. You don't get to see places like this everyday and all those berries on the beautiful Toyon and the cherries were impressive, but," she added, "You didn't tell me about the bears!" You can be assured the few times rides have encountered a black bear on the ranch the bear was instinctively looking for a quick departure and the only thing seen by most riders was the bear's rear end.

Future rides on this trail where Ronald Reagan likely rode down from Rancho Del Cielo during his California governorship, and his presidency, will be scheduled when possible during the non-holiday times of the off-seasons, fall, winter and spring. This route requires riding experience to enable another dimension of the ranch to be enjoyed by those used to extended time in the saddle and who are able to ride a horse into a steady, brisk walk which is a characteristic of an advanced rider. Head Wrangler Tony Thompson is able to accommodate a minimum of three and a maximum of six riders for one of these spectacular "BearsCat Trail" rides which can be arranged to include a regularly scheduled breakfast at the Adobe or a specially ordered boxed picnic lunch at the Adobe.

A new riding option for next summer's season will include a Saturday evening ride from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. to allow guests staying for the weekend to enjoy one of these popular summertime rides. It will also be much easier for evening riders to join the outside dinner Bar-B-Q by the pool Saturday evening without having to dress for dinner in the dining room. Since our summers have been very warm with many 90 to over 100 degree days when frequently the two o'clock rides do not go out, we are happy to offer the Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evening rides as an alternative. The evening rides are limited to a total of 15 riders split into three rides, so please visit the barn early in your stay to reserve a spot.

MOURNING BILL TRAIN

The Alisal golf community lost the most influential personality in our history on August 29, 2008. After a long illness Bill Train passed away peacefully among family members at his home in Buellton, near Solvang and the Alisal that he loved. He was eighty-nine years old. Until his illness prevented him, he loved to stop in at the Ranch Course for regular visits. In many ways, Bill was to the Alisal Ranch Course what Jake Copass was to the Alisal Guest Ranch. He was the consummate PGA Golf Professional, beginning his career over 60 years ago in Southern California. In 1979 he retired from 26 years of service as the PGA golf pro at the Alisal, but his influence here spans more than 50 years. He and his beloved wife Mary Ann, who worked alongside him, were largely responsible for making the club what it is today.

Current Ranch Course Head Professional, Dave Hartley, said fondly of his mentor, "Mr. Train used to hate it when I called him "Mr." He said his name was Bill and he was as humble and generous as he was tough and grumpy.

There isn't a person that ever met him who does not have a Bill Train story to tell. He was my ideal of the perfect golf pro. He taught me to teach. He was unbelievably complimentary of my game and completely disgusted by it at the same time. If you knew Bill, then you know what I mean. Most of the important things I learned about being a golf professional came from listening to him speak and watching him interact with the members. He was there for everyone—handicap or gender didn't matter—and always seemed to show up when you needed him most."

Bill served in the South Pacific during WWII from 1942-1945 while in the U.S. Naval Air Corps. Before joining Alisal owner and golf course visionary, Charles H. Jackson, and course designer, William (Billy) Bell Sr. in opening the first nine holes of Alisal's Ranch Course in 1955, Train was the PGA golf pro at Rancho Santa Fe. Here at the Alisal, he worked tirelessly establishing a pro shop, giving lessons and building a golf community. Under his guidance the Ranch Course became well known and enjoyed an active and loyal membership. Throughout his career, he won many tournaments including the Southern California Open and also beat Sam Snead to win the San Diego Open.

"He knew how to take care of business in fewer words than anyone I've ever met. He respected the occupation of golf professional with his heart and soul," Hartley adds. "Mr. Train had an effect on all of us who golf at the Alisal, but he never knew to what level. To his last days, those of us teeing off on #1 were affected by his presence as he strolled over to watch us start our rounds. The BTF (Bill Train Factor) as it is fondly known among the afternoon golfing crowd was an "out-of-body" experience that you had to feel to understand. Perfectly capable golfers would make horrible swings and shots due to self inflicted pressure exerted by the presence of Bill's eyes watching you tee off knowing a guaranteed swing analysis was soon to follow."

Bill's many friends and students will agree with Mr. Hartley when he says, "I am going to miss Mr. Train and the feelings I had every time I was with him. I am sure Bill is back on the top of his game now that he is back with his beloved bride." The Alisal will long remember and appreciate Bill's legacy as a person and a professional. He leaves behind two daughters, a son, and their families including four grandchildren.

MARCY GETS MARRIED

During the 14 years she has been a fulltime employee with the Alisal, many guests have had the pleasure of getting to know Marcy Clevenger our Director of Activities and now also of the Fitness Center and Spa. Her vivacious nature and dedication to the Ranch have made her a key person here. Since she has many fond memories of growing up spending Sundays after church with her family at the Ranch Course it was meaningful to have her wedding ceremony on the driving range tee and reception in the clubhouse where she recalls eating many a grilled cheese with her sister.

Also meaningful to Marcy was having her wedding in October because it is breast cancer awareness month, something which has touched her family. It was only natural then that her favorite color pink, one she's often seen in, became the accent for this balmy evening ceremony. She married fellow Santa Ynez Valley native, Rick Payne. Zeus, their 5 year old German shepherd was the ring bearer. Rather than tossing her bouquet to a young lady, Marcy presented her pink roses to her Grandma who had been married for 54 years.

Both Marcy and Rick graduated from Santa Ynez Valley High School in '88 and '89. They knew each other from school, but hadn't seen one another in years. They had a chance meeting in November '06 which slowly developed, according to the bride because of her own admitted "denseness," into a first date which ultimately led to true love and pink gerbera daisies on a luscious four-tiered square lemon wedding cake. After a week in Maui relaxing and recuperating from a very busy couple of years helping to develop the Fitness Center and Spa and planning a wedding, Marcy happily returned to the Alisal refreshed and ready for our busy holiday season.