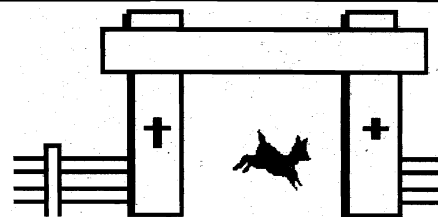


The Spirit

of Down Home Ranch



Feb/Mar 1998

Vol 1 No 2

Dates set for Ranch Camp '98

Ranch Camp is a big hit, and this year will be better than ever.

Up to 100 Ranch Campers will be served during this summer's three-week program. Last year's enrollment was kept to 60, but better facilities will be ready for the campers this summer, and the new Camp Center will house the infirmary and staff quarters.

Youth camps are for persons with special needs aged 11-22. Adult camps are for ages 23 and up. Cost is \$250 per session.

Call or write for an application.

1998 Session Dates

- I June 14 - 19..... Youth
- II June 21 - 26 Adults
- III June 28 - July 3 .. Youth & Adults

Reflections

In January we mailed the first issue of **Reflections**. It will come every month, this month as an insert for *The Spirit*.

We hope you enjoy it.

Upcoming Events

- Fri. March 6 Texas A&M
- Sat., March 7 Work Day
- Sat., March 14 Board Meeting
- Sat., March 21 Work Day
- Sat., March 28 Work Day
- Sun., March 29 BCRC B-B-Q
- Sun., April 19 Angels' Grove Ded.
- Sat., May 2 Berry Day
- Sat., May 30 Work Day: RC Prep
- Fri.-Sun., June 5-7 RC Orientation
- Sun., June 14-19 Ranch Camp
- Sun., June 21-26 Ranch Camp
- Sun., June 28-July 3 Ranch Camp

A&M College of Architecture Developing Master Plan for Ranch

Included in this issue is an invitation to a very special event.

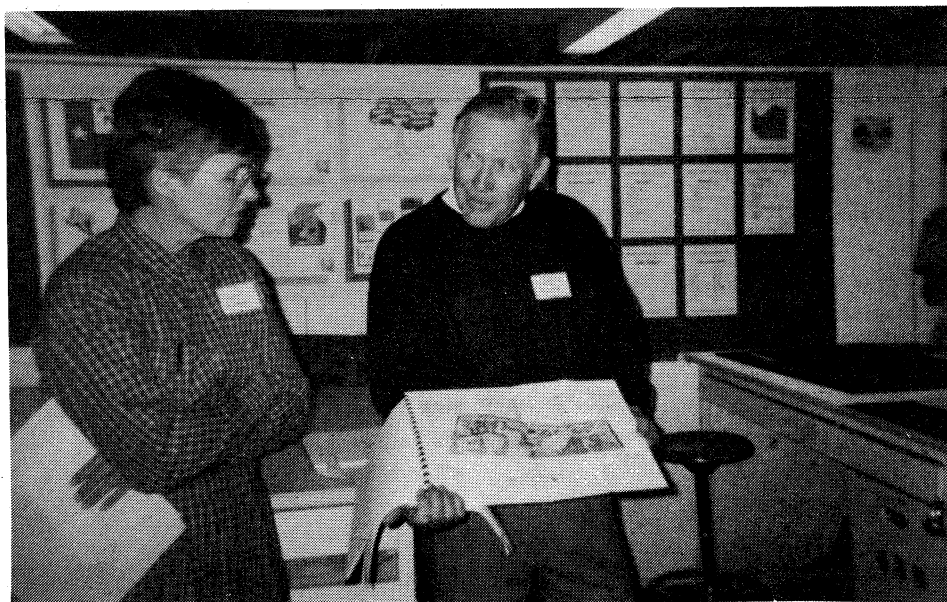
On Friday March 6, from 8:30 to 11:00 students from the Texas A&M College of Architecture will present their models, designs and drawings for the Master Plan for Down Home Ranch.

Advanced architecture students of Professor George Mann and graduate students in Professor Don Austin's landscape architecture program have made extended visits to the Ranch to visit with the founders, Board of Directors, staff and volunteers. They walked the land, conducted interviews and began to analyze narratives, plats, topographical and aerial maps—all to help them grasp the full picture of the Ranch's future and people it serves.

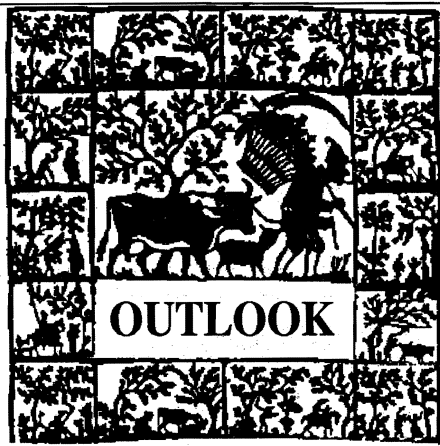
A preliminary showing was held February 11 in the Design Studio of the College of Architecture, where initial designs and models were previewed. The question and answer sessions with the students were very interesting and served to clarify matters of siting, phases of development, and requirements to ensure the safety of people with special needs.

At the completion of the process, the Ranch hopes to have a full-scale model of the master plan, as well as photographs, site specifications, cost estimates and other vital planning information.

The March 6 reception is a major event in the development of Down Home Ranch. We hope many Ranch supporters attend and show Texas A&M and the College of Architecture how much we appreciate their fine work.



Judy Horton looks on as Professor Don Austin shows an example of a master plan developed at the A&M College of Architecture.



by Jerry Horton

When I was a doctoral student and instructor of sociology at the University of Colorado—where I met and wed Judy—we made much ado about "the social system." We read Nisbet and Merton and Lazarsfeld, and of course, his eminence, Talcott Parsons.

We looked analytically, sometimes even with wonder, at the delicate and durable, intricate systems of interdependence that make social life possible.

The "loss of community" was a major theme of much writing and research, and it has lost little of its importance today.

Over Thanksgiving Kelly, Judy and I drove north, to visit three "communities": Misericordia in Chicago; Lamb's Farm in Libertyville, Ill., near Wisconsin; and Sharing Meadows in northern Indiana.

We were impressed with the vigor, the intent, the affection of each of these very different places. Their "clients" are our "clients", women and men, youth and adults with mental retardation.

Sharing Meadows, Lambs Farm and Misericordia step out of the mold and reclaim the high ground of "community." They proclaim that men and women living and working together—even men and women with mental retardation—needn't always adopt the stylish, but often dysfunctional (one of Merton's terms!) model of urban-independence.

When I was a kid on Casey Road, dirt and orchards were my lot. Aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, neighbors kept a watchful eye as we children began our lives. It was "community" that still exists today, if in short supply.

We labor here to build such a place. It won't be utopia. It won't be heaven. But, it will be home—a community for Kelly and for a host of others.

The Homestead at Down Home Ranch: A Way to Secure the Future

Amid the excitement over the erection of the greenhouses and the establishing of the permanent camp facilities, the ultimate fulfillment of the dream of Down Home Ranch awaits the building of the first residence and the start of the residency program. A home and a community, that is our real mission.

That won't happen until our land is owned free and clear. The reason is simple. Down Home Ranch is a non-profit ministry. Businesses which expect to earn a profit can borrow to build and pay back out of the profits. But our residency program will not generate such "profits" and we are loathe to incorporate construction costs into the tuition fees charges for residents.

"The Homestead" is a campaign which was launched last year in order to pay off the remaining \$88,000 owed on the Down Home Ranch land. Because many individuals have joined "The Homestead," we now have only \$58,000 remaining on the principal! Our goal is to retire this debt this year!

In order to reach this goal we will be asking individuals, foundations, service clubs, churches, and businesses to support "The Homestead" campaign. Retiring the mortgage will allow income to be applied to development and programs, rather than debt reduction, and will help as we raise the money for building the many structures that will be included in the master plan.

DHR Proud Recipient of Grants RGK Challenge Met

Last fall DHR was challenged by the RGK Foundation of Austin. They said they would (in response to a proposal) grant the Ranch \$1 for every \$2 we raised, up to \$30,000.

Thanks to grants from the Justin Paul Foundation an anonymous West Texas foundation, and donations from over 100 individuals and churches, the match was made!

The grant money will be used to get the greenhouses fully operational and the Camp Center restored and expanded.

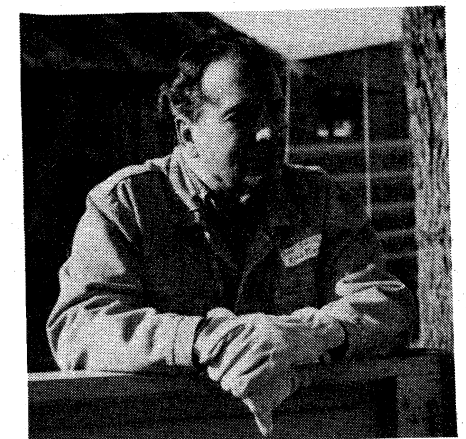
Many other generous donations were made, and for each we are very thankful.

Each of us who live and work here, is aware that the Ranch is dependent upon the good will and faithful support of both the "widow's mite" and the foundation grant—each is vital.

Right: Dick Smith is a long-time friend of Down Home Ranch. His prayers have brought many blessings to the Ranch



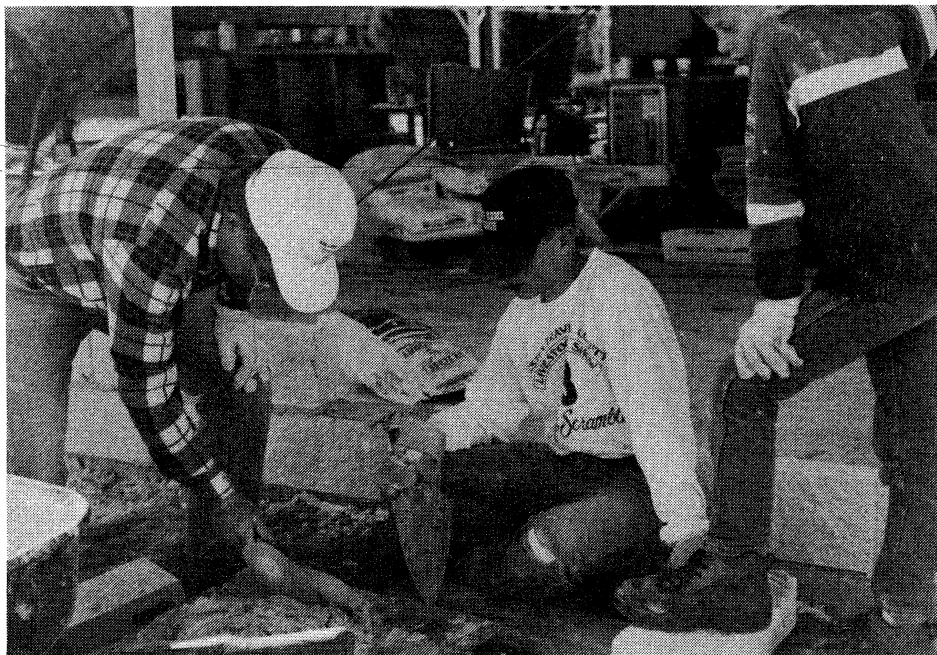
Terry Pundsack, Ranch Hand, works with greenhouse plants and mail prep. She is learning to do some filing and data-entry in the office. We are proud that Terry is a DHR Ranch Hand!



Program Notes and News

Program Notes and News is a new feature for *The Spirit*. We'd like you to share some of the productive and playful things we do together at the Ranch.

- Ranch Hand Terry Pundsack, VESSer Carie Brahan, and Judy and Kelly Horton went folk-dancing at Hancock Rec Center in Austin in January. The wonderful folks there were patient with us and we got a leg up (so to speak) on the Yam Bake.
- Ranch Hand Terry Pundsack helped serve when the architecture class from Texas A&M visited. Terry told the class of her desire to "live in a cottage at the Ranch."
- Ranch Director Jerry Horton and Senior Steward Mickey Harris took Ranch Hands Lynne Christianson, Terry Pundsack, and Bill Moors to pick up former Ranch Hand Lynda Moore and have dinner at the Spaghetti Warehouse. Camp Buddy Ann Harris tagged along, and the whole crew had a wonderful time.
- The "best cookies" at the Annual Episcopal Council (in Houston) were baked by our Ranch Hands. Toll house, of course. *Seven hundred cookies!* And the Episcopalians were shameless in their pursuit of these morsels.
- Judy, Kelly, Terry and Lynne went to see *Titanic*, most of us for the second time. Just as thrilling as the first time and certain young persons continue their mad crush on dashing "Jack Dawson!"
- The Ranch Hands are getting ready to run a marathon! Okay, we'll walk the marathon. And we won't do it all at once, but a mile at a time. But we'll do it, and when we've all walked the marathon, we'll go off on a Ranch "hoopedoodle." (It's a way to motivate ourselves, you see.)
- Understand, all this is in addition to our work with the plants, the mailouts and the other ways our Ranch Hands earn their pay.



Lonnie Green serves as the "guild master" to volunteer apprentices, learning the ancient art of masonry. Lonnie and his crew put in the split-faced concrete masonry units generously donated by Featherlite Industries, Round Rock

Fascinating Facts

- About 3% of the population has a degree of mental retardation. This translates into 500,000 Texans.
- Waiting lists for residential services are usually measured in years, not weeks or months.
- It took Mrs. Lady Bird Johnson 13 years to build the beautiful Wildflower Center. It will wind up taking us about that long to complete Down Home Ranch.
- The staff to student ratio at most Texas State Schools is about 3:1. At private facilities it's about 1:1, the same as at Texas A&M.
- The cost per student to build dorms for students at universities runs from \$25-60,000 per student. Homes for Down Home Ranch expect to cost about \$20,000 per Rancher (and we'll make sure they look as good or better.)

After a concert, a fan rushed up to famed violinist Fritz Kreisler and gushed:

"Oh, Mr. Kreisler, I'd give my whole life to play like you."

Kreisler replied: "I did."

Fr. Blaney, No Bologna!

Our Thanksgiving trip to Indiana was reciprocated in January when we had a visit from Fr. Dennis Blaney, founder of Sharing Meadows.

Fr. Blaney spent over a quarter of a century as a parish priest, during which he developed a life-long ministry to those with mental retardation. In 1991 Sharing Meadows began—the same year Down Home Ranch got started—and is now home to six residents and a thriving camp program.

The community is on 184 acres of beautiful, rolling, northern Indiana land and embodies many of the values we embrace here at the Ranch. They plan for about 30 permanent residents.

Thanks to Fr. Blaney, we hope to be friends and compatriots with Sharing Meadows for years to come.

Volunteer Views

by Carie Brahan

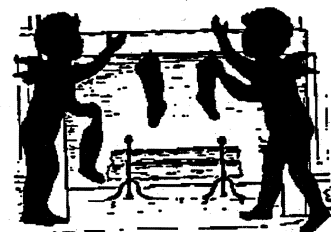
Last summer I sat in my bedroom in Kansas and thumbed through information I had received in the mail about Down Home Ranch. I had made the decision to become a VESS volunteer at the Ranch, but had not yet visited the place where I would spend a year of my life.

As I read newsletter articles and studied pictures, I developed a mental image of the Ranch—from the butterfly-shaped flower bed in Sara's Garden, to the donkey barn, to where I would be living. I developed a good picture of what the Ranch actually looks like.

But what I didn't consider that day last summer is the people at Down Home Ranch, and how they would change my life. Sure, I knew I would be working with clients called "Ranch Hands," that a couple named Jerry and Judy Horton run the ranch, and that I wouldn't be the only person volunteering. What I know now, however, goes way above and beyond what I knew before I came here six months ago.

I've learned that the Ranch Hands would become very dear to me. It is I, more than they, who benefits from our collective labors. I've learned that the Hortons are amazing people, not just at the administration of Down Home Ranch, but also in helping me. Relocating to Texas and being away from my family hasn't always been easy, but Judy, Jerry and Kelly have welcomed me with open arms and have made me feel at home here. Too, I have learned that many wonderful people live in the great state of Texas.

I often wonder how things would have been different if I had chosen a different path last summer. I would've missed out on living on a beautiful ranch, on seeing enormous greenhouses being built before my eyes, and on looking up at the gorgeous Texas sky at night. These things, however, are trivial compared to the people I would have never met if I hadn't come here. It is the people who make me happy I did.



Our Wish List

- A new (or newish) extended cab pickup
- A fencing crew
- Someone to trap or hunt our wild pigs
- Help finding a good cutaway van
- 320 pieces of 2" X 8" X 10' cedar
- Carpenters and helpers for Work Days
- Volunteers for Ranch Camp

"Spur Ranch" For Sale

The 216 acre piece of land to the south of Down Home Ranch is for sale. We tried to buy this land from Mrs. Laverne Rydell, a wonderful neighbor (before it sold a few years ago), but weren't able to do so.

The property has a two bedroom log home, a beautiful metal barn, a well, a gazebo and a pond. Most of it is grazing land, but there are some great building sites.

We'd be good neighbors if you'd like to buy it!

Board of Directors

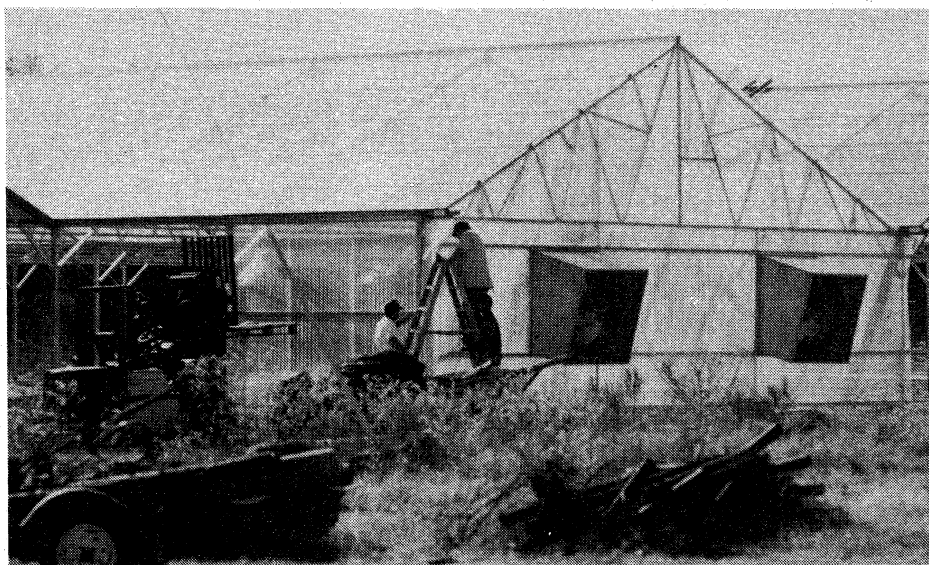
Carroll Fultz, President San Antonio
 Michael Paulsen, Secretary Round Rock
 Kevin Tracy, Member Austin
 Peggy Perry, Treasurer Rockdale
 Jim Crosby, Member Austin
 Gerald Bramlett, Nominee Elgin

Advisory Board

Jane Allison, Advocate Austin
 Emily Vargas Baron, Ph.D. Wash., D.C.
 Laurence Becker, Ph.D. Austin
 Carol Cody, Fdr. Christopher House . Austin
 Ralph Comer, M.D. USN (Ret.) Austin
 Marquita Dubach, AMI Austin
 Rev. James Evans, Catholic Charities Austin
 Richard Halpin, Ex. Dir. AIL Austin
 Don Legge, Chaplain, Scot & White . Salado
 Col. Don Rettberg USAF (Ret.) Austin
 The Rev. Al Rodriguez Longview
 Joanna Reifield Vaughn, Art Teacher Austin

Staff

Jerry W. Horton, Ph.D., Director DHR
 Judy Horton, Program Director DHR
 Mickey Harris, Senior Steward Bastrop
 Carie Brahan, VESS/Outreach DHR



Mickey and men from the Bastrop Co. Restitution Center work on greenhouses

Mission

Down Home Ranch seeks to be faithful to the Christian mission to provide for those in need. Our mission is to build a rural community for adults with developmental disabilities, offering training, housing, recreation and dignified employment, as well as opportunities for growth in mind, body and spirit.

Down Home Ranch, Inc., 20250 FM 619, Elgin Texas 78621
 (512) 856-2246, (512) 856-0128, (888) 926-2253 FAX (512) 856-2246