

♥♥ *Marriage Encounter at the Work Ranch* ♥♥ Bed & Breakfast with a Purpose Exists Here on the Central Coast



VanZante photo

By Sherry Van Zante

My husband, Loyd, and I drove down the lonely country road in Monterey County in search of the San Miguel address for the Work Ranch. Our instructions told us when we thought we had gone too far, we were half way there. We were told the ranch was literally at the end of the road, so we kept riding through rolling golden hills and oak trees to a barricade. Here at the end of the asphalt, an arrow directed us on a gravel road to the right, so on up the hill we snaked.

Our tires crunched in the driveway, as we arrived at the house. Three men greeted us with country hospitality. One offered to help with our bags. Wanting to remove my sunglasses, I pulled my case out of my pocket to change to clear ones. My face dropped. A lens had popped out. The second man took the case and smiled, "I'll fix that for you," and he was gone. The third man pointed to a door, "Go on in the house there. We'll get those

glasses fixed, so you can see."

We walked through the door into a hallway lined with pantry shelves. Stepping into the great room where the kitchen, dining and living areas met, we felt that country road had indeed brought us home. So, we arrived for our Marriage Encounter week end.

In that warm home where we felt safe and secure, we met six other couples. And we met two presenting couples who began that evening to share their own marital struggles and the tools they used to move toward solutions.

Out in the tamed nature of the Works' 12,000-acre working cattle ranch, we enjoyed a retreat in the presence of a great man and an amazing lady. George and Elaine are understated people. George, in his checked shirt and jeans, and Elaine, in her apron, served us. We enjoyed homemade food with fresh baked bread at every meal. We snuggled down, quite aware that we were in the Works' well-feathered nest.

The structure of the encounter makes you stop to be introspective. You pull things out of your own heart, mind and soul that you didn't even know were there. You get in touch with yourself as well as with each other through this workshop on communication.

During a two hour break on Saturday, Loyd and I walked around on that ranch and tried to grasp just how big 12,000 acres are. We were told it is about twenty square miles, and as far as we could see to the north was the Works' land. Being alone together in an empty place that vast reminded us of the importance of our bond. I reached for Loyd's hand, and he wrapped his fingers around mine. We talked about how amazing it was that, after thirty-two years of marriage, we could still learn more about each other.

I discovered on our week end that my quiet, slow-moving man is a barely tapped mine, and I determined to keep on mining. The riches are worth all the work, and the Work

Ranch was a good place to pursue the opportunity.

Currently, the ranch hosts three Marriage Encounter weekends a year in March, May and October. Elaine hopes to expand that to four. To find out more go to www.ccnme.org where you can pursue such a weekend for yourselves.