

Building a Lifestyle: Deerhaven Farms Transfer

By **ASHLEY ROOD**
Rogue Farm Corps

"All you want for your life is meaningful work and meaningful relationships," says Steve Horning. "And we are lucky to have that." Steve is the third generation on his family's 1,300-acre farm in the Willamette Valley. While Steve now runs most of the day-to-day operations, full retirement isn't on his dad's bucket list: "I looked at older farmers when I was growing up and I thought, they've been retired their whole lives," says Gary Horning. "That's what it means to do what you love."

Their family farm transition is on a path to success because the Hornings share a vision for the farm and they continually communicate and evolve their plan for both succession of the

farm and the estate.

For the Hornings, it's not just data that shows there are a lot of farms transitioning from family farms into larger corporate farms focused on investment returns; it's happening all around them. While the land is staying in agriculture, it's different. Gary says, "We have to take care of our dirt, we care about our neighbors."

After attending Oregon State University, Steve realized the farm is where he wanted to be. "We sat down in 2007 and came up with a 10-year plan for what the farm would look like," says Steve. "We wanted to grow slowly in a way that maximized every acre," and provide the lifestyle they wanted. Gary says, "We completely changed what the farm looked like. We inventoried all of our soils to determine best use and based on that, we settled on hazelnuts and placing an ease-

ment on the poorer soils."

Steve came back just in time to learn how to farm through the economic crisis of 2008. "I was fortunate to have to weather those years, it was the best thing to happen," says Steve. Gary agrees: "Going through the hard times, you can't be taught that."

But everything aligned. In 2010, the Hornings finalized an easement with the Greenbelt Land Trust to protect and restore 200 acres of their farm for native fish and wildlife along the Willamette River's floodplain. In turn, the capital from selling the easement allowed the family to purchase additional acreage and their yields went up. The Hornings brought their expertise in farming to restoration plantings, helping Greenbelt refine their practices and better restore habitat.



Gary and Steve Horning with the next generation.



Paige Green

Loren and Lisa Poncia of Stemple Creek Ranch and their children.

A Ranch Reinvented: Stemple Creek Farm Transfer

By **ASHLEY ROOD**
Rogue Farm Corps

"When I turned 30, I had the conversation with my wife that I wanted to move home and try to make a go of it," says Loren Poncia of Stemple Creek Ranch. "If we never tried, I would always wonder what could've happened."

Loren and his wife, Lisa, are now the fourth generation running the family ranch in the coastal hills of Northern California. Their farm transfer's success rests on reinventing the ranch as a business and a commitment to

working in sync with Mother Nature.

Stemple Creek Ranch got its start when Loren's great-grandfather, Angelo, immigrated from Italy and bought the ranch in 1902. It's been in productive agriculture ever since. Loren grew up on the farm and when he hit 18, he didn't even want to go to college. Loren was ready to buy some cows and start ranching.

"Thank God I didn't do that!" Loren said. "There's so much I wouldn't have learned. Going to Cal Poly, the people I met, it all opened my mind." He and his wife made a great life with secure jobs after col-

lege in Sacramento, but ultimately, they decided they wanted to build their lives back at the ranch.

They set up a meeting with Loren's parents, Al and Cathie, in Napa and said: "We want to run the ranch. We don't want to be partners with you, we want to buy your cattle, lease the ranch and do it on our own. The most important part of all this was that they were willing to have the conversation." They figured a buyout plan in part because, as Loren said, "I didn't want to sacrifice our father-son relationship over a business relationship."

When Loren and Lisa took over,

they retired the previous business and rented the land. About eight years into running the business, they took a week-long intensive at the Ranching for Profit school. "It changed our lives for the better. We learned to look at ranching as a business, not a lifestyle."

They ended up going certified organic, put up a website and started selling direct. They've embraced agritourism with a venue for events and Airbnb. Even their chefs stay at the ranch. "We do dinners with them, they meet us and the cows, it's a full circle of transparency."



Looking to buy, sell, or invest in Southern Oregon?

Specializing in Agriculture, Resource properties, and 1031 Exchanges.

Harcourts Oregon Opportunities

www.orop.com 541-772-0000 Toll free 800-772-7284

Office and Agent Licensed in Oregon

FRS19-2/102

Meet Our Agriculture Insurance Specialists

Call Gini or David for a no obligation quote for your farm insurance needs



www.huggins.com
503-585-2211

• Property • Farm • Commercial •
Personal Liability • Large or Small
Farm Equipment • Vehicles • Livestock
• Umbrella Liability • Workers'
Compensation • Life Insurance
• Medical Insurance • Commercial
Processing • Wineries & Breweries



Gini Price



David White

Farm, Ranch or Orchard Insurance