

Ranch transformed from cult compound to Christian camp

By KATHY ANEY
EO Media Group



The Washington Family Ranch in Central Oregon hosts about 1,100 campers every week. The Christian youth camp sits on the site of the former Rajneeshpuram.



Kathy Aney/EO Media Group
The Washington Family Ranch, near Antelope, was once a huge sheep ranch and later a spiritual retreat for followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. The Christian youth camp, owned by Young Life, opened in 1999.

der, arson, election fraud and wiretapping. About 10 followers were imprisoned. The Bhagwan was deported for immigration violations.

Montana billionaire Dennis Washington bought the seized property for a cool \$3.65 million as a destination resort, but ran into zoning problems. The Washington family donated the property to Young Life in 1996 and has continued support with additional donations.

Patty Read, administrative systems assistant at the Washington Family Ranch, said the camp is a mixture of new construction and remodeled Rajneeshpuram buildings. The hotels were repurposed into dorms. The nightclub and mall are now a residence for workers.

Ironic

The transformation to a Christian camp is nothing short of ironic, said Pendleton Young Life leader Chris Thatcher. He and three other leaders shepherded a contingent of 28 Pendleton teens all last week. Thatcher stood in the sports

center where kids scrambled up climbing walls and thudded basketballs off the hardwood. Once a place where thousands of Rajneeshes worshiped the Bhagwan, the center is a hub of recreational activity.

He described the camp as a place where the gospel is presented, but not pushed. Seeds are planted during nightly meetings as kids sing and fellowship in a mosh pit-esque setting inside a building a short hop from the swimming pool. A pastor zings a short but pithy message.

Thatcher said much of the faith building happens one on one.

"We believe something real happens when you journey with a kid," he said.

If the camper isn't interested in faith?

"We meet people where they are — we don't force God on people," Thatcher said. "We provide space for every camper to respond to the good news. We don't stop journeying with kids if they don't choose him."

Camper Andrew Thomas, a recent Pendleton High School graduate, described the camp as engaging, non-threatening and "insane fun."

"The brochures say this will be the best week of your life and they're not lying," Thomas said.

"It is kind of like an escape from reality," said Makya Theis, of Pendleton, "It's a place where you know you are loved."

Fascinating wrinkles

Read is one of 40 year-round employees at the ranch. She serves as camp tour guide along with her other duties. The camp's recent history includes some fascinating wrinkles. God, some say, sanded down some of the rough edges in the planning process.

Early on, Read said, planners discussed creating a manmade lake, but ran into a big problem.

"Consultants said the pond would evaporate about 10,000 gallons a day," she said. "They needed some kind of natural wa-

ter source."

The lake went on hold until a crew digging the swimming pool hit a natural spring with a flow of — you guessed it — 10,000 gallons per day.

When planners couldn't decide what to do with the Bhagwan's house, a 1997 range fire decided matters. A finger of the fire raced down the ridge and torched the residence, the only one of 300 Rajneeshpuram buildings to burn.

The camp's huge grassy field, a place for soccer, volleyball and other activities, required several inches of sand to mitigate for muddiness. Someone on a four wheeler exploring the property discovered a huge sand deposit that provided the exact amount of sand needed.

"This place is a gift," Thatcher said.

Hannah Boozer, once she conquered the ropes course, said she thinks the setting is a perfect place for getting close to God.

"Young Life is a week full of eye-opening moments," she said. "God's grace definitely changes lives at Washington Family Ranch."



Terry Spivey/Wikimedia Commons Photo

Pandora moth.

Pandora moths return to forests

Associated Press

BEND — Pandora moths have taken flight again in the pine forests of Central Oregon.

Andy Eglitis, an entomologist for the Deschutes National Forest, has been getting calls about moth encounters in the woods and in Bend, The Bend Bulletin reported.

He believes there has been a resurgence in their population this summer, but it hasn't yet reached outbreak levels.

The last big outbreak was in the 1990s, when hundreds of moths crowded on buildings around Bend.

People who called Eglitis reported seeing about 50 moths each. The reports have come from various locations, including in the Deschutes National Forest near the Lava Cast Forest and at a bank building along U.S. Highway 20.

Pandora moths are easy to recognize because of their size and appearance.

At rest, the moths form about a 1 1/2-inch triangle, Eglitis said. In flight, they have a wingspan of about 3 inches. Those gray wings have jagged black lines on top and pink on the bottom. The females have thin yel-

low antennae. The males have feathery antennae of the same hue.

"They look like ferns," Eglitis said.

Native to Central Oregon, the pandora moth has a two-year life cycle dependent on pine trees. They munch the trees' needles like mad while they are caterpillars, but they do not cause deadly damage like gypsy moths and other invasive insects, Eglitis said.

Even during the 1990s outbreak, the moths did not dent Central Oregon's woods.

"It was really hard to find any trees that were killed by these things," he said.

The moths emerge from the ground and fly around this time in odd years. The caterpillars are out eating pine needles in spring and summer of even years.

What triggered the 1990s outbreak, which lasted about a decade and moved through different parts of Central Oregon, is unknown, said Stephen Fitzgerald, a forestry professor at Oregon State University in Corvallis. But scientists do know it was a virus that ended the outbreak around Bend and brought the number of moths back in check.

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The FCC will normally authorize this proposed discontinuance of service (or reduction or impairment) unless it is shown that customers would be unable to receive service or a reasonable substitute from another carrier or that the public convenience and necessity is otherwise adversely affected. If you wish to object, you should file your comments as soon as possible, but no later than 15 days after the Commission releases public notice of the proposed discontinuance. You may file your comments electronically through the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System using the docket number established in the Commission's public notice for this proceeding, or you may address them to the Federal Communications Commission, Wireline Competition Bureau, Competition Policy Division, Washington, DC 20554, and include in your comments a reference to the \$63.71 Application of Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC. Comments should include specific information about the impact of this proposed discontinuance (or reduction or impairment) upon you or your company, including any inability to acquire reasonable substitute service.

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