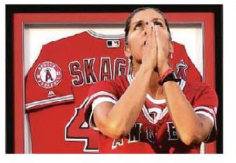


SPORTS
Angels honor Skaggs' memory with an almost perfect night



LOCAL
Save money on tickets and rides at the California Mid-State Fair



SAVE UP TO \$238 IN COUPONS INSIDE

Newspaper of the Central Coast • SanLuisObispo.com

THE TRIBUNE

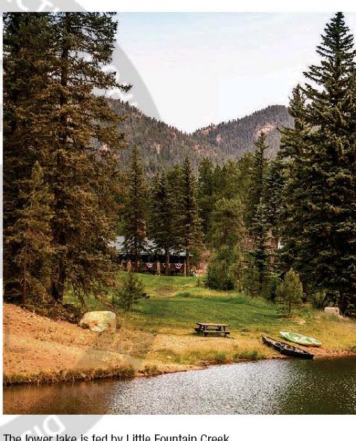
Wine helps SLO County



Colorado guest ranch keeps traditions alive

By Anne Z. Cooke
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE (TNS)
I was returning from a hike up Mount Vigil, the peak you can see from the Ranch at Emerald Valley, near Colorado Springs, when a leathery-faced cowboy walked by, humming a tune and leading a horse. At the same moment, a car pulled up and the driver, eyes masked behind dark sunglasses, leaned out and asked for directions to the ranch, which just happened to be where I was staying. I would have answered, but at that moment the old cowboy stopped dead, looked at the license plate — "Texas," he muttered — looped the reins around the saddle horn and unwrapped a piece of gum. Then he pointed down the road. "That way," he said. "Thanks," said the driver, hesitating. "I'm Tony," he

added. "Say, do you know why they call it Emerald Valley? Was there a gold mine here? Gemstones, maybe?" Curious myself, and still out of breath, I stepped closer, the better to hear. "Well now, I couldn't say," replied the cowboy, pulling a dented army canteen off his belt. "I've wondered on it myself. Might be from their green trees, a hideaway-like, where a person can get away and think. "They used to call it Camp Vigil, after that mountain there. Real special for old Mr. Penrose, Spencer Penrose he was, the man who built the first lodge up there on Cheyenne Mountain. Back in the 1920s, that was." The cowboy paused for another long swallow. "The way they tell it," he said, "he'd get down here with his friends, sit'n up late,



The lower lake is fed by Little Fountain Creek.

telling stories about mountain climbing and all. That's a purty fine log cabin he had, the one they still got. It's renovated now, with a real bar, all chinked up, nice and tight. You'll see. No rain gittin' in there. "All kind of trees shades them log cabins, and your creek has a waterfall and lakes stocked regular with trout. The cabin on the hill is a palace, big enough for weddings and such. The cook's in the kitchen most days, handy with the fixin's. I stop in now and then and

Steve Haggerty/ColorWorld/TNS

SEE RANCH, PAGE 2
PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED BY PRESSREADER
PressReader.com +1 604 278 4604
COPYRIGHT AND PROTECTED BY APPLICABLE LAW



Rugs and a once-a-season patch of manicured grass celebrate a holiday at the Ranch at Emerald Valley.



Steve Haggerty/ColorWorld/TNS

As the guests called out requests, he called on the vast repertoire he hides under that cowboy hat and performed as usual. Country & western, pop, bluegrass, Pete Seeger, Elton John, the Grateful Dead — he knew them all. Listening, I couldn't help wondering why it felt so familiar. Then I remembered. The evening reminded me of Stead's Ranch, founded in 1904 and long gone now, a historic guest ranch and lodge, tucked among the pines, beneath snowy peaks, in Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. For many a golden summer, a weekwide procession of guests came through Stead's, from mountain climbers and presidents to stage celebrities, opera singers and families with kids, all sitting around the fireplace, sharing the West's special brand of hospitality. Which is just how it felt that night at the Ranch at Emerald Valley, at the end of the track they once called the Gold Road.

Ranch
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
becomes me a plate? When the cowboy took another swallow I spoke up. "Is Spencer Penrose the one who built the zoo at the bottom of the mountain, and every time there was a parade he rode the elephant through town?" "Yes, ma'am," said the cowboy. "He bought the land for them animals. It's what happens to folks from the east when they get to this here west. The land took old Penrose and I's. After the Broadmoor took the new owner, too. The rocks, the hills and your meadows, they call you to put down roots. "You buy an acre, build a cabin, get some chickens and you think you're done. Then the place next door gets a sale sign so you buy it, get a rail fence and a cow and call it a ranch. Then the horse and they disappear down the creek, well, you need water in those parts, so you buy it, too. That's history, hereabouts." With that, the old cowboy tipped his hat, nodded to both of us, checked to the horse and they disappeared down the road. "Guess I'll see it for myself," said the driver, adjusting his sunglasses and revving the engine. "Can I give you a ride?" "No thanks, I'll walk," I said. "The ranch is pretty close now, down around the corner." In the late 1980s, the dirt track here was known as Gold Road. I'd seen the mine tailings myself, a heap of yellow dirt pushed up past the trail, where old horseback riders turned toward the creek. And for all that, they never did find gold.

down, the walls, hung with western and Native American art, insisted that I take a closer look. The kitchen, large-party sized, included a long center island, surrounded by walls covered with cupboards, and counters with three sinks and the latest appliances. With bedrooms upstairs and down (and bathrooms for each) there was room for eight people. After that, no city was like another. You could sleep late, or eat breakfast early, then climb the ridge to see the views. Five or six other trails through the forest, or you could ride horseback. A hot lunch and farm-fresh salad or sandwich was followed by a game of Scrabble, a walk around the perimeter or a nap in the hammock. Come 4 p.m. I fetched the fly rod and headed for the lake where the rainbow and brown trout were breaking the surface. Used the wrong fly and came away empty. Cocktail hour followed, inspired by the chef's hors d'oeuvres. Dinner time lasted as long as you could eat or talk, in the dining room or stargazing around the campfire. Wednesday and Saturday evening cocktails, when recording artist and cowboy singer Irl Houston entertained, were the biggest surprise of all. Come, you're thinking? Maybe, but don't laugh yet. I was watching the fire toss up sparks and sipping a smooth cabernet, expecting to hear the usual background thumping, electronic music, when Houston turned the strings and tore into the "Orange Blossom Special," introducing everyone with his lightning-quick picking and perfect

The Nitty Gritty
A half-dozen hiking trails and climbs start at the ranch and explore the surrounding Pike National Forest. For guests combining a visit to Cloud Camp and to the Ranch at Emerald Valley, the 5.3-mile hike from the top of Cheyenne Mountain down to the ranch is a favorite. For information, learn more about the Ranch at Emerald Valley, about Cloud Camp, the lodge atop Cheyenne Mountain, and about the parent property, the Broadmoor Hotel, in Colorado Springs, at www.broadmoor.com. Rates vary depending on the season and weather. Included in daily rates: Transportation between the Ranch at Emerald Valley and the Broadmoor Hotel, a nine-mile drive. On-site activities and equipment: trail hikes, nature walks, fishing gear, horseback rides, all meals, snacks, beverages, wine, beer and hot tubs. Because the Old Stage Riding Stable is a concession, long horseback rides, such as the popular cattle drives, are priced separately. Getting there: Fly into Denver, then drive or fly to Colorado Springs.

Advertisement for 'The Ranch at Emerald Valley' featuring a sign and contact information.

Advertisement for 'The Nitty Gritty' featuring a sign and contact information.

Advertisement for 'Legals' featuring a sign and contact information.