

NEIGHBOURS OF

NANOOSE BAY

AN EXCLUSIVE COMMUNITY MAGAZINE SERVING THE RESIDENTS OF NANOOSE BAY

Paradise Acres Ranch

Family, Horses & Dreams



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Family, Horses & Dreams

“Gerd and I came from different experiences and parts of the world, and we feel fortunate and grateful to have found ourselves living in the best place in the world,” says Bev Voigt.

The Paradise Acres Ranch all started with Bev and Gerd. The couple married and joined families in 2001. An event that blended their love of the outdoors, family and horses. The event was held in the yard at Bev’s home, just off Jinglepot Road in Nanaimo, and the ceremony took place under a gazebo hand-built of driftwood collected by Gerd from Vancouver Island beaches.

Bev’s daughter Allison, then 11, rode in on her pony, followed by Bev’s sister Susan and then Gerd, who rode his large bay Trakehner mare named Hayla. Then the bride rode in on her beautiful black-and-white horse, Bridgette, as her wedding gown flowed in the wind. The newlyweds concluded the ceremony by galloping up the gravel driveway to begin their life together.

Today, a stained-glass image of Bridgette adorns the front door of their Nanoose Bay home, purchased 19 years ago and later transformed into Paradise Acres Ranch—a family residence and a thriving business.

Paradise Acres Ranch is a majestic property that offers trail rides, lessons, vacation rental rooms, RV sites and horse boarding. “It is a taste of Ranch life, which all are welcome to



enjoy through the many activities," shares Bev. "There are currently 55 horses residing on the 125-acre Ranch."

The Ranch is also a loving gathering place for Bev and Gerd's combined family of four children plus the beloved grandchildren, Charli and Leo, to enjoy.

Bev's favourite activity is trail riding, and she has won the BC Competitive Trail Rider Championship two years in a row on her horse Teko. "Teko is a natural athlete and a good friend. We have covered many miles, and I hope we will continue for a long time."

When Bev is not riding horses, she's been working as a realtor since 2003 and is currently with Pemberton Holmes in Parksville. She says, "I enjoy helping others find their place to call 'Home.'"

Bev grew up in Manitoba and began her career in education teaching high school in Winnipeg, Manitoba and coaching the basketball team. She then taught business courses for Red River Community College in remote communities, including Gimli and Peguis Reserve. Returning to the City, she joined Pitney Bowes, where she won the award of President of SLC, meaning she was Canada's number one salesperson. She then moved on to become the company's first female branch manager. During this time, there were horses at home on her acreages. Following a decade with the company, she took some time off to enjoy her new daughter, Allison.

Knowing she wanted to spend as much time as possible with her child, Bev started a home-based advertising business in Saskatchewan. Then, Bev continued the business upon their arrival in Nanaimo.





Gerd grew up in Switzerland before moving to Canada in 1972, where his career as a chef and restaurant owner took him to places such as Montreal, Vancouver, and Nanaimo, where he opened the Peppercorn Café and Grill. His next venture was an upscale, fine-dining restaurant in Lantzville named Winchelsea House. The Winchelsea House flourished for 10 years until the new highway changed traffic flow, and they felt it was time to move on.

The couple had a short time with a combined restaurant on Bowen Road, and then Gerd partnered with Eric and Larry Lim of Sake House and Blue Ginger restaurants to open Glow World Cuisine in the old Firehall Building in Nanaimo. The restaurant was booming, and it became the first Nanaimo restaurant to win the Provincial Restaurateur of the Year — Fine Dining award in 2004. After stepping back from that business, Gerd found more time to pour into the building and operation of the Ranch.

Family plays a central role in the Voigts' lives. Bev's daughter, Allison, an artist and equestrian, has contributed to its operations in many ways. A graduate of Emily Carr University, Allison has travelled between the mainland and the Island over the past years to pursue her art while also being able to focus on being an equestrian coach and horse trainer. She has headed to Vancouver with her partner this month to operate a



studio space and concentrate on her curation, while returning to the Ranch to ride her current horse, Taiko.

Gerd's sons are Geremie, Jon, and Riel. Geremie has two vegan cafes named Buddha-full in Vancouver, which he co-owns with his best friend, Kyla. The first two restaurants have been operating successfully for over 10 years. Two years ago, he bought a house and has focused on completing a beautiful renovation while pursuing a career as a firefighter. He has two dogs, a Pomeranian named Chai and a rescue named Tika, whom he adopted during a trip to India.

Jon moved to the Ranch two years ago and helps his dad with many projects around the Ranch. "He's a dedicated, hard worker who also helps with the daily horse chores," says Bev.

Riel owns a Bricklayer business in Delta and has competed in the Bricklayer 500 in Las Vegas. He won the BC Championship in Bricklaying and proceeded to the prestigious international competition. He is consistently a front-runner and enjoys the competition. Riel and his wife Pamela, who has a successful career at UBC and is an artist and mother of two wonderful children, live in Delta.

Bev and Gerd love having grandchildren. "We were happy to hear Charli, the five-year-old, say that she would like someone



to build a bridge so they don't have to cross the ocean to see us," says Bev with a laugh. "Charli and Leo certainly light up our lives, and we look forward to every visit!"

The Ranch brings everyone together, and there are many barbecues on the patio with stunning views of Mount Arrowsmith and Mount Moriarity. The couple enjoys riding the local trails and visiting nearby natural attractions like the Englishman River and Top Bridge Park. They have ridden trails all over the Vancouver Island and the interior of B.C.

"We love the large property and the fantastic, ever-changing views. We also enjoy the nice micro-climate wherein we receive less rain and warmer weather than all the surrounding areas," says Bev.

The ranch is also home to two Portuguese Water Dogs, Soleille and Luna, and a black-and-white cat named Oreo. "While the dogs aren't particularly fond of swimming, they bring joy to the household," says Bev. "Oreo is known for his bold personality and often joins the dog walks around the property."

In early 2022, Bev, Gerd, Allison and Geremie travelled to Mexico together, where they explored the Yucatan Peninsula. They enjoyed seeking out cenotes, beaches and ruins. The journey began in Merida and then Progreso, where they rented a beachfront house and spent mornings swimming to sharing meals and visiting local markets. From there, they travelled to a mountain town and stayed in a cozy bed-and-breakfast. The trip concluded in Mexico City, where they explored its vibrant history and culture.

One of the trip's most memorable moments occurred during an unplanned visit to a hacienda. Despite the hacienda being closed to the public, the family knocked on the gate and was welcomed inside. They were treated to a gourmet meal and a private tour of the property, including its wine cellar and wedding venue.

But there's no place like home, agree Bev and Gerd. Reflecting on her and Gerd's snowy beginnings, she says, "I would have been here sooner if I had known the Island existed ... but I guess I had to start out in the ice and snow to truly appreciate the beauty, splendour, and weather we have in this piece of Paradise."

Bev says she and the family are grateful every day to wake up, look over their horse pasture, and take in the sprawling property of gorgeous trees and mountains. "It's been a wonderful journey where it feels like the ranch has a mind of its own and constantly evolves," says Bev. "We just try to listen and keep up!" 🐾

