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**For Immediate Release**

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**History of Morning Star Ranch**

What has come to be known as Morning Star Ranch is a thirty acre tract of land on a hillside slope about two miles north east of the small town of Occidental in western Sonoma County, California. Much of the land is rough and naturally forested with redwood, oak and bay laurel trees. Historically, the region has been primarily an agricultural area which has included cattle and sheep ranches, poultry farms and large orchards originally planted with plum and apple trees, but now cultivated with wine grapes.

The property has had various owners over the years, but few historical records regarding ownership exist. Of these, some refer to the land possessing a spiritual ‘energy’ that many felt was associated with a divine presence. In fact, the property was almost dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the Catholic Church by John Beecher (Harriet Beecher Stowe's grand-nephew), who has been one of the previous owners.

Morning Star Ranch became famous when Lou Gottlieb, a member of the popular Limelites music trio, purchased the property in the early 1960s. From 1966 through 1972 - with Lou's declaration of “open land: access to which is denied no one” – the Ranch became an unintended commune, generating a great deal of media coverage and public interest. Unfortunately, it also became a target of intense scrutiny by various Sonoma County regulatory agencies: including Public Health, the Building Permits Department and the Sonoma County Municipal Courts. Conflicts with these agencies and other entities eventually resulted in the closure of the Morning Star Ranch community.

After Lou Gottlieb’s death in 1996, ownership of the land transferred to his heirs. Today, many feel that Morning Star Ranch remains an historically significant spot: one that should be preserved as a uniquely American shrine.