



ALL IN THE FAMILY

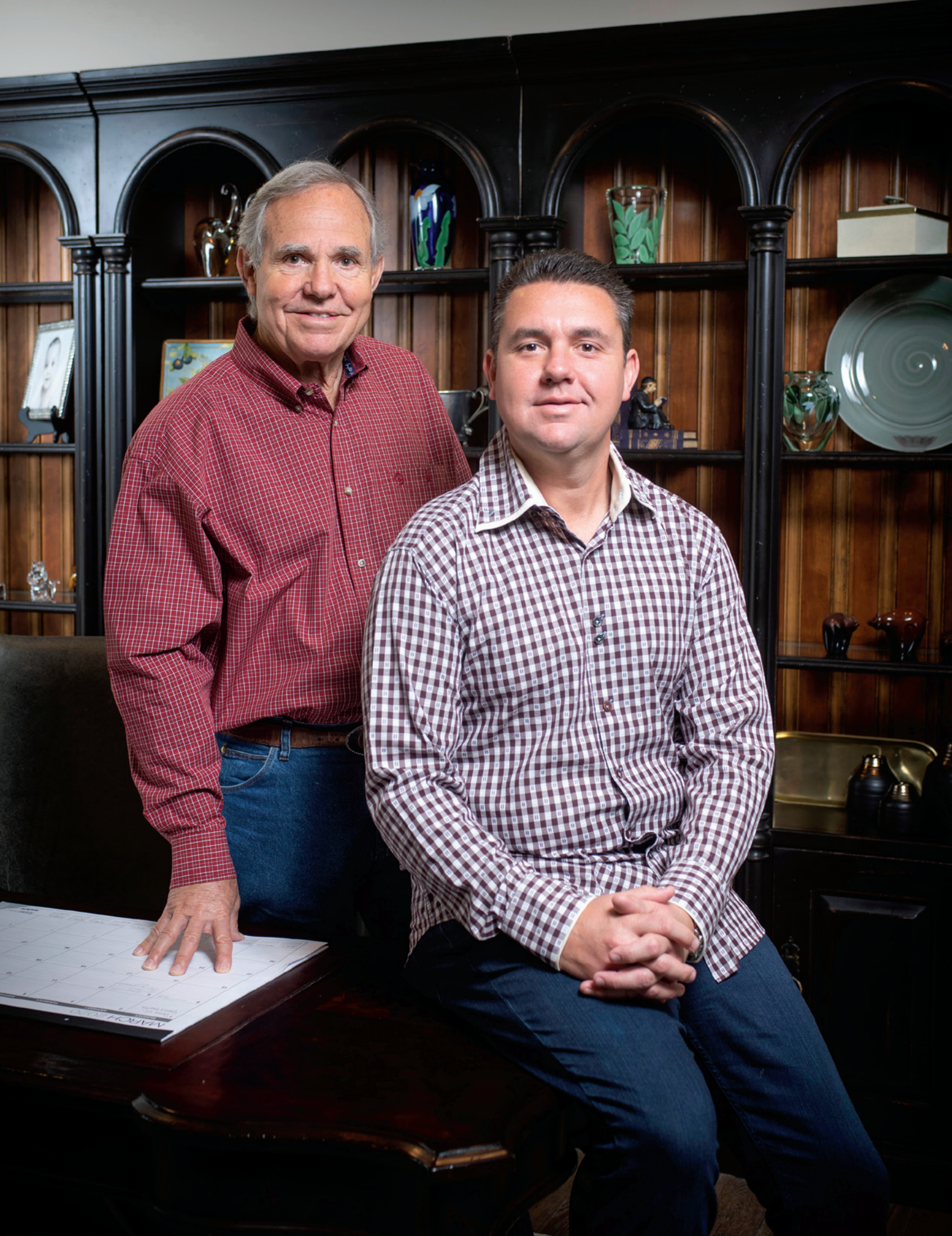
Three generations of
the Norcross family call
Cordillera Ranch home.

By Cheryl Van Tuyl Jividen :: Photography by Mark Humphries

The Norcross family had years of practice being together at their vacation home at Shaver Lake in the hills of their native California. “We had realized we were compatible roommates because we had a family cabin that we all went to as often as possible. We enjoyed our time there together. There was always lots of laughter and good times,” reminisces Marilyn Norcross.

They’ve had the opportunity for togetherness again since finding a new start at Cordillera Ranch. “In 2018, we came to Boerne to visit friends who had relocated from California. We fell in love with Texas and realized this was where we wanted to be. We started looking for homes on that first visit and ended up buying two lots side-by-side in The Springs,” says Marilyn with husband Everett. The second lot was for their son Ryan, his wife Jessica and young daughters Olivia and Emma.

“We were looking for a new adventure,” says Marilyn of their decision to leave their lives in Fresno. “We were just waiting for the right thing to come along. The Springs were ideal — with less acreage, it was the perfect transition for Californians where lots are smaller. It was everything we wanted with wide-open space and safe, care-free opportunities for the girls. Besides being beautiful, it fit our lifestyles perfectly. We are outdoors people and Cordillera Ranch has so much to offer — the golf, the horses, the gym, the dining, the kids’ camps and all the Club activities.” Everett was happy to find commonality, “We wanted a simpler life; something better for our granddaughters and consistent with our values,” he says. “So far Texas hasn’t disappointed!”



The extended family have all been living happily together at Marilyn and Everett's home, awaiting completion of Ryan and Jessica's house. "We are living together now because we all wanted to move. Everett and I started construction of our house immediately and we all moved here when it was complete. Ryan and Jessica waited until our house was close to completion before selling their house in Fresno. Emma and Olivia's school district in California was impacted and the only way the girls could stay in their school until the move to Texas was for them to stay in their house. None of us ever thought we would live together but it has worked out very well and we can't wait to be neighbors," explains Marilyn of the family's adjustment.

Jessica says the time together really made a difference, "Living under one roof has made the transition much easier for all of us and it has provided a great sense of stability for Emma and Olivia." For Everett, it's been an opportunity few grandparents have, "We are blessed to have an up-close and personal relationship with our granddaughters. I got to see Livy ride her first two-wheeler and take off her training wheels."

Living together is just another dimension of their combined lives. The family owns and operates a 70-year old, fourth-gener-



ation bakery purveying company, Robb Ross Foods, providing ingredients to commercial businesses. In 1950, a man named George Robertson, Sr. sponsored a salad oil and margarine business for his sons, George Jr. and Vernon, who were returning from World War II. But within the first year, Vernon got the calling and enrolled in Christian Seminary. So, George Jr. called Everett's dad, Ed, who was married to George's sister, Blanche, and invited him to join the business. "Ed and Blanche were living in Buffalo, New York so Fresno, California sounded



darn good to them and they moved out West! After a couple of years, they took the Robb from Robertson and the Ross from Norcross and created Robb Ross Foods,” explains Everett. Ed Norcross expanded the business into baking goods and by the 1970s, Everett and his brother had joined the company. Today, Everett serves as President and Owner and Ryan is the Vice President of Operations.

In 1980, Everett and his brother started a second company, Fruit Fillings, Inc., to better supply the bakers of the San Joaquin Valley with premium quality pie fillings, jams and jellies at competitive prices. “We rented an 800-square-foot building and started working on Saturdays and Sundays learning the filling biz. We would make fillings on the weekends, sell them to bakers on Monday through Thursday, call them back on Friday to ask about their impression of the products, reformulate, make new batches on Saturday and Sunday, and repeat until we got it right,” says Everett of the new company’s early days.

This was also the year Ryan was born. Marilyn left the business and once Ryan went to college, she returned to work, serving in various capacities before retiring.

For Everett, the beauty of working with his son is that they are united in their core values. “Working with Ryan is an absolute blessing. To see how he treats and leads people — the longer I see him doing his work, the more I respect him,” says Everett. “When it’s his time, he’ll be ready to carry on the responsibilities and the company,” he adds proudly.

For Ryan, who worked summers at both Fruit Fillings and Robb Ross Foods while growing up and started full-time after graduating from college, the feeling is mutual, “I’m grateful to be able to learn firsthand from a man with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the manufacturing and distribution industry. For my father and I, we are truly blessed to be able to work together to advance the organizations.”

Robb Ross Food’s mission statement is “The Baker’s Best Friend — These four simple words express who we are and what we do. The company-wide expertise, honesty and integrity speak volumes about our commitment to customer service.” Everett says that applies to their industry, customers, employees and community, “We want to be your best friend in every sense of the word — the first phone call you make when you’re in a



pinch, your strategic partner when you’re looking ahead to next year and the one you call to share the news when your oldest graduates from high school.”

During the pandemic, their commitment is more important than ever, says Everett, “Food safety is always very important to us. That’s why we’ve had a dedicated safety department for over 15 years. We hold our customers and the public in high regard and want to ensure their safety and that of our employees.” Understanding how relevant the supply chain is, they are doing all they can to help, “We’ve seen stores decimated and so we make deliveries to supply the mom and pop shops so they can maintain their businesses at this time. It’s the American way — we bind together, share ideas and support each other.”

Like many small businesses that are challenged at this time, they are finding ways to make it work and Everett is proud of his team and thankful that so far, he hasn’t had to furlough or have lay-offs. “We all respect each other, and we are getting along and bound together during this difficult time. Everyone is picking up and sharing jobs. We are all getting haircuts,” he says of pay.

So many of the staff are seasoned employees and are like extended family, says Everett, many attending Ryan’s college graduation and wedding. Ryan knows well how much his father cares about their hard-working, dedicated employees, “He gets great joy in the success of the people we work with. I remember one time, a sales rep who had been with us for a few years was able to purchase his first new home and when he told Ev about this, Ev beamed with pride.”

Those feelings extend to the community by giving back. Everett has long been active in the Rotary Club and they are just one of the many businesses they support including the Food Bank, the American Cancer Society, the International Wheelchair Foundation and the Salvation Army. “The desire to make a significant difference in people’s lives is at the heart of our company’s giving,” says Everett.

Ahead there are opportunities with inspirations of how they might fit Texas into their business. There’s also a family vacation planned for Washington, D.C. so the girls can see the White House and the monuments. But first, there’s Marilyn and Everett’s 40th wedding anniversary in June. It will be easy to celebrate with family. They’ll be living right next door. 🍪

The Robb Ross Foods website, www.robbrossfoods.com, is full of recipes for commercial bakeries. At home, there is a long-loved family favorite the Norcrosses have kindly shared. Tempered with the tang of buttermilk, this chocolatey good Milky Way® Cake will satisfy any sweet tooth. Cooked in a Bundt pan, it’s perfect for potlucks or celebrations with friends or family.

Milky Way® Cake

Ingredients:

10 Fun Size Bars (or 6 oz Milky Way Bars)
2 sticks Butter
2 cups Sugar
4 Eggs
1 cup Buttermilk
1/2 tsp Baking Soda
1/4 tsp Salt
2.5 cups Flour
2 tsp Vanilla

Directions:

Melt candy and butter over low heat.
Add this to beaten eggs and sugar and mix well.
Add this to flour, baking soda and salt, alternating with buttermilk and vanilla.
Bake in a greased and floured Bundt pan for 1 hour at 325°.
Make a loose mixture of powdered sugar and water with a pinch of vanilla.
Drizzle over cooled cake.

