

THE UNIVERSAL ETHICIAN CHURCH

Holy Trinity Wilderness Cathedral

C/o Russell Ministries
1401 19th Street
Huntsville, TX 77340

ETHICIUS I, PRELATE
Reception 936-295-5767
Fax 936-294-0233

e-mail: ghr@cyberclone.net
internet: www.salvationnetwork.org

November 22, 2002
ATTN: EDITOR

MARJORIE AND KENNETH RUSSELL GRANT 130-ACRE CONSERVATION

EASEMENT TO NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

For Immediate Release

Contact: George H. Russell 936-891-5245

The Natural Area Preservation Association (NAPA) is the recipient of a new conservation easement conferring permanent preservation on 130 acres of land on Lake Livingston in northeast San Jacinto County, in East Texas.

Kenneth and Marjorie Russell, long-time conservationists and residents of Huntsville, Texas, have granted the conservation easement as part of their effort to preserve a significant area of natural East Texas scenery and wildlife habitat. Dr. Russell is 91 and Marjorie is 87 years of age. They believe that the greatest legacy a person can leave for future generations is one that will have perpetual value to humankind. They believe that the protection and preservation of America's natural heritage has infinite value, far greater than a short-lived legacy such as a public building that will be bulldozed in less than a century.

Wilderness is forever.

In 2001, the Russells donated a similar easement to NAPA preserving a 311-acre tract that includes several miles of lakefront on Lake Livingston as well as swamps and bottomland forests, some of which have only been logged once since East Texas was settled. The appraised value of last year's gift to future generations was in excess of \$2,000,000.

The new 130-acre area is entirely forested. It is a diverse area, ranging from hilltop savannas of native longleaf pine trees to bottomland swamps. An outcrop of large boulders, unusual in East Texas, occurs at one location. More than 300 kinds of plants have been identified on the land.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the new preserve is the large number of longleaf pines. Longleafs are native to East Texas and once were one of the most valuable timber trees in North America. Longleaf timber is still sought after by builders. But most longleaf stands were logged early in the twentieth century and replanted in faster-growing, commercial pine species such as loblolly and slash pine. Only a few stands of longleaf pine remain in East Texas.

Originally, longleaf pine grew in a belt from southeast Texas to North Carolina. The trees on the Russells' property are the westernmost longleaf pines that are known. The preserve will offer opportunities for scientific studies to determine if the longleaf pines are genetically adapted to drought or a different climate.

Dr. Kenneth Lee Russell's interest in conservation stems from experiences early in his life. He grew up on a Brown Leghorn and Duroc Jersey farm near Chilhowee, Missouri. Dr. Russell's vocational agriculture teacher taught him the importance of soil conservation as erosion was removing the soil that provided the basis for the region's economy and wildlife. He watched farmers cut down the Osage orange hedge fences that provided homes for animals and bird life. He was frustrated because he could not get his father to build terraces to protect the soil, but always received the comment, "Maybe next year."

When Dr. Russell became a teacher of vocational agriculture in Sarcoxie and Neosho, Missouri, he taught his students the importance of preserving soil and wildlife. Later, in training vocational agriculture teachers at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, he continued his teaching of soil and wild life conservation.

Marjorie Haw Russell grew up in Charleston, Missouri, 14 miles from the Mississippi River. Old Man River dominated her life. On Sunday afternoon her father took the family for rides to see the river, but also to see the giant trees he wanted protected. Her father was later instrumental in establishing Big Oak State Park. Their Sunday rides taught her to appreciate the many aspects of nature and to love the forest and animal life.

Their worldwide travels convinced the couple that protecting the natural environment is crucial for the well-being of humanity. In 2001, the Russells' purchase of forest land on Lake Livingston made it possible to establish this preserve which will protect the animals, plants, and natural conditions of the East Texas forest. Part of the Russells' dream has come to pass.

"Places like this preserve will become very important for East Texans in the future," said David Bezanson, executive director for NAPA. "Most of the land in East Texas today has been planted in commercial timber plantations with just a few kinds of trees and limited benefit for wildlife. There are not many places where East Texas residents can go and see the natural forests that we have always known."

Conservation easements are agreements, or contracts, between a private landowner and a non-profit organization such as NAPA that restrict or prohibit future development on a piece of property. More than 100,000 acres in Texas have been set aside using these easements.

Natural Area Preservation Association is a Texas-based non-profit corporation, or land trust, that owns or manages 60 nature preserves scattered throughout the state. Many of NAPA's preserves are located in East Texas, with others in north Texas and the Hill Country. NAPA also works with private landowners to suggest ways to protect the wildlife values of their land.

In addition to the Russells, the name of the new preserve honors Edward C. "Ned" Fritz, the founder of NAPA who has become legendary for advocating forest preservation in Texas.

The public is invited to attend the dedication of the new preserve that will take place at 1:30 P.M., Sunday the 24th of November, 2002. A short, easy trail, across the Parkway from the Waterwood Fire Station, leads to one of the most beautiful parts of the preserve, where the ceremony will take place. Waterwood is located seven miles south of U.S. Highway 190 between Livingston and Huntsville, Texas.