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ATTN: OP-ED EDITOR

‘POWER COMPANY ABUSES SAM HOUSTON’S NAME AND LEGACY’

For Immediate Release

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March the second is both Texas Independence Day and Sam Houston’s Birthday. It is the time of year when thousands of Americans, not only in Texas but across America, pause to recognize the legacy of General Sam Houston.

Tragically, a Texas power cooperative is operating in a way that defames the character and memory of Sam Houston, one of America’s greatest heroes. Sam Houston Electric Cooperative (SHECO), because of its abusive tactics that are the polar opposite of Sam Houston’s record of justice, integrity, ethics, patriotism, and love of nature, is casting a dark shadow on the memory of the man who has been my personal hero for over half a century.

There are many strange and mysterious parallels in my life to that of Sam Houston. I was born in Neosho, Missouri in 1945, one hundred years after Texas Statehood was approved. Sam Houston lived for a time with Indians in Oklahoma Territory in a place he called “Wigwam Neosho” before coming to Texas.

My very favorite book in early childhood was given to me by my parents in 1948 while we were still living in Missouri. It was a biography of the life of Sam Houston, who completed construction of his Woodland Home in Huntsville exactly one hundred years earlier. When my father finished his Doctor of Education degree at the University of Missouri in 1950, he was offered a teaching position at Sam Houston State Teacher’s College so we moved to Huntsville.

I didn’t learn until 30 years later, while researching my courtroom defense of the protection of the beautiful Greek Revival Woodland Home, that I had been living quite literally in Sam Houston’s back yard. My family purchased a lot and built our home on land that had been a part of the Houston’s 184 acre homestead.

From the age of 5, in 1950, I spent countless hours in Sam Houston Park, examining the artifacts associated with the life of Houston, fishing and catching frogs in the spring fed pond adjacent to his law office and Woodland Home, and most importantly admiring the beauty of the ancient trees that still graced a large part of the neighborhood that had been a part of his original 184 acres beyond the confines of the 18 acre park.

When parts of Houston’s original homestead were threatened by commercial development, which would have destroyed the character and charm of the shrine of my hero, my wife and I bought the threatened properties to preserve the beautiful trees, many of which had belonged to Sam Houston. Eventually we were able to protect the entire streetscape that borders Sam Houston Park along 19th Street in Huntsville.

Beginning in 1998 our family began to acquire for preservation, rare and threatened ecosystems in San Jacinto County, named in honor of the battle in which Sam Houston and his citizen soldiers gained Texas’ independence.

Tragically, nothing seems to be sacred in America anymore and the names of our heroes can be glibly taken by abusive corporate interests to hide their deeds and actions that run counter to the legacy of the hero whose name was, in my opinion, misappropriated.

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, with its tentacles spreading over several counties in East Texas, is just such a company, which I believe should either start operating according to the ethical standards exhibited by General Houston or change its name, more appropriately to the Tecumseh Sherman Power Cooperative, after the General who cut a swath through Georgia, destroying everything in his path. SHECO has already destroyed the beauty of at least two rural Texas highways and now is

obsessed with destroying the beauty along a swath 6.2 miles long on one of the last remaining untrammelled Texas roadways in San Jacinto County.

Following are a few examples of why Sherman's destructive actions, or those of Attila the Hun or Genghis Khan, for that matter, more suit the actions of SHECO than does the legacy of Sam Houston:

HOUSTON loved and respected Native Americans and would never consider desecrating a place of worship sacred to their culture.

SHECO wants to bulldoze a 35,000,000 year old Catahoula outcrop of boulders high above Lake Livingston that is associated with the Winter Solstice, and is an important part of a Texas State Archaeological Landmark.

HOUSTON was very kind to African Americans and gave up his governorship to be hated by plantation owners to the end of his days because he refused to join the Confederacy.

SHECO has gone out of its way, choosing a route 7/10 of a mile longer than an alternative, to run a potentially dangerous EMF radiation emitting 138 kv transmission line through a predominantly African American neighborhood, rather than more directly through nearby cow pastures and clearcuts, in a blatant example of what is known as "environmental racism". SHECO has subsequently used its substantial resources to stifle the testimony of the affected home owners who demand "environmental justice" and even successfully protested against holding any hearings in San Jacinto County, thus effectively disenfranchising the low income residents who cannot afford to travel to Austin for hearings scheduled on March 7-9, 2005.

HOUSTON loved nature and was one of the few men of his day who preserved and protected the native trees on his homestead, some of which survive to this day.

SHECO demands that it be allowed to cut a swath 60 feet wide and 2.7 miles long through nature preserves and wildlife sanctuaries that were established to protect some of the last remaining ancient forest ecosystems in East Texas, although an alternate route through clearcuts, cow pastures, and cellulose plantations is shorter. Some of the trees SHECO would destroy were living before Texas became a State and may have even shaded Sam who loved to hunt bears in this area.

HOUSTON believed in Democracy and in the will of the people and their right to be heard and respected.

SHECO is run like a dictatorship, where an inspection of the almost impossible to obtain, redacted Board Minutes reveal that the Board is largely ignorant of what is really being done behind the scenes. All of the citizens whose lives and livelihoods would be negatively impacted by SHECO's plans are members of the Cooperative, yet SHECO refuses to acknowledge our right to protest and has spent tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars of our money to fight against us and quash any dissent.

HOUSTON loved the wilderness and spent as much time as possible wandering through wilderness trails and admiring the beauties of nature.

SHECO's plans would seriously damage the beauty of a Great Texas Wildlife Trail. In a letter submitted to the Public Utility Commission of Texas, TPWD stated: "The low aesthetic value that the proposed transmission line puts on the trail does not project a favorable message to visitors to our State."

HOUSTON was protective of private property rights and was one of the persons behind the establishment of Texas' earliest and most beautiful residential neighborhoods just below "Capital Hill" in Huntsville.

SHECO wants to take by force private property that was purchased as a lasting legacy for the enjoyment of all Texans and all Americans as an example of what was meant by the phrase "America the Beautiful" before much of our great country was fragmented, paved over, and clearcut.

HOUSTON promoted a strong economy and quality development.

SHECO is promoting miles of hideously ugly visual and other harmful impacts that will have a serious negative affect on the property values of over 1,500 members of the Waterwood Improvement Association as well as that of the homes of other citizens who will be forced to live within the EMF danger zone of 300 feet from the center line of the high voltage line. The negative aesthetic impact will effect over 6 miles of FM 980 which is the gateway to Lake Livingston, thus seriously damaging the economic future of both Walker and San Jacinto counties.

HOUSTON was a great proponent of education and was among the founders of Austin College, with its beautiful Greek Revival building that still graces "Capital Hill" in Huntsville.

SHECO wants to cut a swath through the site of the planned Academic Village (www.academicvillage.org) as well as damage the scientific research potential on the Russell-Fritz Westernmost Longleaf Pine Preserve.

HOUSTON loved beautiful architecture, clothing, furnishings and other products of civilization as well as the beauties of nature.

SHECO is totally insensitive to aesthetics and rather than running their transmission line through uninhabited and degraded lands that have recently traded for as low as \$150 to \$800 per acre, would damage the passageway of thousands of visitors to Texas. Nearly three miles of the SHECO preferred route would be through Texas Forest Service Aesthetic Management Zones.

HOUSTON was respectful of spiritual values and of the freedom to worship as one pleased.

SHECO would destroy the entire highway frontage of the consecrated sacred grounds of the 716 acre Holy Trinity Wilderness Cathedral where Ethician worship services are held each Saturday, one hour before sunset and at Easter Sunrise. (www.sunsetservices.org & www.eastersunrise.org) SHECO would furthermore blight another rural Texas highway known as Cathedral Drive, that leads the visitor into the heart of the wilderness. Also damaged would be the Chapel of the Nativity, which is open 24 hours a day for prayer and meditation to people of all faiths.

HOUSTON was respectful of the families of loved ones who had passed on and would never desecrate a cemetery.

SHECO plans to cut a huge swath over a half mile in length through the Ethician Family Cemetery (www.ethicianfamilycemetery.org) as well as through areas consecrated for the scattering of ashes of the deceased.

In summation, SHECO is disgracing the legacy and memory of my hero and the person without whom the great State of Texas would not exist. I have asked our State Representative, Jim McReynolds to file a bill that would protect the beauty of our Texas Highways from the type of desecration proposed by SHECO. Hopefully it is not too late to save our beautiful rural highway from SHECO's scheme.

(For background on the terrible uphill battle citizens have been waging to protect the beauties of the State that we love from SHECO, please visit the Public Utilities Commission Texas web site and visit PUC Docket 29705. The web address is <http://interchange.puc.state.tx.us/WebApp/Interchange/application/dbapps/login/pgLogin.asp> Click the link named "login" which will take you to a screen with a box labeled control number. Enter 29705 in the control number box and then click on the "search now" button.)

George H. Russell
American Patriot

George H. Russell, an outspoken opponent of the death penalty, is a resident of Huntsville, Texas, known worldwide as "The City of Death."

He is founder of The Patriot Network, and author of its 35+ web sites located at www.patriotnetwork.org, as well as founder of The Universal Ethician Church, an interfaith ministry with a worldwide following via the church's 275+ web sites located at www.salvationnetwork.org.

Russell, 59, is an educational video producer, environmental activist, historic preservation specialist, photographer, art and antique collector, philanthropist, American patriot and ethician.

Additional biographical information may be found in Who's Who in America, through Internet searches, and in other publications. Images of Mr. Russell suitable for downloading for publication may be found at www.salvationnetwork.org.