

Natural Area Preservation Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 162481  
Austin, TX 78716-2481

(512) 804-1981  
<http://www.cep.unt.edu/napa>

*Katherine Goodbar, Editor*

## FRAZIER-RUNNELS PRESERVE IN ANGELINA NATIONAL FOREST

Many of you have gone to the yearly PowWow at Angelina National Forest and walked through Upland Island Wilderness glorying in the diversity of trees and the richness of the vegetation. You have gone to Longleaf Ridge and marveled at the huge longleaf pines. Did you ever in your wildest dreams imagine that NAPA would own land there? Through the generosity of **Miss Dessor Ree Frazier**, we now have been given a 20-acre tract of land located in the Boykin Community in southeastern Angelina County near Upland Island Wilderness.

"Future generations of Americans will be fortunate to have this generous gift of property," **Richard Donovan** said in accepting for NAPA. "It is strategically located near Upland Island Wilderness and is completely surrounded by the unique area of Angelina National Forest known as Longleaf Ridge." Miss Frazier made the land contribution in memory of her parents, Harrison, Sr. and Mary Frazier, and her grandparent, James R. "Jim" and Emma Runnels, and her charge to NAPA was that they "manage the land to restore food and habitat for East Texas wildlife".

Richard Donovan tells us about the life of this remarkable lady.

Miss Dessie, as her family and friends affectionately call her, was born in 1918, just a few yards from this tract. She grew up cultivating the same land that her grandfather, a freed slave, had plowed before her.

When asked about those times on the farm, Miss Dessie will smile a gentle smile and tell you about her favorite plow mule Kate, or about the first time her father let her take the plow.

Early in life, Miss Frazier set her goal to become a nurse, one of the few jobs available to women at the time, especially black women. She received her primary education in the one-room Vernon School, two and one-half miles away. Every day she and her brothers and sisters walked to school and back home regardless of the weather. On really cold days, they ran.

The year that Miss Dessie finished public school, and before she could enter college, the family home burned. She remained at home to help with the smaller children and with work on the farm. Later, she moved to Houston and began work as an in-home nurse, working 24 hours per day, six days per week. She was paid \$45. per week, some of which she sent back home.

It took two years of in-home nursing, but she managed to save \$350, enough to pay for classes at a Tyler school to qualify for admittance to Prairie View School of Nursing. A near fatal case of rheumatic fever again delayed Miss Dessie's dream, but she did survive and returned to Tyler and later graduated from the Prairie View School of Nursing in 1950.

Frazier-Runnels – Cont.

Upon graduation her strong family ties drew her back to East Texas. She applied for a job at one of this area's hospitals. Unfortunately, in 1950, America was still suffering with the blight of segregation, and the hospital refused to consider her application.

Frazier's bad luck had turned to good. This rejection by the hospital caused her to seek admittance to the University of Texas medical Branch School of Nursing in Galveston. Her application was accepted, and she was numbered among the first black students to graduate that program. She had found her life's work and remained at the University of Texas Medical Center for 38 years and was named "Nurse of the Year" along the way.

NAPA is deeply grateful to Dessor Ree Frazier for entrusting us with the care of this exceptional tract of land. We will tend it carefully.



Larry Shelton admires one of the majestic old trees at the Frazier-Runnels Preserve in Angelina National Forest

**NAPA HISTORY: A BOOK?**

The previous article was longer than we usually give to one preserve, but it is so seldom that we know the history of a preserve, who owned it and loved it before we assumed its care – its heritage, and Miss Dessie's story was well worth telling. It would be so good to know the story of all of the preserves.

**Mary Kay Jackman** sent us the Abstract of Title to the Prichard Preserve that she and her mother gave to NAPA. Can you imagine our thrill when we read in a document dated April 28, 1884, "I, Anson Jones, President of the Republic of Texas, .....do by these presents grant to John Ables, his heirs and assigns FOREVER One League and One Labor of Land, situated and described as follows:"

1 league and 1 labor is 5,099.01 varas square or 4,605 acres.

We also learned that the land was sold to W.G. Prichard in 1888.

In the Fall 1998 NAPA NEWS you read that **Carroll McCarter's** grandfather bought the preserve land for \$6.00 an acre. Wagon ruts which her family has long said demark a former overland trail to the Red River, traverse her land .

In our Spotlight article, you will read some of the history of Banita Creek.

There must be more of these stories about the preserves that we haven't heard. **Anne Norvell** has volunteered to try to collect these stories, and it would be very nice if we could someday compile them into a book. If you know of any histories, please contact her at (214)-373-3973 or Email: annenorvl@aol.com

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Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity. Aldo Leopold

