

## Victory Is Possible in the War on Cogongrass

By *Stanley R. Anderson and Kenneth Leslie, Alabama Forestry Commission*

**“Y**ou best start believing in ghost stories . . . you’re in one.” It’s a line from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, that Dr. George B. Inge says he is reminded of when considering his 160-acre

TREASURE Forest between Wilmer and Georgetown in Mobile County. In 2002, he reported that there were three patches of cogongrass; today there are almost 200 spots.

Dr. Inge, a former OB-GYN, now a fertility specialist in the Mobile area, devotes many of his “off” hours to recreating and working in his TREASURE Forest. He also owns Alabama forestland in two other locations: one woodland in Forest Home between Greenville and Pine Apple, and another in the Mobile River Delta near Stockton on Sandy Hook Island.

Investing heavily in time, equipment, and herbicides, George says, “Controlling cogongrass has become a hobby.” For the past six years, he has made repeated treatments, one to two times per year, in his efforts to control this aggressive, stubborn, invasive grass. He rigged up a 26-gallon sprayer system on the back of a John Deere Trail Gator and purchased a 4-gallon backpack sprayer for mop-up work. The spring and summer sprayings employ 1.2 ounces/gallon of Arsenal® and 4.0 ounces/gallon of Accord® with one ounce/gallon of surfactant. Using a handheld GPS to locate and document his efforts, it takes about 10 hours each season (20 hours per year) to perform all the required tasks.

The extra effort and hard work is paying off. On the boundary lines, the ground vegetation is quite contrasting . . . on the neighbors’ side is a thick sea of cogongrass; now on the Inge side, a natural floor of native brush, grasses, forbs, and only a trace of the persistent invasive. However, some cogongrass is still there and the war goes on. According to Dr. Inge, “It makes

you wonder if you are fighting a losing battle, if your neighbors are not controlling their cogongrass.”

However, a recent land ownership change may ease some of George’s concerns. His new neighbors have become allies in the combat against cogongrass. In beginning their eradication campaign, they have contracted to

spray the invasive weed on the property adjoining his TREASURE Forest, giving him optimism.

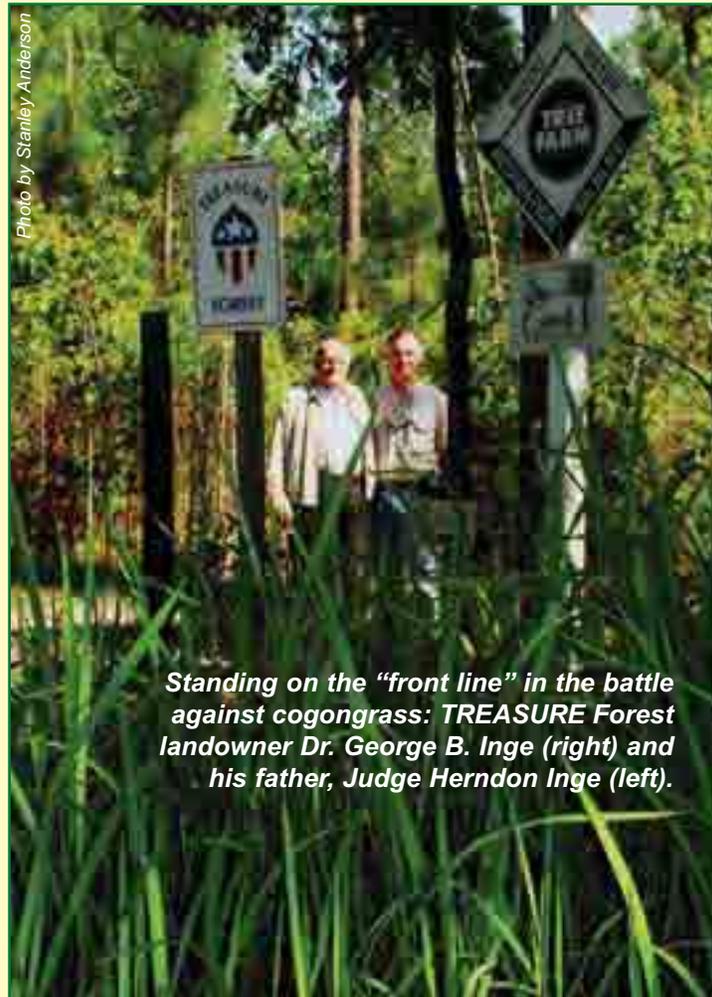
A strong sense of environmental responsibility is demonstrated by Dr. Inge as his property is located just three miles north of Big Creek Lake, the reservoir for Mobile’s source of drinking water. He carefully considers water quality and wildlife when conducting forestry practices such as firebreak construction, prescribed burning, site preparation, pine release, and invasive species control. He stabilizes his roadbeds, uses water bars, and places gravel on critical areas.

Some of the property’s assets include gopher tortoises, pitcher plants, and natural stands of longleaf mixed with hardwoods. Additionally, over a half mile of Big Creek meanders through the forest, which includes 35 acres of planted longleaf pine and some planted slash pine on the lower tracts. George mon-

itors the gopher tortoise burrows and conducts prescribed burning to help keep the habitat healthy.

Affiliated with several groups, Dr. Inge maintains a broad perspective on environmental and forestry issues. He is a member of the Forest Landowners Association, Longleaf Alliance, Nature Conservancy, Alabama Forest Owners Association, Sierra Club, Invasive Species Council, and others as well. In May 2006, he hosted “Forested Flyways,” the traveling education program sponsored by the American Forest Foundation. While this group was visiting his land, George demonstrated

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**Standing on the “front line” in the battle against cogongrass: TREASURE Forest landowner Dr. George B. Inge (right) and his father, Judge Herndon Inge (left).**



live, growing-season prescribed burning on two patches in his longleaf.

Dr. Inge is grateful for cost-share programs and highly appreciative of all the professional and technical assistance he has received over the years from both government and private sources. The Alabama Forestry Commission and Natural Resources Conservation Service have provided help through cost-share and technical assistance. Steve Lyda, former county forester for several years, spent many hours helping the Inges with their land management. He also credits Doug Link and the Alabama River Woodlands Landowner Assistance Program, as well as Steve Crowley with helping them enter into the Scotch Plywood Landowner Assistance Program.

Family ownership on this property goes back to 1921 when George's great grandfather, Plumer Burgette, first purchased it. After his death in 1933, it was leased to an adjacent landowner and received very little management for three generations. Dr. Inge started enjoying the land after his return from military service in 1984 and eventually bought it from his relative heirs in 1995. His father, Judge Herndon Inge, Jr., also owns five acres

with a cabin which adjoins the TREASURE Forest. At 88 years of age, this veteran of World War II infantry officer and former prisoner of war is still working at his law practice daily. He and George work together to maintain their road access.

Several things have inspired Dr. Inge to maintain a forest stewardship ethic. He recalls visiting the land when he was still in grammar school. Later, he was an Eagle Scout and his dad, Scout Master, but they were discouraged from using the land in those days by the adjoining landowner who was leasing the property. Another motivation to enjoy the forest was acquired while taking part in hunting trips, when stationed in Germany during his service in the Cold War. Challenged by the cogongrass issue, George now makes up for lost time.

Dr. Inge said that he is also inspired by a scripture reading from Proverbs 22:28: "Do not move an ancient boundary stone set up by your forefathers." He emphasized that if you own property, you cannot neglect it; you must maintain a management presence. If you neglect it, you might very well lose it – to cogongrass! 🌿

## Alabama TREASURE Forest Association Conference and Wildlife/Forestry Festival October 24 & 25, 2008 -- Montgomery, AL

### Friday, October 24, 2008

Conference

Renaissance Hotel at the Convention Center

Registration: 9:00 – 11:00 am

ATFA Luncheon: 11:45 am

Sessions: 1:15 – 4:45 pm

ATFA Banquet & Live Auction: 6:30 pm

### Saturday, October 25, 2008

Wildlife/Forestry Festival

Farmers' Market

10:00 am – 4:00 pm

*Register on line at [www.atfa.net](http://www.atfa.net)*

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