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**ALL PROFILES WRITTEN BY FRANK MCINTOSH**

## **THE GILL FAMILY**

Long before Fort Stewart and the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program, Moe Gill's family was working the land in the Savannah area. Indeed, some of the Gills' land became a part of Fort Stewart (then Camp Stewart) when it was created in 1940 to provide a site for training in anti-aircraft gunnery.

Much of the family land was amassed by Moe Gill's grandfather and was in turpentine production from the 1920s through the 1960s. When turpentine and other elements of "naval stores" eventually became unprofitable, the Gills got out of the business. After they went out of that business they harvested the "face" trees (so called because of the distinctive V-shaped "cat faces" notched into a tree to draw forth the resin that was distilled into turpentine.)

Gill's property retains the old turpentine still shed and the copper pot used to boil down the resin. After the pot's top was stolen, the family filled the pot with resin which they let set up, rendering this artifact too heavy to steal, at least without trying to sneak a forklift onto the property under Gill's watchful eye.

Gill's grandfather worked a herd of around 500 cattle. At that point cattle were raised under "no fence" rules, roaming freely throughout the area.



*Moe Gill on porch of cabin on his property*

The roundup would stretch from Fleming, on the edge of Hinesville, over to Dixie, well to the east in Bryan County, where the cattle pens were. The cattle also roamed well into the core of the Fort.

Moe notes that a prime function of the roundups, in addition to sorting out cattle ready for the market, was to brand the herd. In addition to the brand (an "under 7" on one herd and an "over 7" on another), the cattle's ears were notched and split in distinctive ways. "Folks can change your brand but it's a lot harder to change a cow's ears," Gill notes.

The family land—eventually divided up among Grandfather Gill's seven children (Moe's father being the only son)—has now been out of the cattle production for a good while.

The land that Moe's father received is worked for timber and game management. The timber is a mix of slash and loblolly pine, with well-managed game plots located around the property planted with headed out rye, wheat, oats, millet ("anything that attracts bugs") to encourage dove, quail, turkey and deer. Gill reports that they practice Quality Deer Management Association practices on the property (limiting take on bucks to "8 points outside the ears and controlling does") and are members of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Gill and family have two conservation easements held by Georgia Land Trust in Bryan and Liberty counties, Ga., each totaling about 249 acres.



### *Marshy area in old rice field*

"One of the things most satisfying about owning land is sharing it with other families and friends. I love my cabin here and love to share it," Moe says. Still, asked what is one of the least enjoyable aspects of land ownership, Moe, like many landowners, responds, "It's keeping your privacy."

"You can post it all you want, and then you look out your window and they're out there sitting in your yard. You really have to know your boundaries and manage your land."

Knowing your boundaries and making sure others did was one of Moe's first jobs on the farm. By the time Moe came along, fencing the land had become more common and each summer, Moe and Paul Davis, one of the hands on the land, would "head out with a croaker sack full of staples and a hammer and go out and put the wires back up where they'd gotten knocked down over the past year. I knew the land real well at an early age. and I've made sure my boys do, too."

Gill would like all the family land to remain in the family and his sons, Joe and Jay, have taken to land management.

"I'm almost surprised how much," Moe says. "I couldn't do it without them—it looks like they'll be the next stewards of the property. And, of course, we couldn't any of us do it without their mother, Gay."