

**PROFILES OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONORS  
GEORGIA LAND TRUST, INC., ALABAMA LAND TRUST, INC., THE CHATTOWAH OPEN LAND TRUST,  
INC.**

**ALL PROFILES WRITTEN BY FRANK MCINTOSH  
(SUMMER, 2010 ISSUE)**

## **THE ROLADER FAMILY**

### **“DOC IKE” ROLADER’S VISION FULFILLED, ENJOYED BY FAMILY**

When “Doc Ike” Rolader purchased the Paces Farm and Land property in Emanuel County, Ga., his simple concept was for the land to support quail hunting and where his family—kids, grandkids—could “forever gather.”

When the senior Rolader bought the property from a land bank, he told his family it would be increasingly hard to find the large contiguous properties his vision required. It took Doc Ike’s vision to see the possibilities.

The land—totally cleared, with four large center pivot irrigators—was terribly depleted from years of leaseholders’ “deficient practices.”

Doc’s son Bob describes the land at time of purchase as “a sea of pigroot and coffee weed.” The family jokingly referred to it as “Paces South: A Treeless Development.”

The Roladers launched a quarter century of aggressive land management with “a month of bushhogging.” They planted over a million pines, creating a mosaic of small game fields, openings and cover areas. They planted wild plums, bicolor lespedeza (which they are now trying to eradicate) and even “fertilized briars, where we could find them.”

Now, the Roladers are transitioning their pine to longleaf. “When we started out, we didn’t know our trees as well as we could have. After a few thinnings, we started planting longleaf.”

A recent planting of 30,000 longleaf brings the total to 70,000. The land, even after the long siege of depletion, is extremely good soil; about 45 percent of the property is rated prime soils or soils of statewide importance by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service.

“We’ve been fortunate to have stable land management much of our time here,” Bob says of his land manager of 16 years, Keith Claxton. They manage for quail, which encourages almost all forms of wildlife; there are healthy populations of deer, turkey, rabbits, foxes, bobcats and, less fortunately, coyote.



*Doc Ike Rolader and his grandson, Ike*



***Mown-grass road through Paces property***

Bald and golden eagles visit the property's two large lakes. Bob, an avid falconer, trains red-tailed hawks that he hunts for one or two seasons and then returns to the wild. The hawks are fond of the property's plentiful gray squirrels, and Bob recalls with a smile when one took on a fox squirrel in a losing battle.

The 860-acre conservation easement donated in 2009 to Georgia Land Trust protects nearly 350 acres of wetlands along Rocky Creek, a significant tributary of the Ogeechee River. The wetlands are crossed by an old rail bed from the Wadley Southern line. The Greenaway Whistle Stop might have served as many as a hundred sharecropper families working the property's fields, then owned by Enon Lamb.

Beyond protecting the land from fragmentation, the family sees the conservation easement as a way to reduce "downstream squabbling, allowing us to concentrate on land management." Bob continues, "It also allows me to plant things like longleaf pine and live oaks. I know I won't walk under them all, but somebody's got to plant them. As I move around the property, I can age myself by how things are growing."

Watching the property grow was a particular pleasure for Doc Ike, who passed away a year and a half ago. The property projects a natural appearance, with pines flowing in natural rhythms across the landscape. Live oaks planted by the family provide shade in the heat and mast for foraging game. The open plots and ground cover are lush. Thanks to Doc Ike's vision, this land welcomes wildlife and generations of family yet to come.