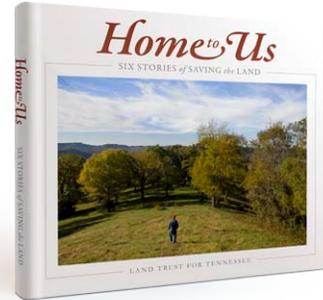




Beautiful Book Showcases Six Families Committed to Preserving the Land



The Land Trust for Tennessee, which was created in 1999 to help save the state's richly historic landscapes from being devoured by development, has just hit the 65,000-acre mark. That is—in just over a single decade—the Land Trust for Tennessee has helped landowners and agencies in the state protect 65,000 acres of land, making it a leading force for preservation across the country and a champion of saving land in the South.

In order to promote and celebrate this critical work, award-winning photographer Nancy Rhoda, writer Varina Willse, and prominent editor John Egerton have teamed to create a rare kind of book that will appeal to anyone who cares about land. Titled *Home To Us: Six Stories of Saving the Land*, due out in the fall of 2012, the book offers six in-depth portraits of families who have made the decision to protect their land. Though regionally specific to Middle Tennessee, the scope of the book's meaning and relevance extends more widely to the South and to the nation as a whole. Ultimately, it is a tapestry of stories—woven beautifully through interlacing words and images—that explores the timeless and essential connection between people and the physical environments they call home.

The fundamental question driving the work is, Why do certain people decide to protect their land? The initial answer is that these people believe that there is nothing more valuable, not for their children and grandchildren nor for the nation as a whole. They choose their legacy to be in the form of hills that please the eye and soil that yields food and grasses that nourish wildlife.

To read this book is to meet and get to know these wonderful people. It is to comprehend what motivates a human to be forward thinking and selfless in a world too often defined by instant gratification and greed. It is to appreciate the land around us and the regular folks who have secured its existence. And, it is to come ultimately to the same understanding that they have: The land is bigger than us. It's bigger than money. It's bigger than time. And it has to be protected.

A hardcover book in full color, to be printed locally using only sustainable products, *Home To Us* is a book to glance through and to curl up with. It is one to give as a gift and one to rest on your own coffee table. With proceeds benefiting further land preservation in the South—and a cost currently set at only \$35—*Home to Us* is a great buy for a great cause.

Included for review are the biographies of those involved, the cover image, and a selection of spreads from four different chapters. We would be happy to share any further information upon request. Please direct your inquiries to Varina Willse at varinawillse@gmail.com or Nancy Rhoda at nrhoda@comcast.net. Thank you in advance for your valuable time and consideration.



Biographies

Nancy Rhoda, Photographer

Born in San Francisco, Nancy Rhoda graduated from Peabody College and attended the University of Tennessee School of Social Work. She came to the *Tennessean* in 1974 as the first female photographer in the newspaper's history and continued her work there for nearly thirty years. During her career, she has won numerous journalism awards, including two first place awards in the National Press Photographers' "Pictures of the Year Contest." As part of the *Tennessean* journalism team, she shared a National Headliner Award and was a nominated finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Public Service in 1981 for her series on the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. That same year, she became the first woman photojournalist to become a "Nieman Fellow" at Harvard University. In 2000, she retired from the *Tennessean* and served as the photo editor for the book, *Nashville: An American Self-Portrait*. Her work has been published in such magazines as *Newsweek* and *Vanity Fair* and in various books, including *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Tennessee Women, Past and Present*.

Varina Willse, Author

Varina Willse is a native of Middle Tennessee, the sixth generation to live on the Buntin family farm in Robertson County. Graduating Phi Beta Kappa with Highest Honors from The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, she began her career in writing in New York, first at Conde Nast *Women's Sports and Fitness* and then at *Harper's Bazaar*, where she helped to launch their editorial presence online. Pursuing a Masters Degree in Modern Literature, she attended Oxford University, Lincoln College, and graduated with Distinction before returning to Tennessee to embark on a dual career in education and writing. She taught American Literature, Comparative Women's Literature, and Romantic Poetry at Ensworth High School, while also serving as a columnist and Executive Editor at the regional magazine, *Culture and Leisure*. She now spends her time raising her twin daughters, tutoring, and freelance writing.

John Egerton, Editor

John Egerton is an independent journalist and nonfiction author who lives in Nashville and writes broadly about his native South. His aim is to discover and interpret the positive and negative forces that for centuries have given this complex region its distinctiveness. Born in Atlanta in 1935 and raised in Kentucky, where he got his formal education (University of Kentucky BA 1958, MA 1960), he has also lived in Florida, Virginia, and Texas. Among his books are: *The Americanization of Dixie* (1974); *Generations* (1983), which won the W. D. Weatherford and Lillian Smith book awards; *Southern Food* (1987), which was named Book of the Year by the International Association of Culinary Professionals; and *Speak Now Against the Day* (1994), for which he received the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. He has taught in the Humanities and American Studies programs at Virginia Tech and the University of Texas-Austin. He has also written and edited two books of history and photography about his adopted home city, Nashville—one for its 200th birthday in 1979 and the other in 2001.

Home^{to} Us

SIX STORIES *of* SAVING *the* LAND



LAND TRUST FOR TENNESSEE



The Crunk Family

Hard Work & Clean Livin’

When a stranger to the farming community of Bethesda in rural Williamson County first meets Mrs. Elizabeth Crunk, he can’t help but be struck by her. She is elderly, in a chronological sense, but vigorously attractive, with blue-gray eyes blazing out of a weather-worn face. A thick mat of white hair bulges from beneath her ball cap, which has a cow emblazoned on the front, and her pearled earrings offset the brogans she’s wearing.

The stranger makes bold to ask her, in a friendly sort of way, “Are you a Tennessee hillbilly?”

Mrs. Crunk is certainly a Tennessean. But of the two farms where she has spent almost all of the past nine plus decades, only one is hilly; the other is flat. And so, hand on hip, she gives the man a mischievous smile, which might easily be a smirk, and messes with him a bit. She also sets the record straight. It’s a combination of sass and straight-shooting she mastered long ago—at least as early as age fifteen, when she, Elizabeth, made “Miz Oliver,” the principal’s wife, cry because she refused to take her feet out of a bucket of cold water in the home ec room. It was frost-bite weather, and, as usual, Elizabeth had ridden her horse to school. Along the way her feet froze. She was thawing them according to her daddy’s advice, and no amount of cajoling or crying by the principal’s wife or by the principal himself was going to get her to do otherwise. That headstrong girl is now the woman confronting the question, “Are you a Tennessee hillbilly?”

“Well, yes. I really am,” she says, “But I’m a Tennessee *Clodhoppa* Hillbilly.”

He was the one to build the bridge across the creek, painstakingly smoothing out the turnbuckles in the old railway flatcar he used as the base. And he is the one who will build his and Allison's future home from the ground up with his own two hands. "Matthew can do it all," Allison explains. "He can do electrical, he can do plumbing. If you can do it, why would you pay someone to do it?" she asks rhetorically.

Having pored over the plans for providing water to his own house, Matthew has now broken ground on the project. He begins by digging water trenches. It is hard work he does high on the hill in a white shirt and pants. The attire is temperature-related but it gives Matthew a ritualistic, almost spiritual aura that suits him, because for all of his practical know-how, he is also an artist. He has been collecting fragments for years, discarded objects that he then uses to make one-of-a-kind light fixtures. Lannie and Allison both envision him doing more of this kind of creative endeavor in the future.

"Well, it's always nice to think that when you're seasonal, in the wintertime maybe I could do this," Matthew replies, "but there's always something else to be done because you just kind of have your nose on the stone." And the stone, for the time being, is the house, which Matthew is intent on making as chemical-free as possible.

Chemicals, and the state of affairs in the modern world at large, give Matthew cause for great alarm. When Matthew's brain starts to tick, it runs like a timer, sequentially honing toward a buzzer when a solid opinion has been formed. The timer runs like this: "There's a lot of things that I'll identify with in life that I really don't like. I look at the car and I think it's a hot day. The front of the car is the vent. The car in front of me is a tailpipe, and what comes out of that tailpipe comes in through my vent, and you can smell it. And when I go into town to do delivery, and I come back, I always feel bad—physically bad—because of what I've picked up in town." The buzzer sounds, and the opinion is this: Matthew



The nursing period, though, is brief, and the lambs are pretty quickly moved into a separate pasture. When Steve enters the gate to feed them, the four-month-olds spook, dashing back and forth, bumping into one another, and ultimately getting confused as to how to navigate toward the feeding troughs. Steve just laughs at them, pointing out the ringleader who initiates the tizzy every time.



The older sheep are far more sedate though no less interested. Rather than scamper about, they stand, every last one, transfixed by Steve's approach. Undoubtedly they are hungry and expectant, but there is something both curious and trusting in the way they watch him. Only when he tosses out their hay do they jostle and bleat at him and one another, vying for the supper he has brought them.

Going about this chore, after a full day navigating the demands of school leadership, Steve shows no signs of fatigue or irritability. He and Susan have recently "down-sized," reducing their flock from fifty to fourteen, and in turn reducing some of the stress regarding their care. Though the change has meant less responsibility in some regards, such as less feeding during these evening rounds, it has actually meant more in others. Before, when the Fishers owned more sheep, they hired a guy to do the shearing, someone whose grandfather had been in the business before



Susan and Steve chose a rare, old-fashioned breed of sheep named Cotswald for the notable softness of its fleece and for its traditional origins.



As much as Mama V misses her husband, her days are not spent sitting in Don's room or looking over old pictures. Instead, she keeps herself busy by cooking and reading, playing bridge and figuring out word games. She is eighty-five and healthy, proud that her doctor thinks she could pass for fifteen years younger.

"He says I could pass for 62. I think an attitude has a lot to do with it. I'm an optimist," she says. "Very optimistic about everything. You laugh and the world laughs with you." She softens her voice. "You cry and you cry alone."

Mama V pauses then reasserts herself, "I have a very good attitude. And I walk, you know."

Mama V is too cautious to walk alone, but she and Vicki walk together just about every day Vicki is out at Shawnee Waters. Their path, a grassy one about two miles long, loops around the peninsula-shaped property and takes them past all the major points of interest. It takes them by the creek and the tennis court and the dock. It takes them by the orchard where cherry, apple, plum, pear, and peach trees grow and by their tidy square garden where pumpkins, eggplant, asparagus, squash, and watermelons flourish. Vicki saves the seeds of the fruit she eats when traveling abroad and mails them home to plant. This is how she happens to have French watermelons in Tennessee.

At any given point along the walk, Vicki might pause to observe a turtle sunbathing or Mama V might stoop to pet the cat, a stray that took a liking to their garden and eventually to the women themselves. The cat makes it the full two miles, as does Mama V, her pole in hand. At certain points on the path, whether steep or bumpy, Vicki extends a hand to her mother—no words needed or exchanged. Then the two continue on, curving back around to rejoin the lake, walking single file along the tranquil banks of Shawnee Waters toward home.