

The Marshall NEWS MESSSENGER



WEDNESDAY

OCTOBER 18, 2000

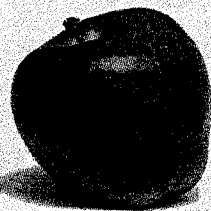
Marshall, Texas

16 pages - 50¢

Vol. 124, No. 133

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**Today's
News
Messenger**



AN APPLE A day is much better in a bread or cake. See Food, Page 8A.

Dear Abby

Wildlife refuge to be dedicated Saturday

By **GAIL K BEIL**
News Messenger

For the first time in 50 years, the fences at Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant in Karnack are coming down.

What was once a place for the manufacture of solid fuel rocket propellant and motors will once again be a place to fish, hunt, and more importantly, a place for scientists to look for better ways to grow trees and care for fragile wetlands.

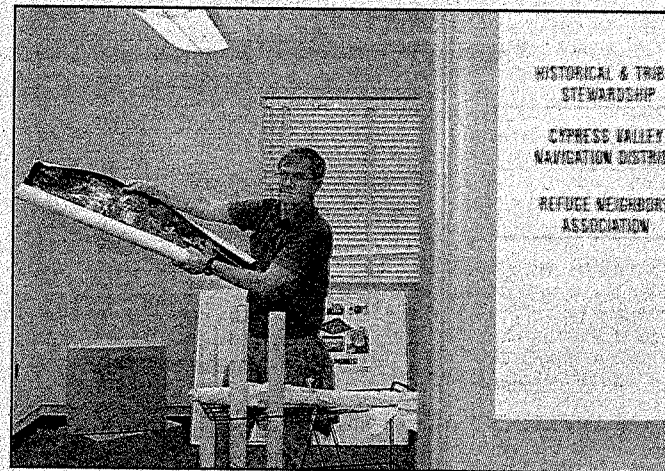
Dedication ceremonies for the 7200-acre Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday. On that day,

title for all the area which is not part of a Superfund cleanup site will officially belong to U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife.

U.S. Rep. Max Sandlin, principal speaker for the occasion, sees the change not only as a boost for recreational pursuits, but also as a chance to once again provide well-paying jobs for researchers and support staff.

"I think this is a positive development for the entire area," Sandlin said Monday. "It offers open access to the public,

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Brent Mitchell/News Messenger

DWIGHT SHELLMAN, president of Caddo Lake Institute, stacks maps and other furniture into offices at the former Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant.

Wildlife refuge to be dedicated on Saturday

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and we're talking to Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Stephen F. Austin State University, East Texas Baptist University, Panola College and Wiley College about establishing joint facilities to do research in to better forestry practices, and other wetland studies. These are programs that will create jobs."

The Longhorn Army Ammunition plant, established during World War II, was closed as a defense industry in 1993. At that time the search began for another use for the lakeside property, some of it pristine forest and unexplored bayous and creeks.

"This is not an area for smoke-stack industries," Sandlin said, "But there was a need for a commercial use for the property and education is the answer to its development."

Dwight Shellman, president of the privately-funded Caddo

Lake Institute, and ramrod for the transfer of the land from the Army to the U.S. Department of the Interior, said he could not agree more.

"What we need is a year or more of steady funding to become eligible for major long term National Science Foundation grants," he said.

As he hauled boxes and chairs into what was once the administration building, Shellman demonstrated the concept he and Sandlin were promoting. Temporary signs on doors designated offices for the colleges on Sandlin's list, plus the Cypress Valley Navigation District, the Texas Nature Conservancy, and other local historical and environmental organizations.

"They're not really there yet, but we're talking to all of them," he said. "The idea is that if we can get a critical mass of university scholars and non-governmental organizations here in this building, they will attract more

researchers, including those from the private sector."

If that doesn't happen, Shellman fears that the Army's fence that is theoretically coming down Saturday will be replaced by one up by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"U.S. Fish and Wildlife is cash poor," he said. "Without basic funding for the Caddo Lake Research Center, they won't have any money to do anything but lock it up.

What Shellman is looking for, and what he said he hopes Sandlin and other friends of Caddo Lake in the U.S. Congress, will do is appropriate new money. He said that with \$500,000 a year in new federal money for two years, plus another \$250,000 in one-time funds to complete the renovation of usable buildings near the gate of LAAP, the basis will be established for the project to continue on its own.

"We don't want to take current funds from U.S. Fish and

Wildlife or from the individual universities that will be involved in research here," he said. "We've got to find new money."

The Caddo Lake Institute, established by singer-environmentalist Don Henley, has been promoting wetlands research in local colleges and high schools since 1996, will operate 15-acre campus with the option to lease 15 more acres from the U.S. Dept. of the Interior. Shellman said he would like to get out of the research business and become the "landlord" for the center. His dream is to see, not temporary signs for imaginary offices, but an atmosphere created by community leaders and research scientists sharing coffee and the conference room.

It's worked in other places, he said, citing just such a center in North Carolina as an example, and in two years, he expects to see it working in East Texas.