

TRAILBLAZERS ENCOUNTERED!

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Among my scouting leaders long years ago we had the benefit of a forestry specialist who gave enthusiastically of his time. I suspect his hope was that what he shared would be long lived and contagious for members of our group. We had notable special excursions related to trails. We had an opportunity to learn and discover the art of trail mending, trail tending, trail signing and marking among others. Most memorable for those of us invited was to learn something of trailblazing. There were so many facets to observe as a new, fresh trail was contemplated in a stretch of yet undisturbed wooded acres. We were to discover how to be wise and discerning in creating something new that would respect and make available for others what was there.

I mention my own mentoring in trailblazing to share a special salute with three special folks who have been among us in Comal County and our beloved Texas Hill Country. Two have left significant markers along the way, one we will have an opportunity to meet in short order on 9 November 6pm.

William (Bill) Schumann left us in September with his legacy of abundant concerns and initiatives in the natural world where he spent a significant number of his years professionally and as an advocate for green, open and treed space. He and his wife, Dolores, shared a companionship of love and outdoor adventuring. They are honored and memorialized aptly with the Landa Arboretum named in their honor. There are many folks who can point to some natural vegetation or trees and say, "thanks to Bill Schumann!" I know of a few of those trees and as I admire their health and gift of shade, I say a little "thanks, Bill" as they are noted. Bill shared many gifts and was a trailblazer in his advocacy for and planting of trees for the long future.

In a very different manner of trailblazing Jensie Simms Madden pursued a life as a naturalist, advocate and astute careful describer of positive measures to be taken personally and as a community. She and her husband and life adventurer, Dan, pursued "earth friendly and enhancing" lifestyle from a model naturalist homestead in Fischer since 2001. They modeled "best stewarding practices" in and with their straw bale self-built home. From that vantage point, Jensie spread her wings into networks of conservation, public policy development with the League of Women Voters and as one of the co-founders of Comal County Conservation Alliance. Numerous publications with her "finger and word prints" caught my eye and ear as she assisted in thinking publicly about land use, water development and the business benefits of "best practices." She was a prime mover in urging that acres be kept green and set aside in conservation protections for private as well as public usage. The list is impressive! A friend observed that Jensie and Dan "walked with a light foot" pursuing their concerns for a more just and thriving friendly world for folks and the environment.

Our CCCA guest, Dr. George Veni, will introduce us to the world of Comal's karst and caves. At 6pm 9 November (virtually - check our website to tune in, comalconservation.org) we will all be amazed! George is very much a trailblazer who has pursued a personal and professional life exploring, cataloguing and describing the bumpy terrain of our hills and the amazing sources beneath our surfaces. He has been a swimmer in the Edwards Aquifer! Fortunate for our drinking water, few boast that!