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Catching up with the green cemetery and other topics

By: CYNTHIA CALVERT , Greater Houston Weekly Editor

George Russell is also making a difference - he is the owner of Texas' first green cemetery. That December column really caused some readers to be uncomfortable - a green cemetery does not use coffins. Russell believes embalming is unnatural. His cemetery, located near Huntsville, offers family plots where even the family pets can be buried but he is facing scorn and derision from some community members who have written strong words against him in the local newspaper. His property has suffered various forms of vandalism and thefts. But his biggest adversary is the local power company, the Sam Houston Electric Cooperative (SHECO). The company has filed a request with the Public Utility Commission of Texas to build a 138,000-volt electric power transmission line right through the Ethician Family Cemetery. Russell says the line is a back-up line that would only serve 500 people. He offered alternate routes which, he says, the company scoffed at. "They have a mean-spirited obsession with damaging our property," he laments. Russell has spoken at public meetings to protest the possible action; today the Commission is trying to decide what to do. When I spoke to Russell, I asked why he thought his cemetery upsets so many people. "Well, let's face it. Everyone thinks I'm weird. But I feel I just think outside the box - well, outside the coffin anyway!" Russell may be reached at 936-891-5245 or at ghr@cyberclone.net