

CONNIE MOORE

Environmental Advocate

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Once upon a time in the laid back Austin of the late 70s, my life was simple. Days began and ended in my culinary and medicinal herb garden, punctuated by a bicycle ride to Barton Springs, where I swam year 'round. Always about 68 degrees, summer-time swims were a refreshing relief to the Texas heat. In the winter cold, it felt like jumping in a warm bathtub. The fog that was created from the cool air hitting the water on those cold days gave the Springs a mysterious, intriguing atmosphere. Often during winter I was the only person swimming. Occasionally I would bump heads with someone to discover they were visiting from Norway, or that I knew them as a regular. It was heaven.

Suddenly the water became increasingly difficult to see through. After asking other swimmers and workers at the pool what they thought was causing the cloudiness, one of them told me that there was a mall being built on Barton Creek, which was decreasing the visibility of the water at the Springs. I decided to check it out myself, not thinking that was possible. Indeed it was true. The developers were lopping off 40 feet of the hill and not mitigating the effects of runoff. The result was increased turbidity at the pool. How could building so far away affect Barton Springs?

Thus began a journey into learning what an aquifer is, that there are five creeks that feed Barton Springs and what determines water quality. What started out as an effort to learn about Barton Springs turned into a lifelong study of many environmental issues and being politically active in order to protect the environment.

Fortunately I found Raymond Slade's USGS office and he explained that millions of years ago there had been a shift in the Edwards Plateau. The fault that resulted affords Barton Springs 68 million gallons a day. I then began to understand how much development affects water quality. Of course not only was the building process itself affecting water quality but all the things that go with it.

Joe Riddell taught me that sewer lines leak. We are putting sewer lines in creeks knowing they leak? Yes and during a rain, especially a heavy rain, water goes into the sewer line and forces sewage out. Because mainline sewer lines are placed in creek beds, sewer lines affect the water quality in that creek or body of water.

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Zilker Park Posse

Save Barton Creek Association

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In addition to the sewer lines and septic tanks creating problems, many things that people use can affect water quality. Brake linings of cars, pesticides, chemicals, medications people take all end up in our water. Something had to be done. I went to a meeting at the pool that a reporter had dubbed The Zilker Park Posse. I talked to everyone about it. If enough people discovered what was going on, measures would undoubtedly be taken to protect our water.

My friend Janette Grainger put a video camera in my hands, taught me how to use it, and I started documenting. At the community television office, ACTV, I learned how to edit videos and placed the documentaries on the community television station. I started going to City Council meetings and learned how city government worked and ordinances got passed. After the city council meetings I would check out the video recordings and rewatch the meetings so that I really understood. I could not stop talking about it. A group started meeting regularly in our homes, at our offices, at the Springs. Joe Riddell, Ken Manning, and Wayne Gronquist along with others drafted the Baron Creek Ordinance. More and more people got involved as they learned what was happening. Janette Grainger donated an office space above her shop, Folk Toy, where the Posse and Save Barton Creek Association could work and hold meetings.

Wayne Gronquist, an attorney, explained the difference between a PAC (Political Action Committee) and a non-profit group. The consensus was that we needed both. The Zilker Park Posse became the group that tried to elect candidates with an environmental platform to improve and protect water quality, and to try to get ordinances passed to protect the watersheds of the creeks that flow into the Springs. The Save Barton Creek Association was registered as a non-profit and concentrated on education of what determines the quality of water in Barton Springs, focusing on Barton Creek.

Many worked to educate people by writing newsletters, as it was the least expensive way to reach the most people. Janette's sharp writing abilities, Joe's dedication to the facts and truth and my passionate momentum for getting the word out was a forceful combination. There were many that contributed, so many that cared. It was truly a grassroots effort. We backed candidates that had an environmental platform by doing commercials and did lots of volunteer work. We worked for ordinances that protect water quality. We opposed bond issues that would fund putting sewer lines in the watersheds of the creeks that feed Barton Springs.

We all volunteered, donating our time. In order to fund the printing of newsletters (mostly inexpensive tabloid format), the mailing of them and to pay for commercials, we had to raise money. Although many people donated directly, it was not enough. So we organized and held fundraisers. Many musicians donated their time for performances. Jerry Jeff Walker, Bill Oliver, Townes Van Zandt, Guy Clark, Gary P. Nunn, Butch Hancock to name a few. Michael Priest donated his time to design many of the posters for the events.

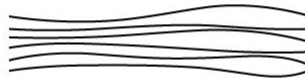
I decided to do as much individually as I could, replacing my flush toilet with a compost toilet. Why pollute the water in the first place? My household water went through a grey water filter and recycled into the garden. Water used for washing dishes and clothes is appropriate for the garden when biodegradable soaps and no chemicals are used. The state legislature was lobbied concerning compost toilets. Soon my environmental interests extended to other areas.

CONNIE MOORE CONT'D

One victory was defeating the planned incinerator. Discovering how fragile our water is made me more aware of soil and air issues. Although Austin had spent \$34 million on plans to build an incinerator, a small group of people joined together to educate people about not only how harmful it was to the air and people breathing incinerator air, but how costly the incinerator would be. After much testimony and documentation of the facts the City Council walked away from it for financial reasons.

Now an acupuncturist and Diplomate of Oriental Medicine in Honolulu, Hawaii, I am about to install a rain catchment for the garden. A photograph of Barton Springs hangs in one of my treatment rooms, bringing memories of friends, many wonderful swims, great fun fundraisers, long nights in the City Council Chambers, longer nights working on newsletters, and the special community that donated time, money and effort to protect this magical place.

BARTON CREEK



TIME STREAM