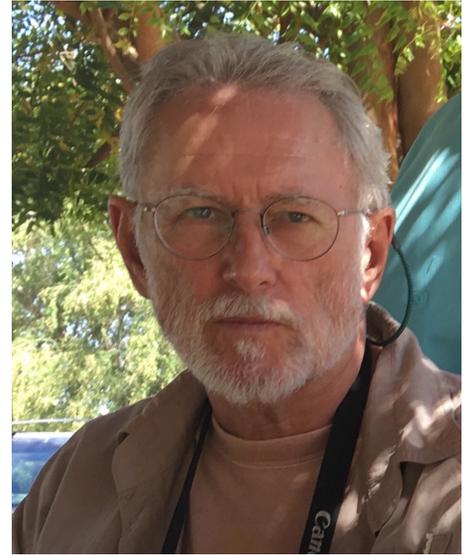


ED CROWELL

Journalist/Author

Austin American-Statesman 1977-Present

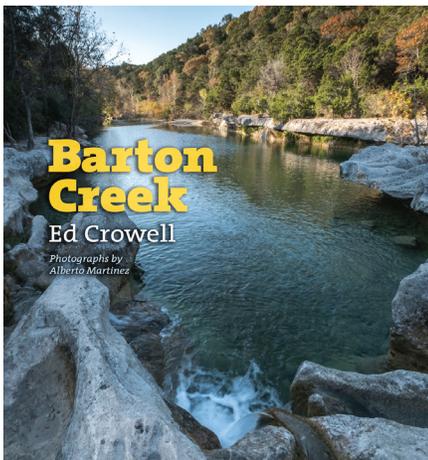


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By the summer of 1990, Barton Springs had closed repeatedly because of high pollutant counts. The tipping point arrived with a massive development proposal for 4,000 acres on 6 miles of the creek.”

My introduction to the beguiling waters of Central Texas began with a 1977 job interview. I flew out from Florida and found myself driven around by a prospective boss. We crossed the wide river then known as Town Lake. We parked in front of Barton Springs Pool to gaze at an immense and lush natural swimming spot. We moved on to Lake Travis and its rocky shoreline.

I was sold with that and the editing opportunity at the Austin American-Statesman newspaper under new ownership. An early project was a month-long series of front-page articles in late 1979 titled “Growth - Austin Life in the 1980s.” We tried to forecast transportation, workforce and inner-city needs as well as threats to Barton Creek and the Lake Austin watersheds.



The pace, scope and fury of growth issues would reach far beyond our imagination. Another series I edited in 1982 zeroed in on Barton Creek and conflicts among landowners, developers and the multitudes seeking places to float.

By the summer of 1990, Barton Springs had closed repeatedly because of high pollutant counts. The tipping point arrived with a massive development proposal for 4,000 acres on 6 miles of the creek. Hundreds of people spoke against a permit for the project at a 14-hour public hearing. It ended with a surprising and unanimous “no” vote from the City Council.

Two years later, I happily voted for an SOS Ordinance establishing new runoff regulations in the Barton Springs zone of the Edwards Aquifer. And I was among voters approving \$44 million in bonds to buy protective conservation lands in the watershed and to finish the Barton Creek greenbelt.

I moved on to editing and writing for feature sections of the newspaper. A year-long sabbatical took me to the Caribbean to write a biography of an old sea captain.

After retiring in 2009, I swam more often at Barton Springs and hiked all I could along the creek. I wondered what it was like far upstream and whose land was at the headwaters.

ED CROWELL CONT'D

I began talking to the city's watershed protection scientists and, armed with topography maps, I drove out to meet people who live on the creek. Everyone had a story to share about their love of Barton Creek. Many of them worried about the impact of new development.

After three years of research and interviews, I wrote "Barton Creek," published in 2019. My friend and photographer Alberto Martinez joined many of my wanderings and his beautiful photos grace the book.

An appreciative reception has come from environmentalists and landowners, toe-dippers and frequent swimmers, hikers and historians. All share a belief that the soul of Austin remains reflected in the clear waters of Barton Creek.

