



Photo courtesy of the Austin American-Statesman

MARY GAY MAXWELL

1938-2016

Environmental Advocate

Save Our Springs Alliance 1990s
Austin Environmental Commission
2001-2016

It's hard to believe that four years have passed since we lost Dr. Mary Gay Maxwell. A graduate of the University of Texas, and a doctor of Psychology, she held a private practice for many years before becoming a tireless advocate, activist and leader in defense of Austin's environment. She served as the board chair of the Save Our Springs Alliance in the 1990s, fighting developers and development pressures threatening the Edwards Aquifer, and became its Executive Director in 1999.

In 2001, City Council Member Beverly Griffith appointed Dr. Maxwell to the Austin Environmental Board, later the Environmental Commission. She would be reappointed by subsequent Council members Betty Dunkerley, Laura Morrison and Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo. In 2008, she became chair of the board, a position she held until her untimely and tragic death in a head-on automobile collision on March 30, 2016.

In memory of Dr. Maxwell's stewardship, the Austin Environmental Commission unanimously passed a resolution to rename the Slaughter Creek Management Unit of the Water Quality Protection Lands, the Mary Gay Maxwell Management Unit. The unit is composed of the Baker, Hafif and Hielscher tracts, totaling 646 acres in Southwest Austin.

-remembrance written by Susanne Mason

The Austin EcoNetwork published remarks by a handful of Austin's environmentalists in its March 31, 2016 blog, just a day after the community learned she had died:

"Mary Gay was a friend, a teacher, and a determined advocate for Austin's environment and our natural resources. She leaves a considerable gap in Austin's environmental leadership. Mary Gay created a legacy of promoting stewardship and responsibility in protecting our city's unique beauty. I am tremendously saddened by her passing."

-Austin Council Member Leslie Pool

"Working side by side with Mary Gay for so many years on the Environmental Board and in the community, I remember thinking that I could literally feel her passion for Austin and its natural environment. She single-handedly willed good things to happen and kept our resources protected. Along with so many others, I will miss her tremendously."

*-Dave Anderson, Director of Land Use Policy at the Drenner Group
former Chairman of the City of Austin's Environmental Board*

"I worked with Mary Gay and several dozen others on the unsuccessful attempt to stop Water Treatment Plant #4. Many people scowled at us at the time. It is now widely acknowledged, even by many of the plant's boosters, that the plant was either not needed or not needed at the present time. As the saying goes, 'they're not laughing now.' She played a pivotal and anchor role in Austin's environmental community. Relatively few people realize the enormous amount of time and the breadth of knowledge and commitment she donated to this city. It is going to take a while to adjust."

*-Paul Robbins, longtime local environmental advocate
Editor of the Austin Environmental Directory*

MARY GAY MAXWELL CONT'D

"We have lost a treasure. Mary Gay put her heart and soul into her environmental leadership. She just deeply cared about Austin, about us, about our world and our future. She possessed a uniquely blunt but loving directness and passion that we sorely need. We miss you and love you, Mary Gay."

-Matt Hollon, City of Austin Watershed Protection Department

"Mary Gay's commitment as the longtime chair of Austin's Environmental Commission and participation on many of its subcommittees was inspirational! Under her leadership the commission was an inclusive forum for areas of ecological importance. Her dedication and inquisitive nature will be missed."

-Scott Johnson, an environmental community advocate

"Mary Gay Maxwell was as skilled and as passionate an activist as has ever spoken at the Austin City Council Chambers. She was a fierce advocate for causes she believed in. She was soft spoken and had that 'Lady Bird Johnson/Steel Magnolia' quality that made some people underestimate her which was a huge advantage and she knew how to play it - and often did. She was also an excellent psychotherapist - and it showed. During my 3 terms as Chair of SOS, she frequently helped 'counsel' the board and was able to provide important insight into people and their personalities - especially developers and elected officials that weren't on our side of the issues. Mary Gay leaves a legacy of advocacy that has made Austin's environment better- and made many of the people around her better human beings. She is an irreplaceable treasure."

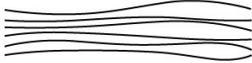
-Robin Rather, CEO of Collective Strength

"Rest in Peace Dr. Mary Gay Maxwell. You were a dedicated public servant as a longtime member and chair of the City of Austin's Environmental Board. You helped shape Austin and by extension urban development on planet Earth. Your life will impact my life, the lives of so many, our city and planet for many years to come."

*-Brandi Clark Burton, Senior Policy Advisor to Austin Mayor Steve Adler
Founder of the Austin EcoNetwork*

"What stands out in my mind about her life and her generous public service is that she always focused on finding the fair and right solution to whatever issue she was working on. She never hesitated to ask pertinent, "pointed" questions to learn as much as she could before making a decision. I'll always remember her for, and be grateful for, her selfless servant leadership to the community. Throughout the twenty-five years I was blessed to know her and occasionally work with her, she never wavered in her steadfast commitment to making central Texas a better place for all of us. Let's not say 'she'll be missed.' Rather let's say that her memory and passion will live on in our hearts, minds and collective soul. Her memory will continue to enrich our lives."

-George Cofer, Executive Director of the Hill Country Conservancy

BARTON CREEK

TIME STREAM