

SANDRA FOUNTAIN

Austin Environmental Council

Acting Director, 1971-1973

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My interest in nature probably stems from my father, Henry Coleman Fountain, who was very thoroughly versed in the flora and fauna of Texas, as well as all components of the ground under our feet because of his profession, Independent Petroleum Geologist.

I first became involved in the Austin Environmental Council in August 1970. (The AEC was Austin's first home-grown, citizen's environmental organization founded by Roberta Crenshaw and Russell Fish in early 1970.) I was motivated to join the Austin Environmental Council by wide reading and an interest in ocean systems as promoted by Jacques Cousteau. I shared his alarm with reference to the degradation of water quality in world oceans. When I found out that there was an Austin Environmental Council, I joined right away. Our purpose was to watch land management on the watershed of the Colorado River and its environs as it is the foundation of water quality traveling to the Gulf of Mexico.

I was a public speaker, so I was called on to testify at various city council meetings. The AEC promoted flood plains insurance. I studied the issue and offered testimony and answered questions. Russell Fish brought the Mayfield property issue to the AEC while I was Acting Director. We lobbied the City Council and “saved” the property as an Austin Park.

After Bobbie's stroke (Roberta Crenshaw, one of the AEC's founder's suffered a stroke in December 1970), the AEC was largely held together by the board whose members were “Old Austin,” and knew where everything was buried. After I returned as Acting Director, after Fred Gillette DuPuy was born. I bought a property on West 34th Street and offered office space to the AEC for its last year's existence, 1973. The AEC slowly and smoothly finished out its time. Louise Lebermann was Treasurer of the AEC. She and Russell Fish closed the books. The files were handed over to Nancy Bowman who had started We Care Austin (The Women's Environmental Coalition).

The life and health of Barton Creek is intimately connected to the general water quality of Central Texas. Understanding what keeps the springs viable demands an understanding of many interrelated natural systems. Sorry to say as a rather “no-growth” romantic, I miss my old dreams of Austin. But, after living almost 9 years on the very crowded Atlantic Seaboard, Austin by comparison is still a green gem. And there are still salamanders at the pool!

Note: The Women's Environmental Coalition (We Care Austin) was formed in 1972, and was modeled after a Women's Environmental Coalition in Denver, Colorado. The organization was active in Austin from 1972-1994.

