

SHUDDE FATH

Community Advocate

Save Barton Creek Association, Treasurer 1981-2008
Save Our Springs Political Action Committee,
Board Member 1990s

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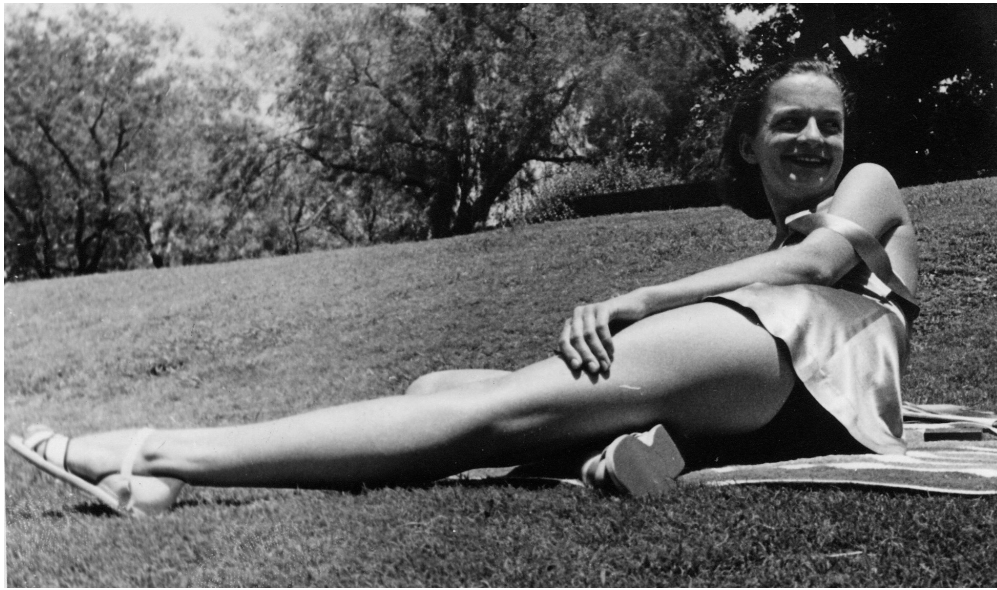
My joke is that I was raised wrong. They made me work, 'cause they worked so hard. Daddy was a family doctor in Bastrop and he practiced almost 40 years and started the first hospital there and my mother got a degree from U.T. Daddy was from Liberty Hill, up here in Williamson County, and Mother grew up on the banks of the Sabinal River in Uvalde County. And 'course they worked the land, they knew how to live off the land. They were both expert growers. Daddy raised all of our vegetables and a lot of fruit all the time we were growing, all his life, and Mother did the horticulture. When I was just a kid, my older brother and I peddled vegetables door-to-door out of Daddy's garden.

I came to U.T. I lived at Littlefield dormitory for two years and a sorority house for three years. I got my degree in four but I had fallen in love with my future husband and he was in school and I didn't want to get out in the cold, cruel world. So, I stayed another year.

Well, my old favorite spot was Barton Springs, you know. I just loved the water and the sun and the grass and the trees and everything, and here's the another thing, how dumb I was. Conny and I were going out there, swimming, back before the air-conditioning, our favorite thing to do in the summer was get off work and go swimming, and then you stay cool. Your body stays cool 'til about bedtime, and you know, you don't suffer from the heat, 'cause all we had was fans, in those old squirrel-cage things. Every time I got a chance I went swimming at Barton Springs. Anyway, I used to proudly get the blackest suntan in town. I worked on it. And, my dermatologist profits from it. About twice a year I have to go to the dermatologist and get something burned off my face.

Our environmental problems today are the fault of my generation. The land in the Barton Creek watershed was nothing but cedar choppers and stone masons and bootleggers, very sparsely settled, and it sold for \$4 to \$5 an acre. And if my generation had been far-sighted, the city of Austin could've floated a bond issue and bought, you know, tons of watershed. And it just never occurred to us that it wasn't always gonna be this way. I'm not a no-growther. I mean, I know we're gonna have to have growth, but we should have responsible growth.

SHUDDE FATH CONT'D



I give Kirk Mitchell credit for reviving and maintaining the SOS (Save Our Springs) name in the political arena, he just kind of single-handedly said, "We gotta keep a political action committee. And he just kind of took it over and formed his own board, and I'm on it. We had a good turnout of audience and voters and everything, and, you know, we made endorsements under the name SOS PAC, and Kirk deserves a lot of credit for that.

Sometimes I get cynical and I say, "Well, volunteer work, you get what you pay for, which is nothing," but what I really deep down believe—volunteer groups waste a lot of time and energy. There's no doubt about it, 'cause you're not dealing with the bottom line. But my rationale is that whatever we do is something that probably wouldn't get done otherwise, even though it's, you know, not real efficient sometimes.

I was on the Electric Utility Commission before I retired but that's all I did until I retired in '81. I'd been a member of Save Barton Creek Association, but I started going to the meetings Fall of '81 when they had lost their treasurer. I thought, well, I got a B.B.A. Degree, I guess I can keep their books.

I feel sorry for people that aren't involved in something. I think whatever you care about you ought to work at it. You ought to do what you can.

-excerpted from an oral history by Shudde Fath, as told to David Todd on June 3, 1997 and transcribed by Judy Holloway