



WAYNE GRONQUIST

1941-2010

Attorney

Save Barton Creek Association, Co-founder 1980s
Texas River School, President

Long before it became cool, Wayne Gronquist was all about saving Barton Creek, his friends said. The soft-spoken attorney began crusading for the environment in Austin in the 1980s when he co-founded the Save Barton Creek Association, hauling developers and City Council members down the creek in canoes. He served as president for the Texas River School, helped locate historic shipwrecks as a co-founder of

the National Underwater Marine Agency and even mucked around in waders on a river in San Antonio looking for lost cannons from the Alamo.

"Wayne came up with the 'Gronquist plan for Austin,' which looked 20 or 30 years into the future at how the environmentalists and developers could co-exist with each other," said friend David Armbrust. Armbrust, a lawyer who said he represents developers, said he met Gronquist in the 1980s and that they remained friends even though they often found themselves on opposite sides of the issue.

Gronquist always had a "twinkle in his eye," even after tough meetings with developers, said Joe Kendall, president of the nonprofit Chautauqua Foundation, also known as the Texas River School. "He would talk about how good things went and what the upsides were, and I'd wonder if he and I went to the same meeting," Kendall said.

Gronquist helped the Texas River School, which teaches children about rivers, creeks and streams, obtain riverfront property on the Colorado River that the organization plans to use as a camp, Kendall said.

George Cofer, executive director of the Hill Country Conservancy, said he went with Gronquist once to search for lost cannons from the Alamo. "Wayne and Clive Cussler were convinced they could find cannons from the Alamo, and each year the river in San Antonio was lowered to do repairs, Wayne would organize a search and go out in the middle of the river in all that mud," Cofer said. "We didn't find cannons but did find a few 'Saturday night specials,'" Cofer said, referring to small handguns.

Gronquist passed his love of the environment to his three sons, who have all worked as lifeguards at Barton Springs, son Mark Gronquist said. Their father also loved history and "helped find a number of shipwrecks," Mark Gronquist said. "He was a great dad, very generous and very loving," said Eran Gronquist, another of Gronquist's sons. "He was concerned about the quality of life in Austin, and I think it stemmed from his desire for really good health and a healthy lifestyle— he practiced yoga for 40 years."

-remembrance excerpted from an article by Claire Osborn, Austin-American Statesman, August 2012