

## AUSTIN HISTORY CENTER

### Oral History Transcript

**Interviewee:** Roberta “Bobbie” (Purvis) Reed Crenshaw (1914-2005)

**Interviewer:** Anthony “Tony” Orum

**Date of interview:** October 2, 1986

**Length of interview:** 1 hour, 10 minutes ... plus several minutes

**Original Tape:** 1051, 1052

**Duplicate Tapes:** 1600, 1601

**Re-edited** in February-April 2018 by Shudde Fath, Mary Arnold, Anthony Orum, Phoebe Allen, Dick Kallerman, and Betsy Fath Hiller.

#### KEY SUBJECT HEADINGS:

Barton Springs and Barton Creek

Calcasieu Lumber Company: owned by Bill Drake family

Crenshaw’s service on Park Board

Development wars from 1950s

Fiesta Gardens: developed by Tom Perkins on Town Lake

Garrison Park, 6001 Manchaca Road: the original 80 acres were purchased in 1961; 40 acres were sold to AISD. The pool was dedicated in 1967.

Gift of trees to the City of Austin from Crenshaw

Lawsuit against the City of Austin, 1984-2000

Little Texas Project

Longhorn Dam: dedicated in 1960, created Town Lake, designed by Brown & Root and built by H.B. Zachry Co. of San Antonio; Gil Pokorny was Austin Energy’s resident engineer managing the construction 1959-60.

Lumbermen’s Investment Corp. Owned 4.5 acres of land between Lamar and Seaholm Power Plant

Memorial Day flood: 1981, Shoal Creek; 13 people died

MoPac: Missouri Pacific or Loop 1

Park Board: Crenshaw appointed to Board by Emma Long

Parks and Recreation Board: a citizens’ advisory board

Sand Beach Reserve: land along Town Lake near Lamar, subject of litigation beginning in 1984-85. *See Addendum for details about the Sand Beach Reserve lawsuit.*

Town Lake: seven-mile lake between Tom Miller Dam and Longhorn Dam, renamed Lady Bird Lake after her death.

Town Lake Plan.

Town Lake Corridor Plan. The Town Lake Corridor Study was prepared in October 1985.<sup>1</sup> City Council formally adopted the Town Lake Corridor Study/Town Lake Park Comprehensive Plan on January 26, 1989 (Ordinance No. 890126-P)

**KEY NAMES:**

Akin, Harry. Mayor 1967-69

Andrewartha, Jack. Built apartments near Barton Springs

Arnold, Mary. Civic leader and former Park Board member

Barrow, Edward Rowland. Brother of David Barrow, Sr.

Barrow, Sr., David. Developer of Northwest Hills neighborhoods

Butler, Roy. Mayor 1971-75

Cain, Pat. Texas Legislator, would-be developer of Little Texas

Cooksey, Frank. Mayor 1985-1988

Crenshaw, Charles E. Attorney, married to Bobbie from 1975 until his death in 1999

Davis, Mabel (Mrs. Alden). Member of Park Board at same time as Crenshaw

Dickson, Fagan (1903-1977). Bobbie's second husband, married 1947-75 (divorced)

Drake, Bill (William S.). City Council 1949-51, Mayor 1951-53

Frederick, David. Attorney for the three women

Friedman, Jeff. City Council 1971-75, Mayor 1975-77

Frost, Susan Toomey. Civic leader, plaintiff in a lawsuit with Mary Arnold and Bobbie

Henry, Stuart. Attorney for the three women

Isely, Ruth. Member of Park Board at the same time as Bobbie.

Johnson, Lady Bird. Widow of US President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

LaRue, Travis. City Council 1963-69, Mayor 1969-71

Long, Emma. City Council 1949-59 and 1963-69

Long, Stuart. Husband of Emma Long and Austin journalist

MacCorkle, Stuart. City Council 1949-53

Mason, Tom. Attorney for the three women

Maufrais Brothers. Operator of sand and gravel business on Town Lake 1950s-60s; 1944 Supreme Court case to stop their removal of sand/gravel from south bank of Colorado between South First Street and Congress Avenue

Miller, Tom. Mayor 1933-49 and 1955-61

Mullen, Ron. City Council 1977-83, Mayor 1983-85

Nash-Phillips-Copus. Post-WII real estate developers

O'Quinn, Sr., Trueman (1905-1990). Austin City Attorney (1939-1950 with the exception of his WWII years)

Palmer, Lester. City Council 1955-61, Mayor 1961-67, manager of Calcasieu Lumber

Perkins, Tom. Developer of Fiesta Gardens, employee of Chamber of Commerce

Powell, Jay Frank. Town Lake Corridor Plan

Reece, Ray. Town Lake Corridor Plan

Reed, Malcolm (1876-1945). Bobbie's first husband (1936-45), father of their 2 daughters

Rockefeller, Laurence. Member of National Recreation & Parks Association (NRPA)

Rountree, Jr., Reuben. Public Works<sup>1</sup> director in late 1950s and 1960s under Mayor Miller and Mayor Palmer

Schrader, Charles. Member of National Recreation and Parks Association

Shanks, David. *Austin American-Statesman* reporter who covered agriculture

Shanks, Louis. City Council 1961-67, owner of Shanks Furniture at 1105 North Lamar

Sheffield, Beverly. Long-time director of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department

Shipman, Sally. City Council 1983-1990

Thompson, Joseph E. Would-be developer

Tutt, Russell P. Member of National Recreation & Parks Association

Watson, J.H. Travis County Judge

Watson, Kirk. Mayor 1997-November 9, 2001

White, Ben. City Council 1951-67

Wroe, Edward. American National Bank president

## **INTERVIEW**

*Anthony Orum: These things generally are fun for people in a way, because they're sort of reliving memories they haven't had for a long time. So I'll put this here, and we'll just go ahead.*

Roberta Crenshaw: You still didn't want a coke?

Orum: No, I'm fine, I'm fine. Thanks.

Crenshaw: Care for iced tea?

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<sup>1</sup> The Public Works Department started as the office of the City Engineer in the 1870s, became the Engineering Department, and was renamed Public Works Department in the 1940s.

*Orum: No, I'm good. I had a little coffee, and I'm in a good shape. Thank you very much.*

Crenshaw: Well, you say you know a good deal about my early background. I did attend the University of Texas after having moved around a good deal and having gone to school in Washington, D.C., to a girls' school. I went to National Park Seminary in Washington, which no longer exists, but it existed then. But I came down here to University, and after I was in the University and received my degree, I married Mr. **Malcolm Reed**.

*Orum: Right.*

Crenshaw: And I don't really—I remember just being swept gradually into the political scene of Austin, because he had such broad acquaintances, you know, and I sort of followed the activities of some of his acquaintances, and one of them was the mayor of the city, **Mayor Tom Miller**. And so they were friends of Malcolm and I, I guess, became interested in various facets of the city government, but I certainly was not a student of government in any sense of the word and hadn't had any real practical experience in it, but I think that **Emma Long**<sup>2</sup> was elected to the Council about that time.

*Orum: That's 1948. [1949]*

Crenshaw: This is about Emma Long, and she was quite a remarkable woman. And I felt very much maligned because of her—because I think at that time the most general attitude that you could express was the masochistic attitude from the men that she had to associate with, you know. They weren't interested in a woman politician.

*Orum: They called her Miss Emma, and they said by calling her Miss Emma, she said, put her in – it closeted her away as though she was rather humbled.*

Crenshaw: Something special, something unusual.

*Orum: Right.*

Crenshaw: And so I feel sure that she must have recommended me to be on the Park Board.

*Orum: I have talked to her at length, and she says that yes, she had recommended that you ...*

Crenshaw: This may have even been after I was Mrs. **[Fagan] Dickson**, because he was thrown more into the ranks of the real liberal element, and her husband **[Stuart Long]** was quite a liberal activist. So it could have been that long after I was living in Austin that I became active in any manner. But anyway, Emma did appoint me, or recommend me to be appointed, and I readily was accepted in about the same vein she was, that I was considered at that time to be the little old lady in tennis shoes that wanted to plant

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<sup>2</sup> Emma Long, Austin's first female City Council member, served from 1949-1959, and again from 1963-1969. She was known for fighting for integration and fair housing.

petunias every place, you know; that neither of us was very capable of any real substance of thought. We were just trying to do simple little things that little old ladies were supposed to go do. And so I'm sure that that was the role I was immediately cast in, and the Park Board<sup>3</sup> was called Park and Recreation Board, and it was a complete misnomer, because it was not. It was nothing but a Recreation Board. The parks were managed entirely under the Public Works system of the City, and it was very frustrating to us. And we couldn't—and I think at the same time that the young man who had started out as a young man, it's clear, Mr. Sheffield, **Beverly Sheffield**, who had served for many years under Tom Miller as Park[s] and Recreation Director supposedly. Or maybe he was called Park Director. I don't quite know.

*Orum: I think he was Parks and Recreation Director.*

Crenshaw: But our board was Park and Recreation Board, even though we never met or never had anything to do with Mr. **Reuben Rountree**, who was chief director of the Public Works. And we couldn't seem to get—I was sort of desperate all the time, trying to get a grip on the beauty of the city and trying to protect the beauty of the city from the perils, even then, of accelerated growth, which was threatening us even back at that stage.

Orum: Okay. Let me ask you – what kinds of things did you do back then? I gather we're talking about the fifties.

Crenshaw: Well, things like this were going on. The dreadful things that were going on were like at one time they started to create a park – what was called a district park –way out south. Now, I'm very bad on dates, so you'll have to check me. I couldn't tell you whether it was in the fifties, the forties, or the sixties or when, but I can well remember this incident. And the Council was made of **Lester Palmer**, who had ... after Tom Miller stepped aside, **Bill Drake** came in, and Bill Drake was really not too interested in staying active, and then he stepped aside. One of the men in his firm, which was **Calcasieu Lumber**, came in. And that was Lester Palmer. And Lester Palmer had an annual TV show or radio show or something in those days with **Louis Shanks**.

*Orum: Was Shanks a member of the Council then?*

Crenshaw: Shanks was a member of the Council.

*Orum: Let me just run some names by you, because I can figure out the date if I can— Palmer, Shanks. Was [Harry] Akin on the Council?*

Crenshaw: No. Akin served very shortly.

*Orum: Yeah, '67, '68. [1967-69]*

Crenshaw: As mayor for just a short time.

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<sup>3</sup> Bobbie was a member of the Park Board from 1952 to 1970 and chair from 1964-69. A letter, dated May 25, 1964 to Roberta from Beverly Sheffield, welcomed her as chair.

Orum: Yeah. Emma was on the Council though.

Crenshaw: Emma was still on the Council.

Orum: Was **Stuart MacCorkle** on the Council?

Crenshaw: No. He had been – I think he had served and moved on, too.

Orum: Okay. Palmer, Shanks, Emma, **Travis LaRue**?

Crenshaw: No. Travis was—

Orum: **Ben White**.

Crenshaw: Ben White was on the Council.

Orum: Okay. All right.

Crenshaw: And Emma. And various persons had stepped in and out with those four.

Orum: Okay. Great.

Crenshaw: And never, and they didn't seem to last too long. They weren't always there. And so, for instance—this is just one instance, and I don't think that it's falling into the right category historically, but this is the type thing that happened. We had decided that we needed a big park out south, so we selected the land. The land was created for the big park. Well, the very first thing that would invariably happen to us, once you chose a park, the developers would go in and buy everything around the park immediately. And you would announce that you were going to have a district park, and you were going to have a certain amount of play equipment – possibly some sort of a stadium or something. Because it was going to be a big park, and the developers in the city would come and buy immediately around it. So that's what had happened to us. The developers had come and bought everything around us, and then we had not been clever enough to think of saving something or asking the city to save an entrance to the park on the south. This was way out south anyway, or was then.

Orum: Do you remember roughly where it was?

Crenshaw: Well, it was—is there an area out that way called Cherry Creek? I think there is.

Orum: Yeah, there is a Cherry Creek.

Crenshaw: Well, it's the park that's north of Cherry Creek. [**Garrison Park**]

Orum: Okay, okay.

Crenshaw: Because I think **Nash-Phillips-Copus** was putting on a subdivision south of Cherry Creek.

Orum: Okay.

Crenshaw: Now there was this little syndrome that had gone on. Because of the war, young men that were bright had come back, and I'm sure Nash and Copus represent them as well as anybody and knew the world needed housing. So they'd gone in the development business. And naturally they had to make their contacts with the lumber people and the supply people, the roofers, and the doorknobs, and the electricity, and all the rest of it. So there was a logical timing with the furniture business, which was Shanks, you see. So and then Lester was tied in with the lumber supply. So there was this kind of a little paternal group that knew how to do these things, and they certainly didn't intend to be interfered with or slowed down. And they were making their fortune. And they had served their country—some of 'em had, and some of 'em hadn't; but it was in that era—and they thought they were entitled to the fruits of the victory.

So Emma was fighting that. She was consistently in a battle trying to keep some unfortunate development from taking place. Well this – here is this park coming in, and I began to carry on about it, because I said, "Look, this whole subdivision now is planned around it, and we don't even have access to the park from the south. This is utterly ridiculous. We need something from the south." Well, no one ever admitted to us, really, the plan. We could sort of designate a general area where you would buy parkland, and someone else bought it. I've forgotten which department bought it, but someone else bought it who had no rapport even worked out with the school systems, which was bad in that once, you know, you'd get a park here, and you'd get a school there, and it was pitiful, because we could have used the same facilities had we expanded the school grounds most places instead of having the developers come in and develop around the school site and then come and develop around the park site. And there was no relationship of the two; you had to replace the drinking fountains, the restrooms, the lighting systems and everything, for the two different facilities. So we were working constantly at trying to break that down to where we could cooperate with the schools and do better planning.

Now I'm sure, thinking back, that that was never what they thought this Park and Recreation Board was supposed to do. They seemed to think that, historically, all we were supposed to do was go tell 'em when to put out the sandbox, you know, in the playground. And someone else chose the playgrounds as a rule. And as I say, in most of the places—we're talking about a big park south. But if you are talking about – the typical deal was that here's this little school ground, and a school, and a block away you have to go, then, and take a city block and make another little playground. And that was just runnin' us crazy, because you know that really was a total duplication. Now I started out talking about the big park south.

So I mentioned this to the Council, and they were resentful. What had happened was that the developers, who I think were Nash-Phillips, had gone out there, and all along Manchaca Road or whatever it is that borders that park, they had taken bulldozers and had pushed all of the brush over against our park site. We didn't quite go to Manchaca

Road. We were 100 to 150 yards back. And they probably owned ‘em on Manchaca Road. So they went along there and just pushed all the brush back, because they were developing their subdivision farther out, and they wanted it to have a pretty appearance, and you didn’t go through this rugged, rustic woodland to get to it. So they pushed it all back and left it piled as high as this house, you know, on the parkland—right on the parkland! Well, I just fell apart over this, so I went down and started fussin’ about it.

And so I finally got Lester Palmer and Dave Shanks—not Dave Shanks<sup>4</sup>, but Louis Shanks—to ride out with me and see what had happened. Now I thought they’d be justly indignant, you know, at what had happened. And they joshed, and they laughed, and they told me I had on a pretty dress that day, and how was everything. And it was supposed to be a very congenial, happy little group going out to see the park. And I was supposed to be very flattered that they had given me their time and that they liked my dress. So we got out there and here was all this debris piled up. And I thought, as I say, they’d be just shocked. Louis ran back, and he said, “Well, Bobbie, I really think it looks better.” Well, of course it looked better from that point of view.

I said, “Louis, do you know that they have trespassed on the city’s land, and they have left all of this debris on the city’s land? And the Park Department is going to have to get it off, and it’s going to cost us a lot of money?” And none of that occurred to him one minute, and didn’t seem to bother him too much. But I think when they finally – really, when I said, “If they’d done this to your private land, you would have them in court by noon tomorrow. You just wouldn’t have waited even to discuss it, if they had just trespassed and piled stuff up on you like this.” I said, “Who knows but what we didn’t want a buffer zone here? Who knows that this wasn’t the plan? Or would have been the ideal park to have had a buffer from the traffic. We might have wanted that woodland there.” Well, so they did go out, I think, and asked those men to clean up some of that. But this was just the typical attitude that we were continually up against, just continually up against.

*Orum: So it was a kind of a constant fight between areas that you were trying to protect and the developers?*

*Crenshaw:* Well, it was just basically a philosophy that was so deep-rooted that [it] was something you couldn’t fight. We didn’t have the authority with which to fight it, and we didn’t have the stature with which to fight it. We didn’t have the political clout with which to fight it.

*Orum: Did Emma help at all? Did you go to Emma?*

*Crenshaw:* Emma always tried, but Emma was always having a problem with ‘em, just the same problem that I would run into when I would try them. And I probably didn’t have the nerve to go and do that and ask the Council to come look, perhaps until I was

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<sup>4</sup> Dave Shanks worked for the *Austin American-Statesman* covering agriculture.



chairman of the Park Board. I was on the Park Board, of course, several years before I was made chairman, and then, after I was made chairman, I think I served quite a few years as chairman. But those first years were just even a worse frustration, because I didn't even have the title to go talk about.

*Orum: Right.*

Crenshaw: You know, I couldn't—I mean, I was just a member of the Park Board, and they didn't mean for you to come talk with Council. You were simply an advisory board. You had no business. You had no vote, no anything, and all kinds of bad things were happening just regularly. There were some developers building apartments right down practically into Barton Creek, very close to the Springs, and that worried me nearly crazy. And so I—and I couldn't understand why they couldn't have this sort of a deal worked out, why that if when you own land, when you go buy raw land, you recognize that you have land that's A-Residential. And if you are going to change the zoning on it, then all kinds of considerations should come into play. And if you have some that has a very sensitive area, like the Springs, certainly you should save those springs for the public and the purity of them and not devastate them, not take any chance on snuffing them out, which you can easily do to springs, you know.

You can just push so much debris into 'em and then the spring disappears. It just goes underground and comes out maybe in the ocean or someplace. So, and the Springs were so marvelous an asset that it just seemed to me terrible. So this fellow [**Jack Andrewartha**] was building apartment houses, and he had land up further. And I was trying to get the point over that, "Why didn't you let him have his apartments up here, you know, where he wouldn't hurt the springs?" And in order to do that, he has to relinquish the right to have 'em down here. No one comes into life born with the privilege of having apartments. You bought land that just had A-Residential, so you're doing him a great favor to let him upgrade it to multifamily. So, but when you do that, tell him, "Now look, you get this, but you give that." At least you don't let anyone, for his dollars that he is going to make, ruin a treasure like the Springs that serve the whole community and are just a priceless marvel. But I couldn't get that point over to 'em, and I was not supposed to know how to talk about those things, you know. I really wasn't.

*Orum: Are you saying you ran into a lot of this man-stuff – you stay there, you're fine.*

Crenshaw: Yes. You stay there until we yank your chain, you know. "You go back to your cage, and when we want you we'll call you." And you were supposed to be very flattered and very honored to be there—to do nothing, of course. But just the fact that you're on the Park Board, you're supposed to be very pleased to be a member, and that's it. You're not supposed to come in here with a bunch of ideas.

So somewhere in that era I was nominated to be on the National Park and Recreation Board, and so I started going to meetings with a very broad sector of people from all over the United States. And they were partially professionals and partially lay people. And the

National Park and Recreation Board [**National Recreation and Parks Association**] was founded in the White House under Theodore Roosevelt [US President 1901-1909]. And the people on it were people like **Laurence Rockefeller** was a member, and a lot of the—**Charles Schrader**, the fine zoologist that's just been recently retired from the San Diego Zoo, was on the board. And the man [**Russell T. Tutt**<sup>5</sup>] who's been quite a patron in Colorado Springs, whose family owned the Broadmoor always, and he was always head of the Zoological Society in Colorado Springs – and just people that had a deep and abiding passion for the outdoors and for environment. And they had sort of inherited their role through their fathers or grandfathers, who had— some of them were directly connected back to **Theodore Roosevelt** in the family line.

But these were people that were both from the professional point of view of knowing what they were doing. Like you'd have the Park and Recreation Director, maybe of the, well, of the whole National Park system, for instance, was a member of the board. And then you'd get somebody that was head of one of the big city boards, like Chicago or San Francisco. So here I was exposed to all the thinking that went on, and soon it didn't take too long for me to make my complaints to 'em, to where everybody was trying to help me. And they were telling me what a dreadful thing it was that we didn't have a Park Department, you see, that we really were tied into this Public Works routine, and that we had no strings or no position, no, they were —

It was just as if the difference in you're talking as a sociologist, probably, to a gravedigger or somebody, as to having any rapport. And the Public Works was strictly engineer, and all he wanted to go was with a sewer from here to here, the quickest, shortest route. And [if] it happened to be right through this creek, or through the spring, there it went, you know. And you could not break that down. Lamar Boulevard in those days was totally ignored as a parkway. It was let— and I sat in on a meeting one day— I've never been this upset—where they asked this Director of Public Works what he considered Shoal Creek to be. And he said, "It's a drainage ditch." And he said, "We come in about once in the spring, early before the floods, and try to clear the debris so the flood will go through." And it, literally, that was all it was in his mind.

*Orum: This is Reuben Rountree?*

Crenshaw: Yes. It was a drainage ditch. And it wasn't meant to be anything else. A drainage ditch!

*Orum: You must have come unglued.*

Crenshaw: I did. I was just desperate. And it was – the weeds were as high as your head, right up to Lamar Boulevard there. Well, Lamar Boulevard came in, and then you wanted more than anything to have the area cleaned up and make some sort of an impression on

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<sup>5</sup> Russell T. Tutt was the son of Charles Tutt, who partnered with **Spencer Penrose** to build The Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs in 1918. Penrose had no children.

the community other than as a drainage ditch. But that's exactly what he classed it, and that's what he meant to keep it. And then a *real* strange thing happened one time. A man named **David Barrow** also served on and off this Council [City Commissions].

*Orum: I know about David Barrow. Are we talking about David Sr. or David Jr.?*

Crenshaw: David Sr.

*Orum: Okay.*

Crenshaw: And he managed to get appointed to various commissions pretty consistently, so that he was very bright about keeping up with where the water lines were going to go, and where the sewer lines were going to go, and where things were already going to be placed, so that when he bought land and put in his development, all that understructure or whatever you call it [infrastructure] was already there, you know. A lot of expense is already in there because they were going farther someplace else to get it, and he was buying where it already was.

And he was – there was somebody, someone was building right down under **Mt. Bonnell** [overlooking Lake Austin in Northwest Hills]. No, David Barrow was working right down under Mt. Bonnell. And I think there was a little house down there, and there was – some problem came up that kids would stand up on Mt. Bonnell and throw rocks. And they would hit this person's roof or something, or it could have been their boats. I've forgotten what the problem was. But, so I looked down there, and I found that here is this great machine working, just making mud and piling it up and making land right under Mt. Bonnell, where kids would throw rocks at everybody. So they were going to have a row of houses right under the mountain.

And I couldn't believe this, and so I went again and complained, and I got David Barrow and Lester Palmer to go in a little boat and we rode up this way and looked at it. And I'll never forget the disgust of, I said, "Look what's happening." I said, "Here is this fella"—and it was David Barrow, you know—"mining this earth and putting it up here making earth in the lake." And Lester said, "Now don't tell me, Bobbie, that you think the Park Board has anything to do with this lake!" Well, I was so taken aback, and I was really not quite up to all this. These things would make me highly nervous, and I said, "Well, you can feel about that any way you want to, but do you think you have a greater recreational facility than this in the city? Is there anything else compares with this, or will ever compare with it?" And that had never occurred to him. I said, "The theory...."

He said, they explained to me what they were doing and how nice it was and let me know how off base I was. They said, "As long as you're taking the mud out of the river and putting it here, you're doing no harm because the water things will still work, the turbines will still turn. You are still going to have the same volume of water." That's all they were interested in was that they, as long as they convinced themselves that the same volume of water would go through the dam and create whatever electricity it does, that

that was all right. I said, “That may be all right to turn the turbines, but,” I said, “on your theory this lake could become 100 yards wide and two miles deep,” you know. I mean, it can become—it’s a *river* now. It’s way inadequate for the use it gets, even then.

I said, “With all these school kids there and the skiing and the water boating and all the things that’s going to take place – the motorboats and all the rest of it is going to take place on this lake, you know, you’re going to find that you just have a ribbon. And why on earth would you make it narrower? I mean, if anything you’d want to make it wider.”

Well, I think – I don’t know whether they ever stopped David from that or not, but that was the kind of mentality we were fighting. See, and Lester got real irritated with me. He said, “Now don’t tell me you think you all have anything to do with this.” And I said, “Well, just categorize it any way you want to, whether it’s our business or someone’s else, but do you have any recreation facility equivalent to this?” And it never had dawned on ‘em. They had recreational value from a circus.

*Orum: What you are saying, I want to pin this down. Was it your sense -- he was appointed to a lot of city commissions—the Planning Commission, chairman of the Planning Commission—that somehow he used that knowledge to anticipate where—*

*Crenshaw: Where to go develop. And he was developing for his brother out of Houston who was a guy that had a world of money, that was an executive in Humble Oil.*

*Orum: It was either E.D. or—*

*Crenshaw: Steve or somebody. [Edward Rowland Barrow]*

*Orum: I’ve got the name in here –*

*Crenshaw: And so he provided Dave with the money, and Dave was here and he did a real good job of bird doggin’ and keepin’ up and knowing where to go, and he put in that whole Northwest Hills, you know.*

*Orum: Yeah.*

*Crenshaw: But you see, they just did not know, these men didn’t know—these men really did not know. They just knew their little group of lives in their little project they were on, and they were money-oriented. And they did not know about the consequences to the environment that their philosophy led them into. They didn’t know. I used to tell them all the time that they were going to—they were creating terrible flood hazards letting these builders develop down into creeks, and I preached that for years. And sure enough, the big flood came.*

*Orum: In 1981. [Memorial Day flood on Shoal Creek]*

*Crenshaw: In ‘81. And then people call me up from all kinds of places and say, “You’ve been trying to tell us this,” and they wouldn’t listen. I said, “You’re going to create, you know, horrible hazards for the city.” And I had gone and tried to get the city to do their flood plain ordinances. I said, “Get those engineers down here, and let’s get these flood*

plains delineated. Let's *know* where they are." Well, everybody got to ridiculing the fact that you were talking about the Hundred Year Flood. So they naturally thought that was going to be a hundred years from now, and "It's not going to bother me, so I'm gonna put my house wherever I want to, and they're not gonna bother me, because the flood isn't coming for a hundred years." Well, and to try to explain to them, you know, there is very little difference in the 25 Year Flood Plain and the 100 Year Flood Plain, literally. And to tell them that they might, that two 100 Year Floods can come back-to-back, you know, why they designated ... (tape turned over here)

*Orum: ...years – did you anticipate those developments?*

Crenshaw: Well, I kept telling them that when they started developing these hills northwest, and they covered everything with impervious ground cover. And that the streets and the rooftops and all those things created, you know, just no way to absorb the water. And that it was going to flow down into these creek bottoms. Well, then when the floods come...it doesn't have anything to do with twenty-five years or a hundred years. It's just going to be a hazard ... every little sprinkle almost, you know, if you let people live in the bottoms of creeks. Because they are going to have to take care of so much more water due to the impervious cover that's going to go on these hills if you don't begin making some kind of a plan to use something other than concrete paving. And I was trying to get them—I'd been to Europe several times, and I was trying to get them to use the concrete blocks with the holes in 'em, you know. I said, just, there are materials. The Highway Department should start using these on their hillsides, and people should use this anyplace they can, because we need all this water. We don't need to rush it down to the creeks. And—

*Orum: Did you have any allies in all of this?*

Crenshaw: Not a whole lot, because I, evidently I was not, I didn't have a forum and I didn't, you know, the— I finally began to lean heavily on the architects, because I felt that of all the disciplines—I had sort of given up on the engineers, and I felt that the architects maybe would take the courage to speak out because of their sensitivity. And I kept telling them that, "This is your discipline, and you must speak on these subjects. You are the only one that will ever speak on 'em." So they made me an Honorary Architect, and the architects would have me come around and make speeches and things. They did try to help me.

*Orum: Which architects – that thing?*

Crenshaw: The **AIA** made me the Honorary [Architect], and then the **Texas Society of Architects**, or whoever was here, would have me come and talk to different groups, you know, at times, and talk to a women's group or somebody else. But all of this was just— apparently very new thinking in those days. Now I happen—

*Orum: How did you realize that all that impervious ground cover might potentially create a serious hazard? I mean, just sort of common sense or—?*

*Crenshaw:* No. I think I had probably picked up a lot of this from different persons I had met on these boards that I had been on. I had just been exposed by then to some very forward thinkers on the subject, and Austin was just determined not to think. See, we had what I used to call a “Cowboy Ethic,” which was, “It’s mine. I’ll do as I please with it, and that’s my corral, and it’s mine, by golly.” And they don’t want anybody telling ‘em what to do with it or how to do it.

So I—they didn’t tolerate me too well, I’ll tell you. One time they were getting ready to do a ridiculous thing. They did do a ridiculous thing. They put in **Fiesta Gardens**, which was a ridiculous thing to do, and the boy that put that in was a young man who loved to water ski. And so, he went down to Florida and saw whatever it is down there. I’ve seen it since, but it’s water ski shows, you know.

*Orum: Oh, I know. Cypress Gardens.*

*Crenshaw:* Cypress Gardens. And he had a pretty little girl that water-skied with him, and he worked at the **Chamber of Commerce**. So he went to every civic club in the city selling them on the idea of Fiesta Gardens, and they would call him, “**Tom Perkins**”—I think that was his name—“of the Chamber of Commerce.” So you would think he represented the thinking of the Chamber of Commerce. Well, he got invited to speak to the Kiwanis this week and the Lions the next week and somebody else the next week, you know, just constantly.

Well, I had no one inviting me to come and counter his talk, and I was very much against Fiesta Gardens, because, I told them, “You know, if you do this you are setting a terrible precedent.” They were giving away many acres of their shoreline and a big body of water that had been created as a gravel pit or something, and we’re going to get for that something like two percent of the gate receipts. They had no concept of planning it, because they didn’t plan a buffer to protect the traffic from the community, from the neighborhood. And cars would go down there when they’d have something and park all over the backyards and all over.

And most of the people down there were Latin Americans, and they would get indignant all the time that it wasn’t for them. And the thing was fenced from them; you paid an admission to get into it, and I just begged ‘em not to do it. And they wanted to. And finally they did do it, and then, it failed. It was not a success, and we’ve still been wrestling ever since with what to do with the remnants. I’ve been serving on some sort of a, just a temporary committee of some kind, [which] they asked me to go sit in on [to] see if what the Mexican community wanted to do with it was all right to use it for – some sort of a little art colony, a little art group or a place for art students to go. And I thought that was a great use of it, you know, because it’s just been idle all these years and

deteriorating. And I think the **Park[s] Department** began to store their old junk in it and was using it for storage barns.

Well, anyway, it wasn't too long after that 'til the legislator out of Austin, an Austin man, **Pat Cain** [Texas House 1963-67] or something was his name, I've forgotten. He comes up to the city, and he has a new proposition. They're going to do something called **Little Texas**, and it's going across the lake. And it's going to take 40 acres of the *surface* of the lake, as well as all the land. And all of this is what's way down, down toward Pleasant Valley Road, where the Park Department now has sort of a headquarters down there. It's not their offices, but it's some portion of their work. And then they have, there are a lot of nice apartments along there, and the lakeshore is very pretty. But they would just gobble all that up, and they were going to get – they said, “We want the same deal they got,” which is exactly what I told them would happen. I said, “Well, you are setting a horrible precedent, you know. The next fellow is going to want the same thing.” And sure enough he did want the same thing, and he had gotten himself about fifteen people to syndicate and put their money together; they were going to do what was called Little Texas. Well, they had some of the craziest ideas you have ever heard of. They were going to have a submarine in the lake!

Well, I happened to have known that we had tried to run some fountains in the lake up under that auditorium that the Lions Club had given us at one time, and they clogged up with algae so fast that we couldn't keep the fountains going. And if you put your hand or foot under that lake, you can't see it anyway. So they didn't have the judgment to know that the way Mr. Disney did this was that he has a huge pool that he treats with chemicals, you know. He's got a clear water base to work with and artificial plastic things to look at. Well, they were going to have a submarine out there, which the windows would have been green by morning. Now what were you going to be looking at? And they had no plan for a buffer. They had no plan for soundproofing the neighborhood. They didn't know what anything was going to be. They wanted a sky ride going across the lake, and I absolutely told them they could not do that because that would have – that that was going to tie down to the **Sand Beach Reserve**, which also I'm sure, I could have told them that that was illegal – what they did to Fiesta Gardens – if I'd had any help.

But you couldn't get any help from the City's legal staff for sure. You couldn't get anyone to oppose the Council, and the Council were the biggest fans, you see. So this was going to bring tourists to town, just like Fiesta Gardens are going to bring worlds of tourists to town. And it was going to do this, and it was going to do that, and it was going to be a showplace, and it was going to be marvelous.

Well, so I got so upset about this that I went down to the Council and I sat there. And I couldn't get anyone to go with me, but I was there, and the thing came up. No, I knew what hour it was going to come up. And I knew the contract they were going to get.

So I took myself down to the **Austin National Bank**—not the Austin, but the American National Bank—I went down to the American National Bank. I went in and I saw **Edward Wroe** and whoever the vice president was, I've forgotten. I called and asked for an appointment, and I went down to see them. And I said—and I was so nervous – and I didn't know how to approach them or how to tell about what was about to happen.

But I said, “This is so bad, that all I can do is leave you this contract and ask you two men if you would do this. If you would give this away in your own business, then I don't expect you to do a thing about this. If you don't think this makes good sense for yourselves, then you sure don't want it to happen to the city.”

Because it was another one of those vague things of one percent or something of the gate receipts and no controls, no nothing – just take over forty acres of the surface of the lake and about forty or fifty acres of land down there. And with probably a horrible cyclone fence. They had no idea what they were going to do with it. And so they [had] called Mr. Ben White, evidently. And Ben White had been considered for years just a rubber stamp with Lester and Shanks. And they never even bothered to tell him what he was voting on, you know. He just was there, and they knew that they had his vote. So the thing came up, and I was there, and I got up and spoke against it. They were so rude to me, and so intolerant of me, and thought I was just a real nuisance to them – that this thing was all cut and dried and ready to go. And they were going to sign the contract that day.

And old man Ben White spoke up and said, “I'm not gonna sign that today.” Well, Louis and Lester shook him, they whispered to him, they got up and left the room to tell him what he was doing, what a horrible thing he was about to do – not signing the thing, and it was kind of pitiful, and they came back and they sat down to vote, and he said, “I'm not gonna sign it today.” He didn't say he wasn't going to sign it, but, “I'm not gonna sign it today.” And finally he said, “A lot of important people have called me and told me not to sign it.” Which I guess those two bankers called him and told him just not to sign it that day, you see.<sup>6</sup> [*Austin American-Statesman*, May 10, 1966, front page]

*Orum: Right, right, right.*

Crenshaw: And so, but in the meantime they had treated me so shabbily that **Trueman O'Quinn**, who had at one time been City Attorney, stood up and said, “Now gentleman, you all have really and truly abused a lovely lady here, and I'm ashamed of you, and I want you each to apologize.”

Well, Lester said, “I'm sorry, Bobbie,” – kind of like that, and Louis just sort of ducked his head. But that's how – what tension there was, you see, that they weren't

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<sup>6</sup> The votes against Little Texas were: Ben White, Emma Long, and Travis LaRue; votes for were: Louis Shanks and Lester Palmer.



gonna—they had committed themselves to that thing. It was – the three votes were gonna go, and Emma was just out on a limb sittin’ over there and couldn’t do a thing about it. And whoever was with her was – I mean if she had a second vote, it wasn’t going to do any good. And, but everything that had happened that had to do with anything in those days was just a three-to-two vote, just no, no, no, no – no problems at all. You just go get it done before the meeting, there it is. And if you were a board member, you were considered treasonable, you know. You have been honored to be a board member, and I – the joke for years was that they were afraid to fire me, that it would have looked so vindictive for them to fire me – that for a long time they let me stay on, just tolerated me. But they did not like any kind of interference.

*Orum: And Little Texas Project?*

Crenshaw: It didn’t go through. It died right there on that floor that day.

*Orum: That’s good. It was a victory.*

Crenshaw: But it was so shattering to me. And I fooled around with that thing until finally I, you know, I finally just went to bed with an aneurysm and was unconscious for many days. I really just think it was truly the strain of—

*Orum: Shortly thereafter?*

Crenshaw: Well, I don’t know when thereafter was, but my aneurysm was in ‘70 I think, or ‘71, and I think it was just because I had lived under such terrible pressure and tension.<sup>7</sup>

*Orum: How long did you remain as chairman of the Parks and Recreation—?*

Crenshaw: I don’t know how long I was chairman.

*Orum: When did you leave?*

Crenshaw: I don’t remember.

*Orum: Okay.*

Crenshaw: Probably after I was ill. And of course my greatest fight all of the time was to try to keep the motorboats off Town Lake. And that was just like giving your blood every day to try to do that. [*The Austin American-Statesman* printed Crenshaw’s Letter to Editor about this issue on April 10, 1960] But I was determined that that new little lake which hadn’t even been created – the dam wasn’t even built [Longhorn Dam was completed in 1960]. And we were trying to anticipate before it was built, and get some kind of a hold on it, and try to convince the public and everyone else that they didn’t need these boats and all this razzle dazzle up and down it. And I kept telling ‘em that there was no place left, that there were six lakes, or however many there are in the chain [**The**

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<sup>7</sup> Her stroke was in December of 1970. She stopped attending Park Board meetings in early 1970. She and **Russell Fish** started the Austin Environmental Council in 1970.

**Highland Lakes**], you know. Every one of them available for a man with a motorboat. But where is the fellow with the canoe gonna go? Where is the little man gonna fish, that wants to sit on the bank in a quiet spot? They can't fish with motorboats flying around them.

And, but I didn't have a PR team. I didn't have anyone helping me, and half of my statements came off sounding kind of silly. But I worked at it very hard and very conscientiously, because people had no concept of what a small lake it is. It's just seven miles long, you know, from end to end. And we kept that Little Texas off of it, and here it was, and I was trying to get – and by then, somewhere down the road, we'd gotten the Park[s] Department. And that was a major stroke. I guess if there's anything – that I did accomplish anything – [it] was getting separated away from Public Works and getting us a Park[s] Department [in 1966]. Because then, finally, we were able then to even get a park planner. See, at first we didn't have any[thing] but a department, but finally we got a planner, and then we come in because you had a plan. And then we finally got a **Town Lake Plan**<sup>8</sup> together. Well, you know, now I had the horrible burden of this lawsuit that – you know the lawsuit that the three of us are in, trying to protect the Sand Beach now?

*Orum: No, I don't.*

Crenshaw: Oh, well, that's a whole new story that's not very old. But there was – when **Ron Mullen** was mayor [1983-85], they were going to — a lady [**Susan Toomey Frost**] came one day and said that she'd been down to the Council meeting [July 2001, when **Kirk Watson** was Mayor], and that they had just passed a zoning plan to permit an access across the park.

*Orum: They had three women?*

Crenshaw: Yes. I'm one of 'em.

*Orum: Susan Frost?*

Crenshaw: Susan [Toomey] Frost and **Mary Arnold** and me.

*Orum: Okay.*

Crenshaw: And so they were going to permit this tall building to go right there adjacent to the parkland and give it a private entrance off – a private road would be cut to it across the park.

*Orum: Where is that?*

Crenshaw: It's right at the foot of Lamar Boulevard, of Lamar when you go south, and if you are going south, of course, you wouldn't – you'd go all the way under the bridge and have to come back to it.

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<sup>8</sup> In 1963 the Council approved a 10-year plan for Town Lake; The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan was signed Feb. 21, 1968.

*Orum: Okay, there's Zachary Scott Theatre.*

*Crenshaw: No, it's on this side. [north and east of the Lamar bridge]*

*Orum: Oh, it's on this side. Okay.*

*Crenshaw: On this side.*

*Orum: Okay.*

*Crenshaw: Just as you leave 5th Street and go down.*

*Orum: Okay.*

*Crenshaw: You're kind of up high, and you go under a railroad track, and then you have to turn off to the right or either cross the river now, but if you came back you'd come up to this, and it's right in there on the left.*

*Orum: Okay.*

Crenshaw: And what they—and the left, coming this way, has a way off of it. And what they [**Lumbermen's Investment Corp.**] had done was take that access road and cut off of it and give them a private road to cross through – but they had to cross the parkland to do it. So this girl, Susan [Toomey] Frost, was the one who happened to be there the day they passed the thing, and she realized they had not had a public hearing on it. So she came furious out of there and spoke to Mary Arnold about it, and Mary spoke to me, and they said, “I just think we better hire a lawyer.” So the three of us hired the lawyers [**Stuart Henry** and his firm, including **David Frederick** and **Tom Mason**], and we are having a long and protracted suit over it. And the young man [**Joseph E. Thompson**] that has this is a – owns this, has borrowed a lot of money from Lumbermen's Investment, and he is going bankrupt on his other ventures right now. He has several others<sup>9</sup>. I don't think he's a very sound person to begin with, but—

*Orum: A fellow in Austin?*

*Crenshaw: Yeah. He has two or three little other things he has done, before he got hold of this idea. But what he had done here that was so bad, was that he had—I know he had given Mullen an interest in it. He hadn't sold it to him at all. He had given it to him. Each time they deposed Mullen about this, he would say he has five percent, and the next time he had seven percent, and the next time he would say, “Well, maybe it's ten percent.” He was always very vague about what his interest in the building was, but that he was going to lease space for his insurance company in the building, and so he was going to take partial interest in the building.*

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<sup>9</sup> Thompson, Mullen, **Robert Keener**, and **Neal Block** were in a joint venture named **Town Lake Joint Venture (TLJV)** and had borrowed money from Lumbermen's Investment Corp. to build a tall building on Lumbermen's 4.5 acre tract adjoining the **Seaholm Power Plant**. Former Mayor Mullen filed for protection from creditors under Chapter 7 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code in October 1998.

But we strongly suspected that he was given his interest, and given his interest to grease the thing and get it through the Council. And that's exactly what he did, and they did it without a hearing. Well, when we called their hand, they knew they had to have a hearing. So they did go back. They said, "All right, we'll have a hearing." And the same votes backed him up again, and I can't remember who voted against it – maybe **Sally [Shipman]**. But the rest of 'em went on and voted for it. And so he presumably had the right — I mean the building had the right — to just cut across the parkland. So we, I happen to know that that area – all of that beach land in there came from the State to the City.

*Orum: Okay. I'm going to just stop. I'm trying to visualize where it is. I can get us down to, okay, there's Lamar—*

Crenshaw: It's across the—

*Orum: There's the YMCA and—*

Crenshaw: It's right across Lamar from there.

*Orum: Okay. It's on the south side of Lamar, but would it be on the southeast side of Lamar then?*

Crenshaw: Southeast side of Lamar. [4.5 acres on the northeast corner of Lamar and West First Street/Cesar Chavez and adjacent to Seaholm Power Plant]

*Orum: Oh, okay. And where were they going to put it up?*

Crenshaw: Well—

*Orum: There's a restaurant. What's the restaurant that's there? There's a—*

Crenshaw: No.

*Orum: No. Okay.*

Crenshaw: There's nothing there.

*Orum: There isn't.*

Crenshaw: Used to be. [**Cedar Door Bar** was a portable building moved onto the northeast corner of the 4.5 acre tract.] There was always a gravel operation there called **Maufrais' Brothers**.

*Orum: Okay.*

Crenshaw: And it's an old place, where for years and years and years, he mixed his cement and made his dump and came in and out of there. And I suppose that he was on — there must — there is a line where it becomes private domain, but in the original concept of the Sand Beach Reserve, it was the Sand Beach Reserve [that] was dedicated. But what it was — it was the old banks of a navigable river. And wherever it exists in Texas it belongs to the State. And it probably exists up and down Barton Creek.

Where if, if any—and a navigable stream is not necessarily what you think, you know. It doesn't mean the *Queen Mary* has to be able to come up and down it, but certainly the big boats originally, some in past history, had come up. And they had docks and landing points along the lake [Lake Austin] where they did a lot of barge shipping and things like that, up and down the Colorado River.

And so, and originally, the reason the **Town Lake Plan**<sup>10</sup> was so important to me is because that which is the Sand Beach Reserve had been built up by terrible kinds of businesses, because they dumped everything in the river, you know. The system was that you just used the river property because it was a good place to dump your old tires or your old mattresses or your old commodes or whatever you had. You threw 'em out in the creek or the river, and people didn't value their waterfront. They had to have water, but they somehow or another – and the pioneer didn't value his waterfront at all – so most of the old cities had all the trash and all the — the San Antonio River was a typical example, you know. It was just – all the industry was along the river, and everything they didn't want they pitched in the river. So to recover our riverbank was quite a trick, you see. And I used to keep telling 'em, if they didn't dedicate the Town Lake Plan, once we drew it up, that anyone could have a blacksmith shop, you know, right on the edge of the river.

*Orum: And what was the Town Lake Plan?*

Crenshaw: Well, the Town Lake Plan was when we first got our little planning department together. We got them to go along and designate all of the Sand Beach area and **everything that we dared lay our fingers on, and to try to widen it as much as we could**, and I think it's called the Town Lake Corridor.

*Orum: From where to where? Let's start down here at Longhorn Dam and go back.*

Crenshaw: All right. It goes all the way up to the **Tom Miller Dam**.

*Orum: Right.*

Crenshaw: The whole seven miles.

*Orum: Okay. Longhorn. Is that seven miles? Longhorn to Town Lake [Tom Miller Dam]? I didn't know that.*

Crenshaw: Seven miles.

*Orum: Okay. Never mind.*

Crenshaw: So, we had finally gotten our great little planners, and we had asked them first of all to set about doing that. Because this was my passion — to get that lake preserved from motorboats and from all kinds of unsightly things as fast as we could – to get it

zoned or classified as a park, so that it could not be deprecated. But that was just a horrible ordeal, absolutely a horrible ordeal, to get that done. But we did get it. We got it; we passed it through a Council, but apparently they never did really dedicate the land as parkland. They accepted the plan, accepted the concept.<sup>11</sup>

*Orum: Which Council was it?*

Crenshaw: I guess this was the—this probably was the Council with [**Jeff**] **Friedman** [mayor 1975-1977] and all that bunch probably. [yes]

*Orum: Oh. The '75 Council?[yes]*

Crenshaw: I would think. Well, it may have been earlier. It may have been much earlier than that. I'm lost.

*Orum: Okay. Butler Council? [no] Roy Butler? [no] Was he on it? [no]*

Crenshaw: It may have been that Council. It could have been.

*Orum: Okay. And the Butler Council there was '71, '73. [Mayor Butler 1971-1975]*

Crenshaw: See, I honestly don't know. I don't know whether it happened before I got sick or after I got sick.

*Orum: Oh, okay.*

Crenshaw: Because after I got sick, I did very little for a number of years. I was told to do nothing, to not have a serious fall, you know, and to just rest and take it easy, because I was in a very delicate situation, you know. I could have just come out of that a vegetable. When you're just, you know, you have a—an aneurysm in my head, and you're, you know, your brain is involved and my eyes were funny when I first came out of this. And I was just told positively not to stay under any kind of stress or strain at all.

*Orum: Well, okay. I'll try to find the date. So at any rate, who was with you on the parks? Was **Ruth Isely** with you at that point or was it a separate commission?*

Crenshaw: Ruth may – if she was, if she was on the Park Board, she was always very pleasant to work with and very helpful to work with. I think she was [on it]. And a lady by the name of Mrs.— I think was her name, Mrs.— [**Mabel Davis**]. I've forgotten her name – was on there for a long, long time. She was a little older than I was, and I think she would have very much preferred to have been chairman than have me chairman. But, and she was very effective. She was much more politic and diplomatic than I was. She

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<sup>10</sup> Both Beverly Sheffield and Roberta Crenshaw were at the 1965 White House conference on Natural Beauty. The Town Lake Plan was presented there. Later in 1965, Roberta and **Lady Bird** were both at the UT conference on "Our Environmental Crisis."

<sup>11</sup> Motorboats were banned from Town Lake in 1960, when Longhorn Dam was completed to create Town Lake; Tom Miller was mayor. Early on, there were efforts to relax the ban by allowing motorboats with "no visible wake," but they were unsuccessful. There were occasional exceptions for Aqua Festival and boat races.

worked better with Council than I did. Of course I don't think she got anything done either, you know. Getting along with 'em didn't get anything done.

*Orum: Yeah. The Town Lake Plan [1975] then sort of said: "This is how the lake ought to look." I mean, what were the central points of the plan?*

Crenshaw: Well, we began to emphasize the importance of this Sand Beach Reserve, which no one even dreamed of. They didn't know this law. I happened to have known the law because I was married to a lawyer, I guess, and he had been in the Attorney General's department. And so this little lawsuit<sup>12</sup> we are fighting now, the Attorney General is helping us with, because the State gave the land to the City for it to be used for public purposes. But it was considered the normal shoreline of the navigable river, so it was designated to wherever the final banks turned up, you see. So there's that little Sand Beach area on both sides that belongs – it's primarily on this side. There's very little of it on the south side.

*Orum: I see.*

Crenshaw: It's primarily on the north side.

*Orum: Okay. I'm just trying to figure it out. There's that—right next to the power plant there's that area there where there's the gravel pit. Is that it?*

Crenshaw: Well, it's really between—yes, and it's between the trestle, where the railroad crosses, and Lamar.

*Orum: Right.*

Crenshaw: It's that land in there.

*Orum: Okay. I know where it is now.*

Crenshaw: And it's crowded up against the railroad tracks. And you see, we keep maintaining they can get to their building by a public street if they'll cross the railroad tracks. And I think the arrangements with the railroad track apply nearly up to the City and probably could be crossed. But they don't want to come in that way. They'd like to

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<sup>12</sup> Lawsuit was filed in 1984 and settled out of court by compromise between Lumbermen's Investment Corp., the State, and the plaintiffs in November 2000. According to Amy Smith in the Aug. 17, 2001 *Austin Chronicle*: "Last November, the city and Lumbermen's settled a long-standing dispute over boundary lines on the property." Kirk Watson was Austin's mayor from 1997 to Nov. 9, 2001. Susan Toomey Frost: "**Jim Mattox** saved our lives. After Attorney General Jim Mattox joined the lawsuit, we three women had no more legal bills." Conversation with Shudde Fath on April 9, 2018.

put this tall building<sup>13</sup> up and approach it from the park. And it's going to be an eight-story or something building, and it's going to have about 2,000 people come out of it at five o'clock.

And they would just make a mess of that interchange there, that's very complex anyway and very difficult. And the joggers come out of the Y and go jogging all through there. And they were going to have to widen the turnaround at the base. I don't think our lawyers have made near enough of the alterations to the present system that were going to be required in order to handle the traffic out of that building. I don't think they've addressed that very effectively. And so far we haven't done very well with our lawsuit. We're going to appeal it again. But we've had unfortunate judges, I think, so far. And we haven't done too well, but we're hanging in there.

*Orum: Well that's good. So, and then did the Town Lake Plan, did that resolve in sort of, I mean, like the hike and bike trail there, and the trees, and was that part of the Town Lake Plan?*

*Crenshaw: Well, it is. Now I gave, to try to get the public to understand what we were doing, and to understand that the river could be beautiful, and it could be enjoyable; and that it was a place that was worth recognizing – I took my own [ranch] hands that I had hired, some men, and I went down and created a little path that starts at First and Congress, right across from that hotel. And it starts right there and it goes, it has a little circle, all of which I feel like, if I go look at it today, which I haven't done in years – it probably is all under-scaled, not properly done. But I only had so many dollars of my own to do it with. So I did this little path that goes along, and it circles this little – it makes a little circle, and then it goes down and makes little steps, and goes down to the lakeshore. And as it goes down to the lakeshore, then you pick it up on what literally is, well, it's a normal little path right along the edge of the bottom down there. And I gave to the city all the plants—well, the plants originally that went all the way from there all the way down to Lamar and on both sides of Lamar – all the flowering peach that you see there every year.*

Since that time, of course, Mrs. Johnson's come back<sup>14</sup>, and they've been added to, and a lot of azaleas have been planted, things like that. But I planted about 398 plants myself—willow trees, flowering peach, redbud, whatever I could find. (switches to second tape here)

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<sup>13</sup> On Sept. 27, 2001, the Council voted 4 to 3 to deny the zoning change request. The four “no” votes were: **Jackie Goodman, Beverly Griffith, Danny Thomas, and Daryl Slusher**. The three “yes” votes were Kirk Watson, **Will Wynn**, and **Raul Alvarez**.

<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Johnson returned circa 1969. After her death in 2007, Town Lake was renamed Lady Bird Lake.



*Orum: At any rate, it's very lush there. So that's between the area—we're talking about the north side of the lake and then stretching from Lamar down roughly to Congress.*

Crenshaw: To Congress, where I put my plants. But I put them on both sides of Lamar. (phone rings) Let me check, answer and—

*Orum: Go ahead. Okay. (tape turned off, then back on)*

Crenshaw: ...to get people's minds on how beautiful it could be.

*Orum: Right.*

Crenshaw: So I planted those 395 or something trees, and they went all the way from— they outlined the path all the way along – and they went all the way to Lamar on both sides.

*Orum: Right.*

Crenshaw: And I, you know, and I—and so every year one or two of my people that know that, every year when those trees bloom, they call me and tell me how beautiful they are. There is a doctor in town that particularly knows I planted those and remembers some of the long battles way years back. He wasn't very vociferous in those days, but now he's very gracious about it, thanking me for 'em.

*Orum: The other – the thing that in fact I had originally called you about – was the whole MoPac thing, and I gather it was something a long time in coming. But these are the things that I brought. This was—these are the minutes of the meeting [public hearing before an estimated 500 people at a **Texas Highway Department** office on the proposed six-lane, north-south expressway<sup>15</sup>] February 6, 1968, and you appeared there to talk really about MoPac and your concern on its development along First Street. And you seemed to— there were a number of people in that audience who apparently were concerned about MoPac and coming into Windsor Road, coming into West Austin. And you expressed the concern about First Street.*

Crenshaw: Well, see, I said here that I wanted to talk about one specific phase of MoPac.

*Orum: Right.*

Crenshaw: That it would not be interpreted as intending to leave the total MoPac in the dust. “We probably are insubordinate. I am quite sure that one more inconvenience is that

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Toomey Frost: “That was a bond issue item that was put up to a vote. Robert Barnstone (before he was on the city council) called me to say he was forming a PAC to fight it — he called it the Six-PAC. He asked that I match his \$1,000 along with four other people. Barnstone cleverly ran the numbers on the expressway and showed how it would raise everyone's taxes. So with only \$6,000 in the advertising budget, we beat the wretched idea down.” Authorization was an item on the Jan. 19, 1985 charter election ballot.

you are going to have to listen to me.” That little old judge was so ugly, and he had told something, some smart aleck story about—

*Orum: About a mule?*

*Crenshaw: About a mule. Yeah.*

*Orum: Yes. That’s at the time frame.*

*Crenshaw: And so I had to try to break the ice, and said I wanted to ask him how he knew that the mule and I would both be there that day – because he maybe was saying that some people are like mules and never give up or something. I don’t know what he — he said something real hateful, knowing it applied to me. And I think he was a County Judge or something. [Travis County **Judge J.H. Watson**]*

*Orum: I guess what I was really wondering is, you know, the First Street Expressway really has never gone through.*

*Crenshaw: That’s right.*

*Orum: There were some plans to eventually have an expressway...*

*Crenshaw: That’s right. That’s right.*

*Orum: ... that came out in the 1956 Master Plan.*

*Crenshaw: Now I remember. Now I remember this, and we were – I was very worried that they were going to – if they opened MoPac with an opening onto the park, which they did, that the expressway – that they would turn the parkway into an expressway.*

*Orum: Okay.*

*Crenshaw: They’ve tried every way since to do it, you know. They just keep on trying to indicate that that’s where the connector route should be between IH-35 and MoPac – should go right along that lake. They *do* this always because that’s the most available land. And until it is *dedicated* parkland, they can always mess with it. So they adopted the plan, the Town Lake Plan, but they didn’t *dedicate* the land<sup>16</sup>. [An ordinance dedicating and formally describing city-owned lands around Town Lake as parkland was passed May 2, 1985, reserving easements for existing utilities, streets, and rights-of-way. Shipman's resolution to dedicate the City-owned waterfront lands was passed on March 14, 1985.]*

*Orum: I see. I see.*

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<sup>16</sup> On March 27, 1985, Roberta Crenshaw received a "Town Lake Hero Award" from the Town Lake Park Alliance at its Zilker Clubhouse gala. Other recipients were Sally Shipman, Roger Duncan, Susan Toomey Frost, Cactus Pryor, Robert Barnstone, Paul Hernandez, Lady Bird Johnson, Alan Tanaguchi, Beverly Sheffield, Miriam Blum, James Austin Pinedo, and Jay Frank Powell.

Crenshaw: Now this year Sally Shipman's bill<sup>ii</sup> has gotten a lot of the land dedicated. Now whether they took in our portion up there where our lawsuit is, or whether it was exempted from her bill because it's in court, I don't know. They may have deliberately cut it out. I'll have to ask her.

Orum: *Have they dedicated that area near the Auditorium Shores? Is that dedicated parkland now? I don't know.*

Crenshaw: I think it probably is. Well, yes, I think she got that done, that that became parkland. See, I really just skirt through a lot of this now and try not to get too much of it on my mind. One thing, I've got so many of my own business problems, I really might agree, I'm going to have to start chewing on my hand. Because I've got lots of my own business problems. And I didn't need to get into 'em, and I got into 'em. And I'm too old, and I've gotten the shingles, and it's running me crazy. I can't throw off the shingles.

Orum: *Well, I guess, you've given me a pretty good sense. I think your argument—I can take those; those are exact – that's an exact transcript. I wanted to know if that triggered anything. But really, you really have given me a pretty good feel for, you know, what you did and the issues that were important to you. And, you know, that's what I was after.*

Crenshaw: Well, this is the most sensible statement that I knew I made. It's not very coherent, but I think what I'm trying to say—

Orum: *Well, Mullen makes statements – none of them are really particularly coherent.*

[end of taped interview 2:05:30]

[This was not the end ... after several minutes of silence the tape continues; the following key points were transcribed by Phoebe Allen in March 2018 starting at 2:06:11]

Crenshaw: I don't have this. I don't have any of these records. (silence) Very interesting reading. I had forgotten all about this.

Orum: *Does it trigger anything additional in your mind? (silence...)*

Crenshaw: I would like you to give me this when you are through with it, or make me a copy of it.

Orum: *I will.*

Crenshaw: Because, literally, this thing jumps right back at you every few minutes, you know. Last year this came up again and we had to defeat this very expressway. And the only way, one way we got to defeat this – you see, Mullen wanted it also, because it was going to go right by his building once he got his building in.

Orum: *Right.*

Crenshaw: And we had to defeat Mullen and some of the Council<sup>17</sup>. And a very bright young man came to me with a proposition, and while I was out of town they got permission to run an ad<sup>18</sup> which showed the three ladies which said that Mullen had sued. See, they have literally sued us for \$12 million dollars or something.

*Orum: Yes.*

Crenshaw: Some Machiavellian person wrote that ad that said, “Why would Mullen sue these ladies?” And they had taken a picture of us purely by accident. We didn’t pose for the picture to be in the ad. We were up at a little overlook on the Zilker Boy Scout camp, where the Town Lake group were once again working on the Town Lake Plan – trying to get it further analyzed. And now that they’ve come up with it, they call it the **Town Lake Corridor Plan**. And it's a better job than we did – more thoroughly done. And the men who’ve done it – I think one named **Jay Frank Powell**<sup>19</sup> [an architect] and one named **Ray Reece**<sup>20</sup> – and they have worked very hard at this concept. I don’t know whether Susan<sup>21</sup> is on that committee or not, but they have been very interested in having me like this Corridor Plan, and they are trying to get the city to adopt it. And I guess the city has adopted it [not until January 26, 1989], but I doubt they have dedicated every inch of it. See, that’s what they do to you. They adopt the plan, and then they don’t dedicate it. And we have shown them on every map the city gives out – the transportation maps or maps for visitors or anybody, that they hand out – that they show this as parkland. But they’ll

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<sup>17</sup> In 1985, **Frank Cooksey** defeated incumbent Mayor Ron Mullen by 38,307 votes/54% to 32,754/46%.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Toomey Frost: “That ad was devised by **Dick Stanford** for the opposing campaign. **Mary Ann Neely** was campaign chair and Mary Arnold begged Mary Ann not to use the Sand Beach lawsuit as a weapon. Mary Arnold, I was told, cried. Mary Ann Neely, however, said something to the effect of “The bottom line is winning.” I think the consensus was that the ad put the nail in Ron Mullen’s coffin.”

<sup>19</sup> During and after Jay’s work with TLPA, he (and Susan Frost) became members of the Planning Commission. Susan later ran unsuccessfully for City Council. ~Larry Akers, April 29, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Ray Reece was later almost single-handedly responsible for the location of our new airport at Bergstrom rather than near Manor, due to his in depth reporting in the West Austin News on the skullduggery and corruption behind the Manor airport proposal, even after it was OK’d by a public vote. By the time he was through with it, Council did not have the heart to proceed, and Jake Pickle had had time to oversee the decommissioning of Bergstrom AFB and the return of that site to the city for its airport. On the basis of that work and his work on Town Lake, a good case can be made that Ray had more influence on the shape of the City of Austin than any individual since the 40 acres were set aside for UT. Not bad for a guy with no money, no rich friends, and no ties to the business community or Austin power structure, just a lot of grit, vision, work ethic, and an unwillingness to concede defeat. ~Larry Akers, April 29, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Susan Toomey Frost: “Yes, I was a member along with Jackie Goodman before she was elected to the City Council. Ray Reece was chair.”

claim that it wasn't dedicated. And that's the reason they can swing off and go to the private builders.

*Orum and Crenshaw discuss where to send the papers. ...*

*Orum: How should I refer to you? As Roberta Crenshaw or Mrs. Dickson, or Bobbie Crenshaw?*

*Crenshaw: It is a problem, and I honestly don't know. I'd guess you'd say Roberta Crenshaw.*

*Orum: Everyone's referring to you as Bobbie, and ...*

*Crenshaw: Well, that's true, too, or you can just say – I have no particular choice. Some people call me Bobbie, some call me – new people that know me are more inclined to call me Roberta. But I think most of this went on when I was known as Bobbie. ...*

*Orum: One last thing I want to ask ... I've done about 160 oral histories, and I'd like to make this available to the Austin History Center. Would you mind if I made this available?*

*Crenshaw: Of course. I'm very flattered.*

Tape ends.

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## ADDENDUM

### Explanatory Notes from Mary Arnold: Sand Beach Lawsuit

The Litigation about Sand Beach did start in 1984-85, and the first suit was judged "moot" in about 1988, because the developer had gone bankrupt. There was another litigation regarding access over Sand Beach for the **Cedar Door Bar**, and it was handled by the Texas Attorney General. [Cedar Door Bar once was on the northeast corner of the 4.5 acres.] Then the City of Austin finally raised the boundary issue - saying that there was more Sand Beach Reserve land, because the boundary had been wrong, giving the private land some of SBR.

A Settlement with the City of Austin was signed in Jan. 2001. Thus 17 years from our first lawsuit, to the boundary settlement. With the boundary settlement, the City should have gotten back about 3 acres of land. But they ended up with about half of that – and part of it was over by the railroad track on the north side of the privately owned tract, instead of being Sand Beach Reserve. PLUS the city did NOT dedicate the land it got back as parkland. Instead it is used for a ROAD over to Seaholm.

Attorneys for the lawsuit were Stuart Henry and his firm, including David Frederick and Tom Mason. Henry was the city's first environmental officer and his position was one that Roberta urged the City Manager to create and fill. Ginny Agnew was the lawyer on the case in the Attorney General's office. The cost to the three plaintiffs was over \$60,000 each. What was so discouraging was that the final ruling that the case was "moot" because the developer had taken bankruptcy and no longer owned the land. AND according to City of Austin rules and regulations, since Lumberman's took over the land and the approved plan, the case, to us, was NOT MOOT because the city still agreed to

let them put a road to their project on Sand Beach Reserve land!!! And we were not given an opportunity to explain that to the judge.

Also, by that time, I think it was the Legislature that had tightened up the rules about who could actually bring such a suit... When we started, Roberta, Susan and me were able to show that we had personal interests in the land... enough to satisfy the requirements of being "interested parties" in order to file the suit. But the business community or whoever was able to tighten up the definitions of "interested parties" so that we could no longer qualify as "interested parties"....

### **SAND BEACH RESERVE** and Lumbermen's Tract Chronology by Mary Arnold

- 1840 – Sand Beach Reserve set aside by Republic of Texas
- 1840s – Outlot 11 sold – southern boundary was “60 yards below the bluff”, and this was northern boundary of West Sand Beach Reserve
- 1870s – Outlot 11 subdivided into Raymond Plateau Subdivision with “60 yards below the bluff” left unsubdivided
- 1880s – Railroad bought the “60 yards below the bluff”
- City uses Sand Beach Reserve for water filtration
- 1916 – Metcalfe Survey in connection with outbreak of waterborne diseases.
- 1932 – City lease of Sand Beach Reserve for public water supply
- 1945 – City purchases Sand Beach Reserve from state – for public purpose uses only
- 1960 – Creation of Town Lake
- 1968 – Council adoption of Town Lake Comprehensive Development Plan
- 1970s – Town Lake Beautification
- 1974 – agreement with 3 businesses – re construction of driveways and parking lots
- 1984 – Council approval of Town Lake Joint Venture zoning, and dedication of road in Sand Beach Reserve to be constructed by TLJV (October, 1984) Mayor Ron Mullen announced that his insurance company would have its office in the Town Lake Joint Venture building.
- 1984-88 – Litigation re road dedication – (TLJV takes bankruptcy; case judged “moot”; LIC takes over TLJV 1.9 ac. Tract) Roberta Crenshaw, Susan Toomey Frost and Mary Arnold sued City of Austin for taking dedicated parkland, part of Sand Beach Reserve, and letting it be an access road for a private development.
- Joe Riddell in the Attorney General's office researches the boundary of the Sand Beach Reserve in the area west of Lamar Blvd. and finds that it has been drawn incorrectly, depriving the City of Austin of a portion of Sand Beach Reserve that should be city-owned land.
- 1990-1993 – Mayor Lee Cooke arranges for Cedar Door Bar to be moved to tract belonging to Railroad and adjacent to 1.9 acres. Proposal to access Bar draws attention of Attorney General, resulting in litigation with Railroad as Intervenor. Court rules park roads “impliedly dedicated” as public roads that may be used to access Railroad land now belonging to LIC.
- 1997-98 – Gables proposal to build apartments on LIC tract which includes 1.9 ac., and the 3.2 ac. Tract and Gables decides to drop project

- 1999 – City explores boundary issue – (See Austin Chron article per Kevin Lewis from Sept 2000)
- City Manager Toby Futrell meets with Roberta Crenshaw and Mary Arnold and city employee Gary Glover to see the basis of the boundary issue re Sand Beach Reserve and the development planned north of SBR west of Lamar Blvd. Gary Glover explains the problem, and supports a more northern boundary for the city's Sand Beach Reserve in that area.
- Settlement Agreement – Approval for City Manager to negotiate and sign Nov. 9, 2000; agreement signed Jan 8, 2001 subsequent review and approval by AG and Commissioner of General Land Office, and .609 ac. deeded to C of A.
- LIC proposal for higher building per DMU-CURE zoning request denied by Council – 9/27/2001 (Opposed: Slusher, Griffith, Thomas, Goodman)
- May 2002 – Seaholm District Master Plan presented to Council – NO ACTION then or since
- 1985 Town Lake Corridor Study
- (Larry Speck says Town Lake Comprehensive Plan completed in 1984)
- May 5, 1985 -- Ordinance dedicating city-owned land around Town Lake as Parkland (reserving easements for existing utilities, streets and right-of-ways.

And again the citizens lost – and the public land, in this case a portion of Sand Beach Reserve, has benefitted the adjacent private development – and NOT "Town Lake parkland" for people to enjoy along with Lady Bird Lake, just like Roberta warned.

The first lawsuit, brought by Roberta, Susan Frost and me, was against the City of Austin for dedicating a road across SBR to access a private office building development (Town Lake Joint Venture or TLJV) for which the City Council had approved the plan, including the road on SBR land. The Texas AG joined our suit -- on our side, against the City of Austin. Joe Riddell, an attorney with the AG's office, researched the case and the issues.

The Cedar Door Bar was a "temporary" use on the land where the office building had been approved. The Texas AG office objected to Cedar Door Bar having access over SBR land and filed suit.

The Boundary dispute lawsuit (1999) was the City of Austin v. Lumbermen's Investment Corporation. (Lumbermen's, LIC) had taken over the TLJV land, and Gables wanted to develop apartments on the land). The boundary lawsuit was settled between the City and LIC with a Settlement Agreement signed Jan 2001. Then LIC filed a zoning case for DMU - CURE zoning, and that case was denied by Council in September, 2001.

So, that really was the end of the lawsuits, but not the end of the outcome for that little piece of Sand Beach Reserve.... What is NOT in the chronology is one last public hearing and effort to keep the Gables/LIC development from taking over all the remaining parkland, one way or another -- I have been going back and reading the council backup and the council closed captioning for the Feb. 2, 2006 Council meeting...

Roberta would have appreciated some of the speakers who pointed out how much the city was giving away to the developer - especially relating to parkland.



Mary Arnold, Apr. 1, 2018:

Yes, there was a young man that was promoting building an office building on the old Maufrais tract, adjoining Sand Beach Reserve. I have found the young man's name -- **Joseph E. Thompson** (though he is much older now!).

He did borrow money from Lumberman's Investment Corporation (LIC), and the fellow in charge of LIC was **Kenny Jastro**, an acquaintance of Roberta... (but because of his dealings for LIC re the Sand Beach Reserve, the boundary issue, and the developments proposed, he was NOT on Roberta's list as a "friend.")

Former Mayor Mullen's Chapter 7 bankruptcy was in 1998. I found an article about that and have copied it and attached to this e-mail...

I found the following information in report about LIC's lawsuit against Town Lake Jt. Venture:

"Town Lake, a joint venture involving Robert Keener, Neal Block, Mullen, and Thompson, borrowed \$4 million from Anchor Savings in March 1984 in order to purchase a plot of land in downtown Austin. Keener, Block, and Thompson signed the promissory note acknowledging this debt to Anchor. The land and a \$1 million certificate of deposit were collateral for the loan. Town Lake and LIC began discussing the possibility of forming a joint venture to construct and lease an office building on the land. In July 1984, LIC loaned Town Lake \$4.6 million to refinance the Anchor loan. The new loan contained similar terms as the Anchor loan; the land and certificate of deposit were designated as collateral. In September 1984, LIC loaned Town Lake an additional \$100,000 to cover architectural fees. The parties produced a draft of a contract detailing the planned joint venture in early October. However, on December 11, 1984, LIC informed Town Lake that it no longer wished to enter into the venture."

Roberta also talked about THREE Austin Mayors being involved with Sand Beach Reserve: 1) **Ron Mullen** and Town Lake Joint Venture, 2) **Lee Cooke** who arranged for the Cedar Door to be moved temporarily to the TLJV site, and 3) **Kirk Watson** who was involved with the "Boundary Settlement" in 2001.

**Rusty Heckaman**, Austin History Center staff: The case originally launched by Mary Arnold, Roberta Crenshaw and Susan Frost and later combined with the suit by the State's Attorney General was originally presided over by **Judge Juan Gallardo** on March 21, 1986 in the 345<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court of Travis County. (No. 370,394). It appears the case was appealed various times and the original ruling by Hon. Gallardo dismissed on November 25, 1987 by Judge Earl Smith. Judge Gallardo's findings as well as some references to him in various correspondence lead me to believe Mrs. Crenshaw would have had a very low opinion of him and might match the remarks in her interview.

## **ENDNOTES Submitted by Larry Akers, April 28-29, 2018**

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<sup>i</sup> The "plan" that Ray, Susan, and Jackie worked on as members of the Town Lake Task Force was called the "Town Lake Corridor Study". Its final draft was published in October 1985. Other members of the task force were **Enrique Lopez, Jr., Jonathan**

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**Markley, Matthew O'Hayer, Cynthia Valadez, Regan Gammon, and Kathryn Kennedy.** Jay Frank Powell was not on that particular task force. The study was the first such assessment since the 1968 Town Lake Comprehensive Plan, whose recommendations had received scarce implementation. A great deal of the land proposed for park use in the 1968 plan had been diverted for other uses, including the Austin High School campus and land sold by the City for businesses like the Jack-in-the-Box and others along South Lamar and Barton Springs Road. The Town Lake Corridor Study encompassed both public lands and adjoining private properties from Tom Miller Dam to Longhorn Dam, as well as five miles of the Colorado River waterfront down to the confluence with Walnut Creek. Tributary creeks and the traffic grid were also part of the study. Its recommendations were key to the establishment of the Waterfront Overlay District, which governed private land development in the Town Lake Corridor, and the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board, which oversaw its implementation. The Study also laid groundwork for the creation of Austin's "Great Park" along the lakefront, with the 87 acres of Auditorium Shores (now called Vic Matthias Shores) and what is now called Michael Butler Park as its centerpiece, and Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park as an eastern counterpart of Zilker Park. Roberta's contributions to the creation of Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park [is] documented elsewhere.

<sup>ii</sup> Sally's 1985 ordinance did include part, but not all of the Sand Beach Reserve lands Bobbie discussed. There appears to be a little notch that may be the land the Three Ladies litigated, but it might rather be the Seaholm intake structure. It also did not include the 54 acres bounded by South First Street, Barton Springs Road, Lee Barton Drive, and Riverside Drive. This land was the focus of the Town Lake Park Alliance's efforts leading up to the January 19, 1985 charter election. **Ray Reece, Jay Frank Powell, Susan Frost, Miriam Blum and myself (Larry Akers)** were among the principals of that group, the core of which included between 15 and 20 people at various times from 1983-1990.

The TLPA had gathered 19,577 signatures toward a ballot proposition to dedicate the 54 acres as parkland and regulate the amount of development there. City Council with the backing of the Chamber of Commerce and much of the business community countered with a proposition to use the site for a convention center. TLPA's campaign defeated the convention center proposition by 32 to 68% of the vote, but its own Proposition 18 fell just short, receiving 48.3%. Subsequently, TLPA broadened its program to recommend waterfront enhancements from Tom Miller Dam to Colorado River Park and solicited endorsements from candidates who were elected to a majority of City Council seats that May (the election where Frank Cooksey ousted Ron Mullen).

Their program included dedication of the riverfront lands in Sally Shipman's May 2, 1985 ordinance, and their continued momentum led to 1) the dedication of the 54 acres on July 17, 1986; 2) the formulation of the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan under contract to architects Johnson, Johnson, and Roy with Larry Speck as principal; 3) the subsequent adoption of the Town Lake Comprehensive Plan Ordinance in 1988, which specified design constraints and elements for the waterfront, parklands; and 4) the negotiation of the current site of the Austin Convention Center (with Reese and Powell as primary negotiators), and the killing of Councilmember Louise Epstein's proposal to build a bicycle racing stadium on the 54 acres.

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TLPA also uncovered the Chamber of Commerce's use of City funds to fight against Proposition 18, which led to the wresting of the City's hotel-motel tax-funded convention and tourism promotion contract from the Chamber and the establishment of the City's Convention and Tourism Bureau. Ultimately, TLPA's efforts laid the groundwork for the negotiations and public vote to create what is now known as **Michael Butler Park** (on the 54 acres) as part of the Town Lake Community Events Center Venue Project in 1998. In essence, TLPA inherited the momentum for the reclamation of the Town Lake waterfront for parkland from Roberta Crenshaw and Lady Bird Johnson and carried it into the 21st Century.

I should also have added **Daryl Slusher's** name to the prominent TLPA roster. Daryl managed the Prop 18 campaign and, of course, went on to serve on the City Council and as Assistant Director of the water utility. Among other core TLPA alums were energy and environmental expert **T Paul Robbins**, neighborhood stalwarts and eventual Planning Commissioners Mary Arnold and **Jean Mather**, and neighborhood leaders **Brooks Kasson** and **James Pinedo**. TLPA was like the Miles Davis Quartet of the neighborhood and green movement in Austin in the 1980s, a seminal group in which many future leaders cut their adult teeth. Other core members included **John Houghton, Hobie Hukill, Glenna Balch, Richard Wright, and Bob Russell**, and among our supporters were luminaries **Roger Duncan, John Henry Faulk, Cactus Pryor, Alan Tanaguchi, Beverly Watts-Davis, Susanna Almanza, and Marcos de Leon**.