

amid urban surroundings, preserves the bayou in its and forest. Photo © 1988 by marshland, wilderness park Armand Bayou,

Preserving Armand Bayou

James Herzberg

Armand Bayou Nature Center lies approximately twenty miles south of downtown Houston, immediately adjacent to the Johnson Space Center, the Bayport industrial complex, and the Clear Lake residential developments. The close proximity of this over-1600 acre natural preserve to centers of high technology, industry, and community life, make it an especially valuable resource. An enormous enhancement to the quality of life in the area, its presence among such neighbors is conducive to and symbolic of cooperation and common direction among diverse economic and social activities.

Before the industrial development of the Gulf Coast, the waterway was not especially unique in comparison to others, but the bayou gained distinction as one of the best preserved examples of the indigenous habitat. A vigorous campaign, formally launched in 1970, ensured that its innate features would remain untouched for posterity. The record of this movement is, at one level, an interesting story with a colorful cast of characters: the anachronistic Jimmy Martyn, the irrepressible Frank Kokesh, and the determined Hana Ginzbarg, among others. At another level, creation of the nature center also exemplified a strong cooperation from people of various social backgrounds, from someone as poor as the farmer Jimmy Martyn to another as wealthy as philanthropist Nina Cullinan. At a time when the Houston area seems to be moving beyond its strong heritage of individual private philanthropy toward more public planning and citizen involvement, when better and more numerous parks and greenbelts were major objectives of the Sesquicentennial commemoration, a reminder of a community-based campaign, such as the effort to save Armand Bayou, should be timely and encouraging. This is a heartening account, to even the most cynical, of citizen participation and government cooperation.

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An Unspoiled Locale

The bayou itself, a tributary of Clear Lake, has a deep middle channel, resulting from its once-long journey to a sea a hundred miles away. As a result of land subsidence in the twentieth century, primarily from underground pumping of oil and ground water, it is often extremely broad, yet shallow near the edges. Along its shores, the coarse, silty soil of the floodplain permits good drainage and supports galleries of forest, with hickories, hollies, oak, elm, and ash growing there. A grassy prairie frames the periphery. These three environments—marsh, forest, and prairie—can accommodate a variety of wildlife and yield fascinating illustrations of the interlocking ecologies. ¹

The bayou is also a chronicle of human history. Nomadic Indian tribes inhabited the vicinity for thousands of years, moving from campsite to campsite, subsisting off game, fish, nuts and berries, even yaupon leaves, from which they could brew a strong tea. Early pioneer communities, such as the "Old French Settlement" of Cajun families, raised sugar cane, cut wood for sale, and grew produce in the decades that they inhabited the vicinity. Among these early pioneer families were the ancestors of Texas folklorist J. Frank Dobie. Dobie. Property of the sugar cane, cut wood the sugar cane, cut wood for sale, and grew produce in the decades that they inhabited the vicinity.

The perpetuation of a natural waterway such as Armand Bayou into the early 1970s was largely thanks to Jim West, a colorful Texas oilman. Establishing his ranch in the vicinity in the 1920s, West built his own grand home (now the Lunar and Planetary Institute on NASA 1) at the point where the bayou emptied into Mud Lake before draining into Clear Lake itself.

Acquiring thousands of acres, many of which came from the homesites of the early white settlers, he maintained the bayou as a game preserve, thus keeping it relatively pristine and removed from the rapid commercial and suburban growth accompanying the East Texas oil boom. When Humble Oil and Refining Company, the forerunner of Exxon, bought the West ranch in the late 1930s, the company landmen who looked over the property found it as rural and peaceful as a place could be: cattle grazing in pastures, thick stands of oak near the water courses, and abundant wildlife including turkey, quail,

and prairie chicken. Until the county road crews cut Bay Area Boulevard through the locale in 1967, the bayou was accessible only by a small boat.⁵

This splendid isolation faced a serious threat when the National Aeronautics and Space Administration decided to locate its headquarters on the former site of the West ranch. Political clout, combined with the economic and technical advantages of Houston, had determined the Clear Lake location. The subsequent influx of industrial and scientific firms as well as NASA personnel precipitated a titanic construction boom. Predictions circulated of over 200,000 new residents in the Clear Lake area in twenty years, and a million new people in fifty years. Strike-it-rich stories in real estate were legion. "When astronaut Walter M. Schirra went into orbit Wednesday," the Houston *Chronicle* reported, "he had company on the way up—skyrocketing prices of land in the Clear Lake area. . ." The most ambitious project was Clear Lake City, promoted by builder Del Webb and Friendswood Development Company, a subsidiary of Humble Oil and Refining. The projected community sprawled over 15,000 acres, including the bayou area, at an initial cost of \$200 to \$375 million.

With the autonomy of the bayou now in question, a lone farmer with land along its banks, Jimmy Martyn, made his own attempt to preserve the natural habitat. In a story not known for many years, Martyn refused a \$500,000 offer from Friendswood for the remaining twenty-eight acres of his family farm—even after the developer was ready to let him stay there until his death. In his eighties, Martyn had lived on the farm all his life. Maintaining a simple existence, without electricity, gas, or running water. he cared most deeply for wildlife and natural surroundings. His sole concessions to the modern world had been the use of a 1925 Ford truck, which even outlasted him, and a crystal radio set, on which he had heard the news of the first space flights. In the surroundings water is presented by the concessions to the modern world had been the use of a 1925 Ford truck, which even outlasted him, and a crystal radio set, on which he had heard the news of the first space flights.

⁵Undated newspaper clipping, Clear Lake Shores vertical file, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library, Houston, Texas; *Deer Park News*, August 18, 1971.

¹Armand Bayou Nature Center, *Trail Guide* (1986), 2-12, 16-18; Geology-Armand Bayou, Armand Bayou Nature Center Files, Pasadena, Texas (hereafter cited as ABNC).

²W. W. Newcomb, Jr., *The Indians of Texas* (Austin, 1961), 61-79. See also Lawrence Aten, *Indians of the Upper Texas Coast* (New York, 1983), for a more technical and specific analysis.

³Margaret Henson, retired professor of Texas history, University of Houston at Clear Lake, interview with author, Houston, Texas, March 11, 1986; Houston Audubon Society and Preservation of Armand Bayou Committee, Armand Bayou Park and Nature Center: Field Survey and Guidelines for Development, March, 1974, 6.

⁴Dobie's grandfather, Robert Dobie, actually drowned in the bayou. His grave is in the Seabrook Cemetery. Houston Archaeological Society, Newsletter (May 1981); J. Frank Dobie, Some Part of Myself (Boston, 1967), 57.

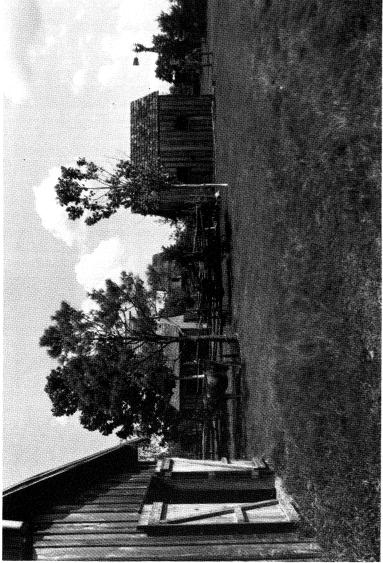
In addition to Vice President Lyndon Johnson, who was chairman of the National Space Committee, local Congressman Albert Thomas chaired the House Appropriations Subcommittee handling NASA's funds. Houston itself could offer a major port, a large industrial and petrochemical complex, and scientific and research facilities. Businessman George R. Brown's engineering of the land donation from Rice University was the final sweetener. Stephen B. Oates, "NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center at Houston, Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 67 (January 1964): 373-375; William D. Angel, "The Politics of Space: NASA's Decision to Locate the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston," The Houston Review 6 (1984): 63-81.

⁷Oates, 373-375.

⁸Houston Chronicle, October 7, 1962.

⁹Ibid., January 22, 1982.

¹⁰Information concerning the Jimmy Martyn story is the result of an oral history project conducted by the Armand Bayou Nature Center. Martyn's father, an immigrant from Cornwall, bought the original 84-acre tract in 1879 as a homestead for his family. Martyn had run the farm



name is commemorated in this working model of a turn-of-the-century farm. The peric armhouse was carefully moved across the bay by barge from its original site in Kemah. Photo

Upon Martyn's death in 1964, his heirs sold the property to the developer. Although the farmer's preservationist gesture had proved only symbolic, Friendswood continued to leave the land untouched as it concentrated on existing office and residential projects further to the west of the bayou.

The Concept of the Park

For those who were ready to assume the task in the early 1970s, the obstacles to saving the bayou must have seemed formidable. American cities, and especially Houston, had traditionally lagged behind their European counterparts in providing for urban parks. Despite a few notable exceptions in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Kansas City, most Americans still saw themselves in a rural context and felt little need for parks to enhance their urban settings.¹¹

In the Houston area, despite a moderate climate and ample available land, no strong tradition of public park planning had ever developed, even in terms of lax American standards. Houston's two major parks, Hermann and Memorial, were gifts from wealthy donors, rather than publicly initiated acquisitions. Although numerous proposals for comprehensive park plans had come forth since 1912, lack of funds had always hampered implementation. 12

Even where parks existed, threats to their survival were frequent. The largest loss was the severing of 133 acres out of Hermann Park as the site for the Texas Medical Center. Philanthropist Ima Hogg repeatedly interceded to preserve Memorial Park: once when a municipal stadium might have been built there, once when flood control authorities proposed channelizing a portion of Buffalo Bayou, and twice when the city suggested drilling for oil. He Sam Houston Park, the oldest city park, had been almost forgotten until a private group, the Harris County Heritage Society, formed to restore the 1847 house which had once been used as Park headquarters. The City Council had planned to demolish the structure. The parklands at the Addicks and Barker

since his father's death in 1926. Houston *Chronicle*, November 28, 1985; *ibid.*, October 27, 1981; Don Perkins, director of the Armand Bayou Nature Center, interview with author, Pasadena, Texas, February 28, 1986.

[&]quot;Ian Stewart, "Politics and the Park," New York Historical Quarterly 61 (July 1977): 126-127; George Chadwick, The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (London, 1966), 163-220; Charles Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, A History of Urban America (New York, 1967), 256.

¹²Jean Hardy, "City Parks," *Houston Home & Garden* 5 (April 1979): 188; Houston City Planning Commission, "Open Spaces for Living," (pamphlet, August 1968), 20-21.

¹³Three hundred thousand dollars from the sale went into a fund for small parks throughout the city. Houston *Chronicle*, October 17, 1958.

¹⁴Virginia Bernhard, Ima Hogg: The Governor's Daughter (Austin, 1984), 93-94.

reservoirs in far west Houston, site of events for the 1986 Olympic Festival, once faced possible adulteration into an auto racetrack.¹⁵

With a few exceptions, the local community leadership had simply not shown any real initiative in park planning by the late 1960s. 16 Somehow, parks never brought the same urgency or pressure on city hall as a broken water main, a defective sewer line, or a street with potholes. 17 The metropolitan area retained a strongly pro-growth and private sector mentality, exemplified by the confession of the Houston City Planning Commission in 1968 that the ". . . Private Sector [sic] is the most predominant determinant factor shaping the physical and social pattern of the City. Aesthetic, cultural, and recreational desires of Houstonians are largely met by private enterprise." The city prided itself on rapid development; to some, any other amenities seemed irrelevant. The Chamber of Commerce magazine exemplified this attitude when it commented that "Houston's emphasis on quality of living is reflected in its changing skyline." 18

From a state perspective, a similar lassitude existed. The only major preservation projects had been the creation of the Padre Island National Seashore in the 1960s and the Big Bend National Park in the 1930s. ¹⁹ As of 1970, neither Mustang Island nor the Big Thicket were part of the public domain. Traditionally, Texans had never demonstrated a particularly strong preservationist impulse. While the state had produced an eloquent naturalist in Roy Bedichek and an ardent conservationist in East Texas banker W.

¹⁹Several factors contributed to the creation of Big Bend park: the efforts by local boosters who appreciated the beauty of the area; a liberal national administration that favored government involvement in parks and especially new projects for the Park Service and its Civilian Conservation Corps; the unique possibility for Big Bend, which regrettably has failed to materialize, of becoming an international park and a symbol of good will between Mexico and the United States; the low economic worth of the land, which was overgrazed pasturage for the most part; its possible economic stimulus to the area through tourism and recreational enterprises; and a heavy publicity campaign, even involving J. Frank Dobie and historian Walter Prescott Webb. The only real opposition came from ranchers and stockmen in the area, who considered the reserve a haven for predators on their livestock and resented Park Service efforts to control hunting in the vicinity. John R. Jameson, *Big Bend National Park: The Formative Years*, Southwestern Studies no. 60 (El Paso, 1980), 55-56.

Goodrich Jones, the Texan affinity for land was nonetheless largely in terms of its economic use. What mattered was the cotton, oil, or timber it could produce, or the cattle it would graze, rather than aesthetics. State government itself, seeing the opportunity for an impressive state capitol or stronger public education, quickly divested itself of public lands to support these goals. Extensive use of these resources had distinguished Texas from other post-Civil War Southern states in respect to economic activity. But such rampant exploitation of natural resources also showed a significant disregard for the state's natural bounty and inspired the stereotype of reckless oil companies and pro-growth developers.²⁰

The concept of preserving the bayou, however, was even more novel than a traditional city recreational park or a regional land reservation. The goal was maintenance of a small urban wilderness reserve. Customarily, such native habitats were large, remote areas available for national and international use, such as the Everglades and Yosemite National Parks, the Kruger National Park in South Africa, or the Serengeti Wildlife Refuge in Kenya and Tanzania. For a small wilderness area close to a city, adequate allowance for the constant shifting of plants and animals in a confined space would be a principal difficulty. A single event, such as exhaustion of a specific food supply, could destroy a small-scale ecosystem. Numerous species, such as deer or wild fowl, would require minimum ranges for survival. As well, the very real danger of excessive human activity nearby, which could crowd wildlife into the preserve and contribute to pollution, would also exist. To achieve any real habitat preservation, reservation of as large an area as possible, preferably three to four thousand acres—a monumental objective in respect to high urban land values—would be necessary.21

The only similar examples locally were the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center in Memorial Park and Eisenhower Park below Lake Houston. Both of these were relatively small. Less than a handful of urban wilderness parks were in the planning stages in Texas, and only a few hundred existed in the whole United States. Where impressive sites remained, such as Angel Island near San Francisco or the Hudson River Palisades across from New York City, the locations tended to be geographically distinct from nearby urban areas, not, as with the envisioned Armand Bayou park, right in the

¹⁵Southern Living, June 1985, 32-34.

¹⁶David McComb, Houston, 2nd ed. (Austin, 1981), 161.

¹⁷Karleen Koen, "Fun and Games," Houston Home & Garden, May 3, 1977, 93.

¹⁸Planning Commission, 14; *Houston*, June 1971, 17-19. Reestablishment in the 1970s of a Parks Board by the City of Houston, a vigorous county parks program, and private efforts by such groups as the Park People and Friends of Bellaire Parks have gone a long way in remedying this situation. The projected Cullen and Sesquicentennial projects may become stellar examples for urban parks. The status and future of neighborhood parks is less certain, however. Patrick Jankowski, "Keeping Ahead of the Bulldozers," *Houston*, May 1984, 27-28; Chris Delaporte, "Houston, the Rising Star in Recreation's Universe," *Parks & Recreation*, October, 1980, 47-51.

²⁰John Graves, "The Hard-Used Land," *Atlantic* 335 (March 1975): 91-97; T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star* (New York, 1968), 282-283; Robert S. Maxwell, "One Man's Legacy: W. Goodrich Jones and Texas Conservation," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 77 (January 1974): 355-380; Eleanor James, *Roy Bedichek*, Southwest Writers Series no. 32 (Austin, 1970).

²¹Recommendations by Norman Woldow, Professor of Biology, biologist with the San Jacinto Water System, April 1, 1971, Armand Nature Center Project (Pasadena), ABNC Files. See also Theodore Mastroianni, "An Urban Forest—Can It Survive?" *Parks & Recreation*, December 1978, 42-43, 49.

middle of a growing industrial and suburban complex.²²

Although it was an unusual concept with a discouraging lack of precedent, the idea of preserving the bayou as a wilderness still had many advantages. While most urban waterways had become rear doors or alleys to major cities as transportation modes shifted from water to land, this bayou, at least, had remained intact.²³ One of the last natural bayous on the upper Texas Gulf Coast, it demonstrated the overlapping prairie, forest, estuary, and marshland ecosystems once characteristic of all bayous, but now greatly impaired by bulkheading, concreting, and shoreline development. Maintenance of this natural zone would retain species in the metropolitan area which might otherwise disappear. Its environment would help clean and maintain the urban atmosphere as well by reducing dust and noise, absorbing storm water, and biodegrading pollutants.²⁴

As an urban wilderness preserve, the bayou would be available to numerous nearby public schools and universities for use as an outdoor teaching facility. This potential would particularly benefit low income groups. Without such a convenient facility, many inner-city children, whose families could not afford the time or the money for a vacation at a national park, would know wilderness areas only through a picture in a book or a scene on television. Even for more privileged groups, frequent visits to a close nature center would stimulate a greater appreciation of the outdoors than the once-in-a-lifetime trip to a major wilderness area.

At another level, preservation would retain good study sites for anthropologists and archaeologists, as well as for students of the natural sciences. Although the nature center in Memorial Park provided some of these advantages, a reserve of a few thousand acres, rather than a few hundred, could accommodate much more activity. An Armand Bayou park in southeast Harris County, with its more pronounced marine environment, would form a geographic balance to the Memorial Park arboretum.²⁵

Recreational opportunities would also be available. Bay Area Park, a county park at the intersection of the bayou and Bay Area Boulevard, would

provide launching sites for canoes and kayaks. Nature trails could facilitate hiking. These attributes seemed fundamental in the initial stages of the preservation campaign, as most people's only conception of an urban park was in recreational terms. Gradually, the public appreciated more the full range of natural, educational, and recreational activity which could be accessible to them.

The Preservationist Atmosphere

While Americans had long appreciated wilderness areas as a distinct and unique natural feature, in contrast to the European taste for country estates and urban garden parks, this traditional sentiment for the natural environment had gained an apocalyptic quality by the late 1960s. There grew a genuine fear of pollution and destruction of nature from heavy technology. To many minds, in the often quoted line of author H. G. Wells, there was a very real race between education and catastrophe, at least regarding ecological matters.²⁶

Reflecting this trend, environmental organizations in the Houston area moved beyond special and largely apolitical interests, such as beautification through the garden clubs or hunting through the Houston Sportsmen's Club, to embrace a host of ecological issues. Chapters of the more politically active Audubon Society and Sierra Club formed in Houston. The League of Women Voters, through its general educational interest in public issues, became more versed in environmental affairs. The Buffalo Bayou Preservation Association formed in 1966 to halt the concreting of that waterway, expanding in 1969 to the Bayou Preservation Association in order to maintain the ecology of all Houston area streams. In response to a growning need for a coordinating and informational center for all these various groups, the Citizens Environmental Coalition came into being in 1970.

Buoyed by this increased awareness and associational support, the movement to preserve Armand Bayou could find a more appreciative audience and more responsive local political bodies.²⁷ Sensing its popularity, area conservation and environmental organizations gave the project their highest priority in this part of the state.²⁸ The preservation campaign enlisted not only the experienced naturalist Dr. Robert Vines, author of monumental studies of trees, shrubs, and woody vines in the southwest, but also wealthy individuals

²²Letter, Ginzbarg to J. Kent Hackleman of KPRC radio, March 9, 1975, Reviews 1974-1975, ABNC Files; *Urban Wilds* (New York, 1975), 20-24; "Houston's Urban Forest," *Southern Living*, March 1983, 67, on the Arboretum.

²³Lewis Moncrief and Jan Camp, "Forgotten Rivers," *Parks & Recreation*, October 1974, 31-35, 86-87.

²⁴HUD Environmental Statement, May 2, 1972, Armand Bayou microfiche, Houston *Chronicle* microfiche files, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library; Houston *Post*, May 30, 1971; Field Survey, 25.

²⁵Project Justification, March 22, 1973, Clerk of Commissioners Court Files, Houston, Texas; Houston *Post*, February 13, 1975; *Field Survey*, 75; City of Pasadena, HUD Grant Application, July 1972; Richard Pough, "Natural Areas vs. Recreation," (typescript), Armand Memorial, ABNC Files.

 ²⁶Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, rev. ed. (New Haven, 1973), 237-262.
²⁷McComb, 147-152; Rev. Ben Skyles, chairman of the Preservation of Armand Bayou

Committee, interview with author, Pasadena, Texas, February 22, 1986; Mrs. Terry Hershey, founder of the Bayou Preservation Association, interview with author, Houston, Texas, April 9, 1986; Harold Scarlett, environmental reporter for the Houston *Post*, interview with author, Houston, Texas, April 10, 1986; Houston *Chronicle*, December 18, 1980; *ibid.*, October 25, 1981.

²⁸HUD Environmental Statement.

such as Miss Nina Cullinan, who hosted a fundraising cocktail party, George Mitchell, and Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Hershey.²⁹ University professors, engineers, school teachers, attorneys, and ministers were also ready and eager to work in the campaign.

Some opposition, or at least indifference, did exist. Anti-pollution campaigns in blue-collar neighborhoods drew little support from workers who saw environmental restraints as a burden to industry and a threat to jobs. ³⁰ But the specific goal of bayou preservation never posed the same threat to livelihoods. ³¹ With confidence in its human resources, as well as mindful of the challenges ahead, the campaign to preserve Armand Bayou could begin.

Working to Save the Bayou

The campaign to maintain the bayou emanated from the murder of Armand Yramategui in January 1970. Yramategui (pronounced ear-ah-MAT-ah-ge) had been curator of the Burke Baker Planetarium and a leader in environmental causes in the 1960s. Although he had only visited the bayou a few times on nature study trips, he had deeply appreciated the unspoiled vicinity and felt a natural spot so near to the city and the Manned Spacecraft Center, where so much growth was occurring, should remain untouched. ³² Deeply enthusiastic about both natural science and space exploration, he perhaps sensed the rare advantage of having a nature and space center in such close proximity.

His tragic death during a freeway holdup now inspired a movement to preserve the bayou in his memory. In a stirring statement before the Harris

²⁹Sentimentally involved as well as professionally, Dr. Vines had first visited Horsepen Bayou, a tributary of Armand Bayou, as a ten-year-old boy with his father on a fishing expedition. He became intrigued with the beautiful plants and wrote a prize-winning essay for the old Houston *Press* newspaper about the bayou, "The Most Beautiful Place I Have Ever Seen." The experience encouraged his career in natural science and made the bayou's preservation a very special goal for him. Deer Park News, August 18, 1971; Hana Ginzbarg, "Why a Park on Armand Bayou?" (typescript), Land Acquisition Files, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Austin, Texas.

³⁰Skyles interview. Reverend Skyles also headed a Help End Pollution campaign in Pasadena and witnessed the divergent responses first hand. This reaction followed the national pattern in which local communities rarely moved to control pollution and possibly discourage industrial development. The only effective control came through national legislation.

³¹Promoters of Armand Bayou did not face, for example, the harassment and ostracism that greeted those trying to save the Big Thicket in East Texas, where many worked for the lumber companies and saw wilderness preservation as only a threat to their jobs. Geraldine Watson, leader in the Big Thicket preservation campaign, interview with Sarah Emmott, November 9, 1980, ABNC; *Texas Observer*, September 11, 1981, 1.

³²Information leaflet by Frank Kokesh, Armand Nature Center Project (Pasadena), ABNC Files; Mrs. Sarah Emmott, longtime friend and associate of Armand Yramategui, interview with author, Houston, Texas, February 22, 1986; Carl Aiken, longtime friend of Armand Yramategui, interview with author, Houston, Texas, February 21, 1986.

County Commissioners Court, two days after Armand's death, Frank Kokesh, an engineer with Schlumberger Well Services, a friend of Armand, and a Clear Lake area resident since the early 1950s, set forth the bayou preservation goal. In the fall of 1970, he renewed his commitment with others by holding a commemorative ceremony on the Bay Area Boulevard bridge crossing the bayou.³³

The first step in the now formally launched preservationist campaign was to change the name of the bayou, then known as Middle Bayou, presumably because it was midway between Taylor Lake and Clear Creek, the other tributaries of Clear Lake. Frank Kokesh and Hana Ginzbarg, who had worked with Armand to defeat a proposed water plan and was present with Kokesh when he addressed the Commissioners, appeared before the Pasadena City Council to request the name change, as the bayou was entirely within the Pasadena city limits. The Council unanimously supported such a resolution, which the Harris County Historical Survey Committee and the United States Board of Geographic Names later ratified.³⁴

The selection of Armand's first name for the honor reflected the obvious difficulties his tongue-twisting last name would have as a geographic term. The choice was also more suitable for a man whose informality and familiarity with others had been so universal. In Pasadena, he had worked with many citizens on parkland development and wetlands protection as well as assisting the Harris County pollution control officer, Dr. Walter Quebedeaux, in cleaning up the ship channel. The Pasadena City Council was happy to discard the meaningless "Middle Bayou" for the more melodic "Armand" as a special gesture of gratitude. The Pasadena City Council was happy to discard the meaningless "Middle Bayou" for the more melodic

This name change, of course, would mean little, if bayou development was soon to follow. For the next four years, its fate remained uncertain. Four major participants—Hana Ginzbarg, Friendswood Development Company, the City of Pasadena, and, later, Harris County—would determine the outcome.

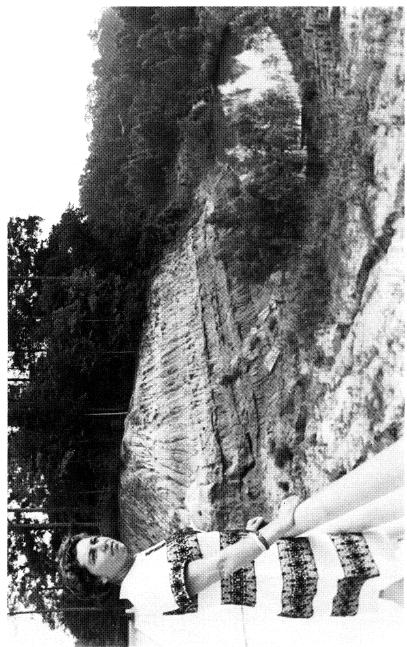
Hana Ginzbarg became the single most important individual in the efforts to save the bayou. For the next few years, her involvement in the campaign became a round-the-clock, seven-day-a-week commitment. Fellow participants remember phone calls at midnight. The Nature Center files hold letters written by her at 2:00 a.m. Enthusiastically supported by her husband and

³³Houston *Chronicle*, November 6, 1970; informational leaflet by Frank Kokesh, Armand Nature Center Project (Pasadena), ABNC Files.

³⁴Pasadena City Council Minutes, December 1, 1970, City Secretary's Office, Pasadena, Texas; *Houston*, October 1971.

³⁵ Aiken interview; Emmott interview.

³⁶State Senator Chet Brooks, interview with author, Austin, Texas, March 12, 1986; former Pasadena Mayor Clyde Doyal, interview with author, Austin, Texas, March 7, 1986.



a Ginzbarg looking over an "improved" Buffalo Bayou in 1971.

son, she devoted her formidable energy and intelligence to a cause in which she strongly believed. 37

Her interest and ability stemmed from many experiences. As a girl she emigrated to the United States from Czechoslovakia in the wake of the 1939 invasion by Nazi Germany. Here she studied chemistry at Vassar and earned a master's degree from Smith. While attending Purdue University for her doctoral work Hana met and married Arthur Ginzbarg. The couple moved to Houston in 1949, when Arthur became a physicist with Shell Development Company. Although busy with her husband and young son, Hana taught chemistry at some of Houston's best private schools: Duchesne, Kinkaid, and St. John's.

She and her husband shared a keen enjoyment of nature. They became canoeists, boating on Armand and later Buffalo Bayou. Gradually, they came to realize how quickly these natural resources were disappearing. In their first years in Houston, the Ginzbargs had lived in the old Town and Country Apartments along Brays Bayou, off Almeda Road. They had liked to walk along the bayou; but soon bulldozers began knocking down trees along the banks as part of a flood control project which would eventually concretize miles of Houston area waterways. The family moved to Bellaire and transferred their hikes to the upper reaches of Brays Bayou. Soon the bulldozers reached that portion. More trees fell, and more concrete lined the creekbed.

They switched their hikes again, to Memorial Park along Buffalo Bayou. Before long, they learned that it, too, would receive the same concrete mantle as Brays and White Oak Bayous. But this time, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Harris County Flood Control District faced serious opposition to their plans. One night, Hana happened to see Mrs. Terry Hershey on television, opposing the flood control project on behalf of the newly created Buffalo Bayou Preservation Association. Hana joined the organization and soon began working to preserve a bayou so tied to the natural and human history of the city. Terry Hershey and other members of the Buffalo Bayou Preservation Association gradually convinced enough people of feasible alternatives for flood control, such as detention ponds or development modifications, to halt the project.

Along with this participation, Hana became active in other conservation projects, such as the opposition to the proposed water plan in the late 1960s. Her association in these projects with Armand Yramategui led her, upon his death, to spearhead the effort to save the bayou in his memory. In March 1970, she toured the waterway and was deeply impressed with the beauty of its

³⁷Hana and Arthur Ginzbarg, interview with author, Bellaire, Texas, February 26, 1986; Skyles interview; letter, Ginzbarg to Hackleman, March 9, 1975, Reviews 1974-1975, ABNC Files.

undisturbed shoreline. Its preservation became her goal and the dominant theme in her life for the next several years.³⁸

Friendswood Development Company, owner of the land surrounding the bayou, was the second principal in the preservation campaign. With its vast land holdings and numerous projects, the company was a leading developer in the Houston area. Its subdivisions were typically for middle and upper income families. Its primary activity in the 1960s, the development of Clear Lake City, featured a large community recreation center and golf course, as well as numerous other amenities. It had donated the land for Bay Area Park in 1967 and initiated arrangements for its parent company, Humble Oil, to give the land for the future University of Houston at Clear Lake. ³⁹ In many respects, it was a responsible, broadminded, state-of-the-art developer.

At the same time, certain executives within the company had considerable difficulty appreciating the need for a wilderness preserve in the 1960s and early 1970s. Probably the very first suggestion for maintaining the bayou came from Linda Snyder, a contributor to the newsletter of the Houston Outdoor Nature Club, in December 1964. When she submitted the idea of a wilderness sanctuary on Middle Bayou to company officials, they thought its implementation was "economically unfeasible." 40 Several company executives felt they had already given away enough land in the Clear Lake area, either directly through Friendswood or indirectly through Humble Oil. In truth, to the company the whole concept of donating land to prevent its development was, in the words of Harold Scarlett, environmental reporter for the Houston *Post*, "about as appealing as scattering baskets of \$100 bills off the top of the Humble Building." 41 One Friendswood executive more bluntly expressed this view in a statement to Frank Kokesh, declaring, "You know, land is like any other commodity—to be used up." 42 At one point, the company had even

considered damming Mud Lake and purchasing the site of the Harris County Boys Home for full development of the bayou region.⁴³

Company officials remained unenthusiastic about preservation of a natural area that would require substantial changes in the overall development and a reduced financial return. They seemed to place little value on the park's enhancement of surrounding property or the public relations benefits from contributing to such a project.⁴⁴ At one stage, the president of Friendswood even wrote this somewhat condescending observation to one of the preservationists: "For about two years now, we have had periodic contact with various groups desiring the establishment of a park along Armand Bayou. On each occasion, we have stated our development plans were firm; and we were proceeding accordingly. Despite your group's apparent desire to see a park created, it is still not evident that a willing park development agency, adequate funds, or firm plans are available." ⁴⁵

The company ultimately decided, perhaps in a limited public relations effort, to sell the land if park proponents could meet its price. While refraining from immediate, outright construction of a subdivision—an option that was always open to them—the company would not donate the land. Judging from the tone of some of the executives' remarks, Friendswood remained skeptical of the preservationist goal. 46 Apparently their visions were still of minimal, developed recreation, as exemplified in their billboard on the NASA 1 main thoroughfare advertising Clear Lake City as the "Great American Town"—and showing a family canoeing on Armand Bayou. 47

The third major entity in the preservation campaign, and the one that held the bayou's future in the balance, was the City of Pasadena. As the result of a lengthy annexation battle with the City of Houston, Pasadena had acquired

³⁸Ginzbarg interview; Houston *Chronicle*, April 7, 1985; Frank C. Smith, Jr., past member of the Preservation of Armand Bayou Committee and former President of the Armand Bayou Nature Center, interview with author, Houston, Texas, April 2, 1986.

³⁹Undated newspaper clipping, and Company Newsletter, February 24, 1966, both in Clear Lake Shores vertical file, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library.

⁴⁰"The Spoonbill" Newsletter, December 1964.

⁴¹Houston *Post*, January 24, 1971; Andy Helms, former Pasadena city planning director, interview with author, Katy, Texas, April 1, 1986.

⁴²Marginal note of November 21, 1971, by Kokesh on letter of March 5, 1971, Pollution-Water, ABNC Files. Kokesh gave as good as he got, as when he told a reporter that "…instead of splitting the land up into little fenced retreats for the snob trade…the developer should set aside the whole area as a public trust." Houston *Post*, January 24, 1971. In an unrelated incident, he once sent a sample of industrial waste water to the chief executive officer of Standard Oil at Rockefeller Plaza in New York. Blaming the effluent on an Exxon facility, he described the liquid as having the same color as iodine and smelling like weed killer. After a flurry of irate correspondence from both sides, no real action ever took place. Letter, Kokesh to Standard Oil, December 9, 1970, Pollution-Water, ABNC Files.

⁴³Frank Kokesh, interview with Sarah Emmott, January 14, 1980, ABNC.

⁴⁴Letter, Frank Smith to Dr. Charles F. Jones, Vice Chairman of the Board of Humble Oil & Refining Company, December 16, 1971, Contacts with Friendswood Development Company, ABNC Files; statement by John Turner, president of Friendswood, *Hi-Lites*, 1971-1972; *Audubon Society Bulletin*, January 1971; HUD Environmental Statement.

⁴⁵Letter, Turner to Frank Smith, January 12, 1972, Armand Bayou Nature Center Project (Pasadena), ABNC Files.

⁴⁶Any characterization of Friendswood's position throughout its dealings on Armand Bayou must remain speculative, as company records are unavailable for research. Friendswood did commission an environmental study of the vicinity, upon a reported sighting of a rare red wolf. The report compared Armand Bayou with the upstream areas of Dickinson Bayou to find few real differences in the locales. Preservationists had never insisted Armand Bayou was unique, except in its lack of human alteration. Environomics, Comparative Evaluation of the Armand Bayou and Dickinson Bayou Floodplain Ecosystems, August 1973, ABNC; Aiken interview.

⁴⁷Letter, Ginzbarg to Richard Morgan, Regional Administrator of HUD, May 29, 1972, Pasadena Planning Department Files, Pasadena, Texas. Roy Pezoldt, Friendswood Project Manager in Clear Lake City, 1970-1973, felt the company leadership gradually appreciated the project's value. Interview, Roy Pezoldt, March 6, 1986, Houston, Texas.

jurisdiction over the Middle Bayou area in 1969. Whereas other municipalities in Harris County, faced with Houston's aggressive annexation policy, had either joined the city or done well to maintain their independence, Pasadena had actually prevented Houston's wholesale strip annexation of southeast Harris County and secured for itself a strong industrial base along the Bayport channel to Galveston Bay. As a result of this victory, Pasadenans now boasted an expansive civic pride, out of which significant public works could materialize.

Parkland was in fact a primary need for the city in the early 1970s. The town's rapid growth from a little over 3,000 residents in 1940 to nearly 100,000 by 1970 had outdistanced existing facilities to the extent that Pasadena had less than one and one-half acres of park space for every thousand residents, when the normal need was for at least seven acres per thousand. Moreover, many city residents shared in the growing environmental consciousness of the period. The city's uncontrolled growth and proximity to the oil refineries and ship channel had given it a poor image environmentally. A major park project could alter this perception as well as providing the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could accept the period of the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could accept the perception as well as providing the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could accept the perception as well as providing the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could be provided the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could be provided the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could be provided the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could be provided the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could be provided the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could be provided the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could be provided the city with needed recreational facilities. 100 parks project could be provided the city with needed parks project could be provided the city with needed parks project could be provided to the city with needed parks project could be provided to the city with needed parks project could be provided to the city with needed parks project could be provided to the city with needed parks provided the city with needed parks provided the city with needed parks provided the city with needed par

Acquiring the Land

This combination of a determined proponent, a resistant landowner, and a responsive civil authority received a further catalyst with the discovery of a rapid increase in area subsidence in the early 1970s. Frank Kokesh began noticing shoreline fence posts sinking and docks more frequently covered with water. He recalled that marshgrass had covered Mud Lake in the 1950s; it was now no longer visible. Palm trees which had grown along the bayou bank at the old Kirby Mansion site on Mud Lake were now in two feet of water. Convinced the land was sinking, he and Hana Ginzbarg began contacting local authorities, urging restudy of floodplain elevations. When the U.S. Geological Survey finally completed its report in 1974, it confirmed their

⁴⁸Following its classic pattern of aggressive annexation to provide a broad tax base, establish room for later expansion, and control rival towns, Houston strip-annexed, in effect "lassoed," southeast Harris County in the early 1960s. The location of the Manned Spacecraft Center as well as the imminent passage of a restrictive municipal annexation act had inspired this maneuver. Now cut off from any possible expansion southward, Pasadena jumped the strip to annex Middle Bayou and its littorals in 1965, claiming a right of access to a navigable stream. A later court decision let the Pasadena acquisition stand, while invalidating Houston's action. Helms interview; City of Pasadena vs. The State of Texas ex. rel. City of Houston, 442 S.W.2d 325 (Tex. 1969); Houston Chronicle, March 4, 1970.

⁴⁹Houston Chronicle, April 25, 1971; Charles Welsh, director of city planning for the city of Pasadena, interview with author, Pasadena, Texas, March 26, 1986.

suspicions. Subsidence in the ship channel vicinity, for example, which had totaled one foot prior to 1943, amounted to as much as seven and a half feet since 1943. The NASA area had dropped more than two feet between 1964 and 1973.⁵²

The study had a profound impact throughout the west Galveston Bay region, ultimately resulting in the creation in 1975 of a special subsidence district to monitor and control subsurface pumping. Apprised of these developments and wishing to qualify for federally subsidized flood insurance, the City of Pasadena passed flood plain management ordinances which prohibited development below thirteen feet above mean sea level. In the Armand Bayou area, some eight hundred acres thus became undevelopable, obliging Friendswood to recast them as recreational space in its plans. Land subsidence, if nothing else, was forcing some reservation of greenspace.⁵³ The future of the wilderness preserve, however, was still far from certain.

To bring this goal closer to reality, on the basis of representations by Hana Ginzbarg, Frank Kokesh, and others, Mayor Clyde Doyal of Pasadena appointed the Preservation of Armand Bayou Committee in December 1971, chaired by the Reverend Ben Skyles of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Pasadena. In addition to the interested preservationists, the committee consisted of numerous Pasadena bankers and civic leaders, whose presence helped assure support within the city itself. The more active members, such as Reverend Skyles and Mrs. Ruth Jobes of the League of Women Voters, especially generated grassroots interest.⁵⁴

Aided by the Armand Bayou Committees of the Houston Audubon Society and the Bayou Preservation Association, both chaired by Hana Ginzbarg, the committee urged the City of Pasadena to apply for a grant program through the Department of Housing and Urban Development for open spaces and parks near urban areas. Often termed the "Legacy of Parks" program, its most attractive feature was an intended ratio of 75% matching federal funds to 25% local revenues. A favorable report on the Armand Bayou project by the HUD regional office early in the summer of 1972 initially designated \$1.5 million in

⁵²Letter, Kokesh to Doyal, July 29, 1971, 1973 Releveling Report of National Ocean Survey, ABNC Files; Brigadier General Harold Neely, former general manager of the Clear Lake Water Authority, interview with author, Nassau Bay, Texas, March 21, 1986; U.S. Geological Survey, Land-Surface Subsidence in the Houston-Galveston Region, 1974, Subsidence, ABNC Files.

⁵³Helms interview; Welsh interview; Ginzbarg interview; Donald Hagman, *Urban Planning and Land Development Control Law* (Minneapolis, 1971), 113. The flood control feature of the natural preserve became more important in coming years. When tropical storm Claudette dropped over twenty inches of rain in the Clear Lake area in July 1979, the nearby Clear Lake Forest subdivision rode through the record storm without any flooding. The open land of the nature center had acted as a flood plain, retaining the water, rather than letting it spill over immediately into the bayou. Houston *Post*, August 12, 1979.

⁵⁰Field Survey, 73.

⁵¹Doval interview; Helms interview; Welsh interview.

⁵⁴Preservation of Armand Bayou Committee, ABNC Files.

federal funds for land acquisition, so that Pasadena would only have to match with \$500,000. Due to appropriation cuts and a large number of applications, the money ultimately became available at a 50% matching level rather than the original 75%. The federal government could come up with \$1 million, but Pasadena would have to do the same, or lose the grant. 55

At this point, Mayor Doyal and the Pasadena City Council took an intrepid and decisive step. As the City had only until the end of the year to match the HUD grant, inadequate time existed for a general bond election. The City Council, encouraged by Mayor Doyal, issued certificates of obligation for the added million dollars instead. This form of municipal debt did not require a general referendum. The procedure's purpose was to permit city government to act quickly for projects in the civic interest. Although the city was solvent financially and clearly needed additional park funds, this high level of indebtedness for a city of 100,000 people was extraordinary. Perhaps only a mayor barred by the city charter from seeking reelection, such as Mayor Doyal, would have taken the political risk. Many disparate events had made it possible to reach this stage. A less confident civic mood might not have permitted the action. Less concern about flooding and subsidence might have reduced the desirability of parkland acquisition. Had the land not generally been floodplain and held more potential for development, Friendswood might still have refused to sell. Less enthusiastic proponents might not have secured federal backing or persuaded city officials of the project's value.⁵⁶

This action was a turning point in making the Armand Bayou park a reality. With federal and municipal funds, the city purchased a strip along each side of the bayou from Red Bluff Road to Mud Lake, comprising 955 acres (tracts 1-6). Had city government not been willing to vote its share, park proponents would probably have lost the federal money and then been unable either to raise sufficient funds from private sources or to induce the county to acquire adequate acreage. At the same time, the City of Pasadena had gone just about as far as it was able or willing to go. Although its objective was somewhat ambiguous at the time, the city government had never really endorsed the idea of a wilderness preserve. The land purchase was more for a future greenbelt, similar to Brays Bayou in southwest Houston. City officials were still anticipating an upper-income subdivision in the area. Friendswood

had aheady prepared plans for Armand Bayou and was at work in the nearby Clear Lake Forest neighborhood.⁵⁷

For the preservationists, however, this public land acquisition was just a beginning. Even prior to approval of the first HUD grant, Hana Ginzbarg had visited the HUD regional office in Dallas and discovered a second grant possibility which could reserve more money. The open space program still had unclaimed funds which administrators would have to allocate before the enabling legislation expired at the end of the year. As soon as the first grant had authorization, the Pasadena city planners were at work on the second application. The objective was to use more HUD and local funds to acquire additional acreage east of the Bayou.⁵⁸

After the issuance of the certificates of obligation to cover the city's share on the first grant, however, Pasadena had no further public revenues available for park acquisition. Never keen on the wilderness preserve idea in the first place, the city by itself might well have lost the second grant. Newly elected Pasadena mayor John Ray Harrison was willing to allow city staff time for further work on park development, but committed no supplemental municipal revenues. As Pasadena city employees had contacts within the federal bureaucracy as well as knowledge of the project, however, their experience would be valuable.⁵⁹

The Preservation of Armand Bayou Committee and Bayou Preservation Association accelerated their fundraising efforts with widespread advertising, direct solicitation, and requests to foundations. By the end of 1972, they had raised enough to reserve \$350,000 of HUD money. Still short on the purchase price for the additional land, the Committee turned to the Harris County Commissioners Court for further public support.

Like the City of Pasadena, county government proved responsive to the Armand Bayou request. Partly in reaction to the growing sense of environmentalism, Harris County voters in 1972 had elected a majority to Commissioners Court who were interested in parks and attuned to the growing urban character of the county. Three commissioners—County Judge Bill Elliott, Tom Bass, and Jamie Bray—formed an unprecedented political combination immensely helpful to the Armand Bayou cause.

Prior to that time, with the notable exception of the Astrodome, which was

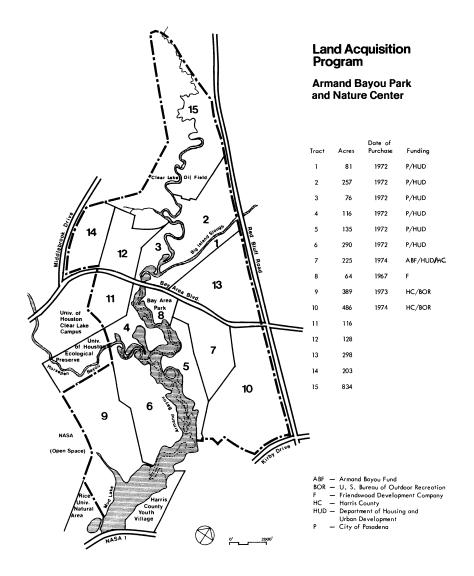
⁵⁵Dwight Rettie, "Broad New Funding Program—'Legacy of Parks,' "Parks & Recreation, April 1971, 35-38; HUD Environmental Statement; Pasadena City Council Minutes, July 25, 1972, Pasadena Public Library, Pasadena, Texas; Ginzbarg interview; letter, Floyd Hyde, Assistant Secretary of HUD, to Senator Lloyd Bentsen, February 15, 1972, personal files of Frank C. Smith, Jr., Houston, Texas.

⁵⁶Doyal interview; Helms interview; Welsh interview; Elbert M. Morrow, "The Certificates of Obligation Act of 1971, As Amended," *Southwestern Law Journal* 31 (Spring 1977): 455. The primary objection of the City Council was the cost involved. Houston *Chronicle*, November 8, 1972.

⁵⁷Although the city of Pasadena would probably not be able to provide city services itself to such an isolated subdivision, it could still contract with nearby municipalities or water districts for their provision, as it did in El Cary and El Jardin. Helms interview; Welsh interview; Doyal interview.

⁵⁸Letter, Ginzbarg to Helms, June 30, 1972, Pasadena Planning Department Files; Pasadena City Council Minutes, July 25, 1972, Pasadena Public Library; HUD Grant Application, July 1972.

⁵⁹Welsh interview; Helms interview; remarks by Hana Ginzbarg at park ceremony, April 28, 1974, Miscellaneous, ABNC Files.



clearly in a class by itself, county government had not shown a particular interest in parks. With members more oriented to the traditional rural nature of the county, the Commissioners Court thought a sufficient private land base and recreational programming existed to limit the role of public authority. Only small precinct parks, derived largely from donations, scattered throughout the county and derisively labeled the "twenty-eight secret parks," were in use at that time. §1

The new Commissioners Court recognized that the larger county jurisdiction and tax base meant that it could acquire land prior to suburban growth and plan area-wide park systems. To achieve this, the County Commission secured passage of a \$5 million parks bond issue, the largest such bond issue up to that time, and disbanded the system of individual precinct control in favor of a county-wide parks department. With a coordinating bureaucracy, the county could apply for federal funds. The booming local economy at that time made available even higher local matching funds.⁶²

With the county now involved in negotiations, as well as the City of Pasadena and the Preservation Committee, Friendswood began to drive a very hard bargain. Presumably the company began to fear a real loss of developable land, which had not been a feature of its earlier dealings with Pasadena. The company stipulated that it would sell tracts 7 and 10 as a unit, and only after the county purchased the now-isolated tract 9. The company probably calculated that while it retained a large amount of highly developable land, in tracts 7 and 10, prices for all its land would remain firm. Selling each tract separately would reduce the development potential, and thus the price, for the remaining acreage. In essence, Friendswood was forcing park proponents to come up with more money for more land immediately, rather than parceling out the tracts as funds became available.

Although the HUD program was no longer in operation, the county was able to secure federal funds from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, under the

60This was a typical national attitude, as well. Charles M. Nelson and Lawrence Leroy, "County Parks: State of the Art Today," *Parks & Recreation*, January 18, 1983, 84-86; James Arles, "County Government," *ibid.*, August 4, 1969, 30-32, 50; Herbert Duncombe, *Modern County Government* (Washington, 1977), 198.

⁶¹County parks included Sylvan Beach, Clear Lake, and Bay Area Parks in southeast Harris County; Duessen Park on Lake Houston; a park on Spring Creek; and a half-acre in the Heights. The use of county road and bridge crews to maintain the "twenty-eight secret parks" gives a rough idea of their insignificance to county government. The figure of twenty-eight such parks was merely speculative, as no general listing existed. Remarks by Congressman Bob Casey, former Harris County Judge, at park ceremony, April 28, 1974, Miscellaneous, ABNC Files; remarks by Hana Ginzbarg at a Bureau of Outdoor Recreation forum in Dallas, June 29, 1972, Smith Files; Hershey interview.

⁶²Helms interview; Welsh interview; former County Commissioner Tom Bass, interview with author, Houston, Texas, March 12, 1986.

⁶³Note by Ginzbarg, April 12, 1974, Land Acquisition-Tract 7, ABNC Files.

park ever materialized. The primary impediment to state action w.e. Armand Bayou's "urban character." The state only supported recreation areas in rmal locations and still conceived of state parks primarily as weekend retreats. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission could have made an exception to this policy, if the park had sufficient statewide significance and constituted a "facility of greatest need." The high cost of the land, the lack of precedent, and the continued dominance of the state legislature by rural representatives made any such departure from the usual pattern highly unlikely. Despite interest within the department itself, the Commission took no direct action. As the Department Director wrote one preservationist, the Commission "cannot accept this gigantic task." 73

Political activity and public pressure for the Armand Bayou Park and similar projects nonetheless had some indirect effect at the state level. In 1979 the legislature finally recognized the need "to put parks where the people were," as Governor Preston Smith had advocated when he visited Armand Bayou in 1972. State lawmakers passed a statute permitting state assistance for local parks, including urban areas.⁷⁴

Despite state inaction, involvement of the county had made the difference in the character of the park and achieved the fundamental goal of establishing a wilderness preserve. Armand Bayou Park was no longer an intended recreational greenbelt running through an affluent suburb, as the City of Pasadena and Friendswood Development Company had envisioned. By seeking a broader governmental authority for more land, preservationists had created a regional nature center. This expansion of park use and orientation was the fitting result of a campaign that had enlisted both widely based citizen support and government action.

Maintaining Public and Political Support

Throughout the period of land acquisition for the park, preservationists were simultaneously developing programs to raise public and political

interest in the facility. These efforts were extremely important in the initial stages, when the park was only a concept, but also helped to sustain its operation once it had come into being.

Publicity in a variety of forms was a constant aspect of the park campaign. Proponents used all types of media, from national magazines to local newsletters, to promote their cause. During the frenzied fundraising efforts of late 1972, when the preservationists were trying to match as much of the second HUD grant as possible before expiration of the program, *Time, Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated*, as well as other national publications, ran a one-page public service announcement showing a picture of the bayou under the caption, "We urgently need money to build absolutely nothing here." This attention from national publications attracted a wider audience as well as giving a greater legitimacy and credibility to the preservation effort.⁷⁵

The local press was similarly supportive. Harold Scarlett of the Houston *Post*, regularly supplied with information from park proponents, ran innumerable columns on the Armand Bayou campaign. Clearly supportive of the preservationist goal, his stories were also very timely, as when he wrote a Sunday feature on Armand Bayou immediately prior to a meeting of the Pasadena city planning commission to review Friendswood's plat for its bayou-side subdivision, or when he interviewed an official from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and caught the attention of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. The more conservative Houston *Chronicle* gave the project less attention, but did run several editorials in favor of the park.⁷⁶

One of the most distinctive and effective uses of the printed media was the coverage in neighborhood newspapers and club newsletters. Hana Ginzbarg, in particular, provided press releases, editorials, and regular reports, which these publications often printed in full. Although circulation was not wide, these communications reached a more interested audience with fuller news and could evoke a deeper individual response than the more generally distributed newspapers and magazines.⁷⁷

Audiovisual attention was most effective for a bayou of such great natural beauty, at once so hidden and so convenient to the metropolitan area. Local and even national television broadcast films of the bayou, which the growing use of color broadcasting and receiving made even more dramatic. Proponents

⁷²Memo, May 26, 1971, Land Acquisition Files, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Michael Herring, State Park Coordinator with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, interview with author, Austin, Texas, March 10, 1986; Brooks interview; Skyles interview; Ginzbarg interview.

⁷³Memo, F. A. Murray to E. G. Marsh, March 26, 1971, Armand Bayou Nature Center Project (Pasadena), ABNC Files; letter, James Cross, Executive Director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, to Mr. and Mrs. Mascha, March 17, 1972, Land Acquisition Files, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

⁷⁴State Assistance for Local Parks, Parks and Wildlife Code, secs. 24.001-24.013; Pasadena *News Citizen*, March 9, 1972; Brooks interview. Preservationists never even attempted designation of the site as a national park. Such a goal would have involved a lengthy decision-making process, during which bayou dredging or development might occur. Even if they were successful, an Armand Bayou National Park would attract a large number of people potentially destructive to its wilderness preserve character. Letter, Ginzbarg to Ron Jones, Planning Director, July 19, 1971, Land Acquisition Files, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

⁷⁵Time, November 13, 1972; Ginzbarg interview. Time-Life also printed a picture of Armand Bayou in its *Urban Wilds* volume of the American Wilderness Series.

⁷⁶Houston *Post*, January 24, 1971; Houston *Chronicle*, October 14, 1972; *ibid.*, March 13, 1972. Scarlett's interview of October 30, 1971, was noted in a background paper for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission dated December 31, 1971, Land Acquisition Files, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

¹⁷Bayou Banner, April 1971, published by the Sierra Club; Houston West Side Reporter, October 2, 1972; Nancy Wood, former coordinator of the Bayou Interpretive Guide Program, interview with author, Houston, Texas, March 21, 1986.



Dramatic pictures such as this, published to illustrate an article on the Armand Bayou campaign by the Houston *Chronicle*, increased public visibility and support for the project.

could also give slide shows before interested clubs.⁷⁸ This dual technique in audiovisual use before large and small audiences paralleled the eclectic publicity use of printed media.⁷⁹

In addition to the publicity efforts, preservationists were also politically active, both at the grassroots level and through more direct personal approaches. Hana Ginzbarg would attend all types of meetings with lists of names and addresses of relevant political leaders. She would work the crowd as if she were running for office, going from person to person, giving them the necessary information and encouraging letter-writing. She typically used club newsletters for the same purpose. Proponents gained endorsements from political conventions and meetings of local mayors. Such widely publicized efforts increasingly persuaded representatives and administrators of growing public support.⁸⁰

More directly, the bayou offered a good backdrop during a campaign for politicians anxious to identify with the environmentalist groundswell. In 1972, incumbent Governor Preston Smith, running for reelection, and State Senator Joe Christie, in a separate race for lieutenant governor, each took tours of the bayou as part of their campaigns. In contacting political figures, Mrs. Ginzbarg would follow each letter to an agency or representative with a phone call, often having the representative approach the agency as well. Bayou Preservation Association leader Terry Hershey, appointed to President Ford's Citizens Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality, developed communication links and knowledge of federal programs that would help the Armand Bayou cause.⁸¹

In fundraising, preservationists worked as much as possible through existing clubs, with their own established audiences and resources. The Bayou Preservation Association, which since 1966 had been educating the public and activating an interest in bayous, proved very useful in this respect. The Armand Bayou project, in the early 1970s, in fact demanded virtually the entire attention of the organization. This proved crucial in late 1972, during the whirlwind of fundraising to match the second HUD grant. A fresh

⁷⁸Ginzbarg interview; Aiken interview; transcript of televised tour of Armand Bayou by Victor Emmanuel, April 7, 1972, Smith Files.

⁷⁹Equally important to the direct media solicitation, proponents never even contemplated such sensational and sophomoric tactics as a demonstration, or a march, or a picketing of Friendswood headquarters. Such attention-grabbing tactics would have added a radical tinge to the movement and alienated many in the conservative Houston area already disturbed by the excesses of the anti-war campaign and other contemporary social protests. As established members of their communities, they could work more through existing organizations and contacts. Ginzbarg interview.

⁸⁰Houston *Post*, May 19, 1972; ibid., August 13, 1972; Ginzbarg interview; Wood interview; letter, Ginzbarg to Morgan, May 29, 1972, Pasadena Planning Department Files.

⁸¹ Houston Chronicle, March 2, 1972; Ginzbarg interview; Hershey interview.

organization, without the knowledge of foundations or interested citizens, probably could not have raised as much money in so short a time. Unlike gifts to the symphony or medical center, donating for habitat preservation was still a new concept that many people needed time to appreciate.⁸²

Armand Bayou proponents did not limit themselves to established groups, however. They developed some very creative events that often generated more publicity and public interest than actual cash. A small example was a newspaper recycling drive sponsored by the Pasadena Jaycees, which collected only a few hundred dollars, but also reminded residents of support for the park and raised environmental consciousness through recycling. HEP, Inc. (Help End Pollution) and several other community groups sponsored a "Discover Armand Bayou" Day in Bay Area Park in October 1972 to better acquaint people with the bayou. Fifteen-minute boat rides at a penny a pound of body weight, white elephant sales, and prize raffles helped raise over \$2,000 for the park. Similarly, students in the Spring Branch School District sold green armbands with the attention-getting letters "S. O. B." (Save Our Bayou).83

By far the most memorable and successful fundraiser was development of the Creature Christmas List. Terry Hershey and Liz Carpenter, associate of former First Lady Ladybird Johnson, composed the following poem while cruising on the Mississippi:

Five dollars saves my lily pad.

Ten dollars saves my nest.

Twenty dollars saves our hole-y homes.

Fifty dollars saves the rest.

One hundred gives me room to roam.

Five hundred saves the pond.

One thousand helps us build the path

that children walk upon.

First used in 1972, the promotional circular featured the various creatures to which the stanzas refer. The approach proved highly successful, raising \$8,000 in 1973 and \$14,000 in 1974. Somehow, the simple rhyme let people identify more with such creatures as a bird or a racoon, and the peril to their habitats.⁸⁴

82Minutes of the Committee for the Preservation of Armand Bayou, October 12, 1972, Pasadena Planning Department Files; Armand Bayou Foundations, personal files of Mrs. Terry Hershey, Houston, Texas; Hershey interview.

83Letter, Thor Hanson of the Pasadena Jaycees to the Reverend Ben Skyles, July 5, 1973, Fund Raising, ABNC Files; Audubon Society Bulletin, October 1972; letter, Ginzbarg to Hackleman, March 9, 1975, Reviews 1974-1975, ABNC Files.

⁸⁴Houston *Post*, December 8, 1972; Creature Christmas List, Hershey Files (variants produced in other years are in Armand Bayou vertical file, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library); minutes of the Executive Committee of Armand Bayou Nature Center, Inc., January 22, 1975, ABNC Files; Skyles interview; Hershey interview.

Initiation of nature hikes along the bayou proved similarly popular in their offering of greater experiential and presentational enjoyment of the outdoors. Originally sponsored by the Audubon Society, hikes began as early as the fall of 1971. Led by university professors and prominent naturalists, they were informative and companionable. Dr. Joseph Kennedy, an ecologist with the University of Texas, once led the wife of Lieutenant Governor Hobby and her companions along the bayou, ending with a beautifully photographed gathering at which he displayed a Louisiana milk snake coiled in his arms, and in referring to the bayou, told the group to "let it be, and let it be understood." ⁸⁵

By October 1973, the Bayou Interpretive Guide program began. With as many as 150 people attending the first series of workshops, the guides ranged from dock workers to school teachers and scout leaders. Starting in Bay Area Park, hikers were able to make their way along the shore of the bayou before coming around back to the park. Used to promote an appreciation of nature, these excursions might also involve, depending on the leader, requests for donations and preservationist appeals. Accompanied by a great deal of publicity, the outings widened the involvement of people beyond those few actually working on the campaign to save the park. Community leaders and interested officials could now see genuine popular support for themselves. The bayou project no longer simply reflected environmentalists talking to environmentalists, but now included a large cross-section of people who were involved and informed.⁸⁶

Basically, through these various publicity, fundraising, and recruitment efforts, preservationists were maintaining a momentum for the park. While some questioned the high cost of the land, while Friendswood was reluctant to lose its development potential and slow to understand environmental needs, no real opposition to the project existed. The only reaction even simulating a resistance came from residents of the Cresthaven Estates neighborhood in Pasadena, at the headwaters of Armand Bayou. Having experienced two severe floods in 1969, neighborhood homeowners were anxious for flood control work to begin soon. While sympathetic to their plight, preservationists felt that the neighbors were victims of an irresponsible developer and that correction of his error did not justify depriving the overall community of an irreplaceable environmental resource. Even if grading of banks and clearing of underbrush, or rectification, occurred all along Armand Bayou, flooding would still happen on a site that was simply too low in the first place. These arguments proved persuasive. Armand Bayou remained a natural stream, and

⁸⁵Audubon Society Bulletin, August-September, 1971; Houston Post, February 2, 1973; *ibid.*, April 8, 1972.

⁸⁶Comments by Nancy Wood before the Commissioners Court, July 25, 1974, Community Involvement and Support, ABNC Files; Wood interview.



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group at Armand Bayou. Among Dr. Kennedy's audience is Mrs. Hobby (in Or. Joseph Kennedy of the

residents of Cresthaven Estates received little relief from the periodic flooding.⁸⁷ On the whole, preservation of Armand Bayou enjoyed carefully cultivated but genuine and heartfelt support.

The Context of the Nature Center

The development of the Armand Bayou Nature Center reflected most clearly the American democratic traditions of urban park growth. In contrast to European patterns, whereby parks often evolved from the private estates or hunting preserves of the titled and wealthy and only gradually became publicly available, parks in the United States were often publicly initiated and publicly oriented from the start. As landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted had emphasized in his plans for Central Park in New York City and the Boston greenbelt system, urban parks could perpetuate democratic ideals by bringing various classes into familiar contact, encouraging neighborliness and spontaneity rather than separation, disdain, or private ostentation.88

To be sure, numerous wealthy and influential individuals had had a vital role in the creation and sustenance of Armand Bayou Park. The story of its development, however, was hardly just one of philanthropic bequest. An unusually high degree of community cooperation and commitment at numerous private citizen and governmental levels had made this achievement possible.

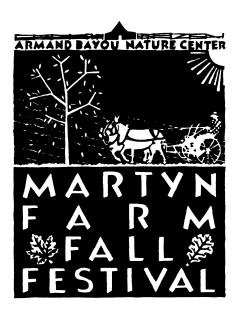
This common effort, once successful, produced the added benefit of a higher value placed on the final result by the many who shared in its genesis. Visited by over 200,000 people each year, the park and interpretive center now offer numerous educational programs, tours, events, and a general closeness to nature and rural life. In so doing, its functioning must fulfill many of the hopes and attributes of its founders.

From another standpoint, somewhat apart from the social and political context of its development, but yielding perhaps a more profound and instructive statement, the Nature Center's near proximity to the space complex graphically illustrates the close relationship between the space program and the environmental movement. As scientists have learned more of

⁸⁷ Audubon Society Bulletin, May 1971; HUD Environmental Statement; Bob Blair, Cresthaven resident, interview with author, Pasadena, Texas, February 21, 1986. While there was some representation by a Friendswood executive that very few Clear Lake area residents cared to preserve the bayou, quite the opposite seems to have been true. The only serious criticism within the area regarded the loss of a strong potential tax base for the local school and utility districts. Most felt that the educational and quality of life enhancements in an area already overdeveloped were strong countervailing factors. Frank Kokesh, Doris Grundy, and Nancy Wood, among others, were Clear Lake residents working to maintain the bayou. Undated newspaper clipping, Armand Bayou vertical file, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library; correspondence between Ginzbarg and Doris Grundy, June 1972, Smith Files.

⁸⁸Thomas Bender, Toward an Urban Vision (Lexington, 1975), 176-177, 187.

the solar system through space exploration, the conviction has grown that the conditions necessary to support life are delicate and precious. Its band in the universe may be very narrow, and preservation of its existence on Earth even more critical. Instinctively, this may have been the early insight of Jimmy Martyn and Armand Yramategui, whose thoughts and lives helped shape the nature preserve. In this deepened appreciation of our interdependence, Armand Bayou Nature Center may indeed have achieved its mission and reflected its history.



The Armand Bayou Nature Center sponsors tours, classes, and special programs such as the popular Fall Festival held each year.