A 7-minute video narrated by Cactus Pryor was produced by John Bernardoni in 1997 to honor Bobbie for her many contributions to Meals On Wheels. The link is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cll0TdM0zqE&feature=youtu.be

Mary Arnold, Shudde Fath and Phoebe Alleln would very much appreciate Letters of Support for renaming the "Shoal Beach at Town Lake Metropolitan Park" as the "Roberta Reed Crenshaw Overlook" in honor of Austin's "original environmentalist". Mail Letters of Support to: Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Attention: April Thedford, 919 West 28 1/2 Street, Austin, TX 78705 OR email April at: april.thedford@austintexas.gov

Roberta "Bobbie" Purvis Reed Crenshaw (1914 – 2005)

Compiled by Phoebe Allen

Lady Bird Johnson often receives the credit for the beauty of Lady Bird Lake and its **Hike & Bike Trail**, but she claimed that all she did was get aboard a moving train. She would be the first to acknowledge that it was Roberta Reed Crenshaw who was the engineer of that train. A pioneer of the Greenbelt and one of the leading forces behind the creation of many of Austin's best-loved natural and cultural treasures, Roberta Crenshaw was an environmentalist before the word was coined.

Bobbie Crenshaw campaigned for 60 years as the driving force for preserving parkland and trails in Austin and was the motivating force behind developing the beauty of the shores. It was Bobbie who galvanized support for the Hike and Bike Trail that has become an Austin landmark. It was Bobbie who lobbied forcefully against motorized boating and amusement park development on the lake. It was Bobbie who built a flagstone walk from the Congress Avenue bridge down to the shore, and initiated the trail by personally purchasing and planting - along with a few of her own ranch hands – close to 400 trees, some of which continue to bloom each spring: flowering peach, redbud, jasmine, weeping willows and other trees on the north shore between Congress Avenue and Lamar Boulevard, in her words: "to try to get the public to understand what we were doing and to understand that the river could be beautiful and could be enjoyable, and that it was a place that was worth recognizing." She worked together with Beverly Sheffield to envision the first hike and bike trail and lay out the loop around the lake.

Her vision and tireless personal commitment helped shape the Austin parks system into the nationally recognized source of pride and inspiration that it is today. She helped expand the Parks and Recreation Department, enlarging the scope of the former Austin Parks Board beyond playgrounds and softball leagues, and gave parks a significance of their own. She was a visionary, but also an eminently practical person. It was she who convinced the State Department of Transportation to pay for and install the pedestrian bridge under MoPac to complete the loop of the expanding hike and bike trail. She fought against the lake becoming an amusement park or being filled with motorboats and noise.

Bobbie was a member of the board of the **Austin Parks & Recreation Department** from 1952 to 1970; appointed by Emma Long, she served as chair from 1964 to 1969, at which time she helped develop the original plans for the beautification of Town Lake.

She stated in a 1986 Austin History Center interview, "I was considered at the time to be the little old lady in tennis shoes that wanted to plant petunias every place."

Bobbie created **Reed Park** in 1954 by donating six acres, and donated 30 acres of parkland for the **Colorado River Park**, now the Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park. She served as a director and trustee of the **National Recreation and Parks Association** (1965), and was a founding member, advisor and director of the **Austin Environmental Council** (1969).

Crenshaw was a heroine and mentor to today's environmentalists **Mary Arnold** and **Shudde Fath**. Fath recalls: "She was responsible for starting more good things in this city than almost anyone else. She was my hero. She never gave up."

Her personal contributions to Austin are simply astonishing in their scope. As a cultural philanthropist, Roberta Crenshaw's financial contributions to our city in large measure continued the legacy of her first husband, cotton exporter and oilman **Malcolm Reed** (1876-1945), with whom she had two daughters. She donated her interest in the **Paramount Theatre** to a non-profit corporation and persuaded her daughters to follow suit with a total of 50% ownership, enabling the Paramount to be restored to its former glory. "It is unimaginable to think what would have transpired with The Paramount Theatre's resurrection had it not been for the generosity and tireless efforts of Roberta Crenshaw," states John Bernardoni. "She was a driving force who gave the theatre legitimacy with Austin's business, political and social set."

She was not just a member, but one of the *founders* of **Austin's Ballet Society** (now Ballet Austin), **Heritage Society of Austin** (now Preservation Austin), **Austin History Center**, **Symphony Orchestra Society**, **Women's Symphony League**, **Laguna Gloria Art Museum**, and the **Texas Nature Conservancy**. She spearheaded the creation of the **Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum** and raised private funds to ensure its future. Widely respected in the community, she also served on the advisory board for the UT School of Architecture and was an honorary member of the Austin AIA (American Institute of Architects).

Beverly Scarborough said of her, "There are a lot of people in this town who call attention to themselves. She doesn't. She just does what needs to be done. And she has incredible vision."

In light of recent plans for MoPac, Roberta Reed Crenshaw has left us with some final words: "I was very worried that they were going to, if they opened MoPac with an opening onto the park — which they did — that they would turn the parkway into an expressway. They've tried every way since to do it, you know. They just keep on trying to indicate that that's where a connector route between IH-35 and MoPac should go — right along the lake."