



Dr. George Barnwell

George M. Barnwell, Jr.  
Citizen Activist  
July 1, 1939 – February 13, 1993

George was a good man, a good friend, and a good Daddy.

He was born and raised in Little Rock and was a creative man with a unique way of envisioning the world and its possibilities. From his rocket launches as a teen to his activism as an adult, when an idea struck, he figured out a way to make it work. (Fortunately, with some of his wilder ideas, he also had the wisdom to know when it might be better not to follow through!)

He met Sandra Weigand at The University of Georgia while serving in the Naval Supply Corps. He earned a BS in Mathematics from The University of Arkansas and a MS in Psychology at The University of Georgia. He and Sandy married in 1963 and had two daughters, Karen and Stacy. They moved to San Antonio in 1970, after George finished his Doctorate in Biomathematics at North Carolina State University.

He became an Associate Professor of Pathology at the University of Texas Health Science Center. He taught biostatistics to grateful graduate and post-doctoral dental students and collaborated with numerous scientific groups to help them interpret their research with the use of biostatistics. His research interests included mathematical models of biological systems, especially in the area of locomotion and pattern-generating mechanisms in the spinal chord, cholesterol metabolism, and biomechanics. When he died, he was collaborating with his peers on books examining mathematical modeling of the metabolism of cholesterol. He was also a free lance writer, with publications in numerous conservationist and archeological magazines.

George was a naturalist who went camping and canoeing throughout the South and Southwest. He was happiest at the beach, hiking across Chihuahuan Desert or the Texas Hill Country, and running white water. During his childhood in Arkansas, he developed a passion for fossil hunting and was always looking for promising areas to search. When he was fourteen, he found a mammoth tusk near the White River. His parents weren't convinced, but they heaved it into the trunk and hauled it back to the house on Ridgeway. (It's probably still in the basement.) His interest in geology and fossils was a lasting one. He could point out a geode in a field of stone and looked for a good trilobite

his entire adult life. He was also an accomplished photographer and had a profound interest in Native American culture and arts.

If George saw something that bothered him, he did his best to change it for the better. Throughout his life, he devoted himself to a number of important causes, particularly environmental issues such as water conservation and alternative fuels. San Antonio is a large city that depends on an underground aquifer for its pristine, limestone-filtered water. George spent many hours of his time volunteering on citizen advisory panels, walking petition drives, and educating local officials on the importance of protecting the city's only water source – not always an easy sell during the period of the city's explosive growth.

He was active in many organizations, including the First Unitarian Universalist Church, the Sierra Club and the Aquifer Protection Association. He also participated as a volunteer in a number of political and issue-related campaigns. He served as Co-Chairman of the Task Force 90 Utilities Task Force and was a member of the Technical Advisory Panel for the San Antonio Energy Study, the District Attorney's Task Force on Child Abuse, the Energy Task Force-Greater Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council, and as a role model in Southland Corporation's College Path Role Model Program for gifted minority students. He served as President of the Aquifer Protection Association and was active in various efforts to prevent further development over the recharge zone.

He was kind, generous, and caring, and positively influenced many people's lives. He was an excellent teacher, both in his job and by his nature. When he shared what he knew, his passion and enthusiasm rubbed off on his audience.

We wish he could have met the rest of his family. He was at Stacy's wedding to Doug Yost, but he didn't meet his grandsons, Morgan and Thomas. He never got a chance to meet Brad Rzepniewski, Karen's husband. They would have gotten along like chosen friends, rather than in-laws. We wish he could have been here for more laughter, the weddings, the births, loud symphonies, camping trips, conversations, spring wildflowers and summer floods.

We miss him.