

CHARTER MEMBERS

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Moved Mrs. E. H. Abernathy
Moved Lola Anderson
Moved Mrs. T. C. Barber, Jr.
Mrs. T. C. Barber, St.
Moved Mrs. John Barron
Dead Mrs. W. B. Bleecker
Mrs. Charles Bracht
Dead Mrs. J. C. Bramhall
Moved Cleaver Ruth Brown
Moved Mrs. D. R. Burlingame
Mrs. Augustine Celaya
Memb. Theresa Champion
Dead Mrs. J. N. Crawford
Dead Ella A Evans
Moved Mrs. Ruth Exley
Mrs. Kenneth Faxon
Mrs. Ethel N. Fry
Moved Mary Francis Hardin
Moved Mrs. T. C. Hargadon
Dr. Beatrice Hawkins
Moved Mrs. J. B. Hayes
Moved Betty Hefka
Mrs. D. D. Henderson
Moved Mrs. H. B. Jeffery
Dead Mrs. Elizabeth Keller
Mrs. Morgan Miller
Dead Claire Key
Dead Mrs. W. McK. Lambdin
Moved Mrs. Leonard Levy
Moved Mrs. G. A. Mather, Jr.
Moved Mrs. T. J. Mireur
Dead Mrs. Claude Morton
Moved Mrs. J. Sutton Myers
Moved Mrs. D. D. Norton
Dead Mrs. J. B. Osborne
Mrs. M. E. Owen
Moved Mrs. A. W. Pigott
Moved Mrs. Maurice Pipkin
Mrs. F. W. Pitt
Mrs. E. A. Rendall

LIST OF CHARTER MEMBERS - Continued

Moved Mrs. Martha L. Rogers
Moved Peggy Sappington
Dead Mrs. W. F. Sappington
Moved Mrs. Ruby Saturnine
Moved Mrs. Peggy Sledge
Dead Mrs. H. M. Smith
Dead Mrs. O. R. Stillinger
Mrs. Ralph Stone
Moved Mrs. J. C. Swinburn
Moved Mrs. L. V. Terry
Moved Mrs. Lenore Uribe
Moved Mrs. A. E. Von Stilli
Moved Mrs. Oma Wallace

List compiled August 14, 1975

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS
OF THE
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BROWNSVILLE

Fran Twenty-five years is a long, long time! How can we cover everything that is in these Minute Books and Scrap Books?

Mary We can't. We just have time to cover the most interesting things. - I do think, though, that everyone would like to know how we got started.

Fran OK, I'll start there. - In the beginning, a group of 7 or 8 Brownsville women got together and decided to form an organization dealing with government. They had heard of the League of Women Voters, so they called the president of the Edinburg League and asked her to come down and tell them about it. A date was set and each one present agreed to bring at least 5 others to the next meeting.

In the patio of the old Chamber of Commerce building on Levee Street four officers of the Edinburg League explained League purpose, organization and operation. So impressed were the 33 Brownsville women that, then and there, on July 26, 1949, they banded themselves into the Provisional League of Women Voters of Brownsville.

The first task required of a Provisional League was a community survey. Divided into 9 groups the 54 women (the membership had increased, you see) collected data on the historic, geographic, political, economic and other aspects of Brownsville. Fact-finding began on September 1, reports were given and discussed as each phase was completed, the final report being made December 6.

Earlier in the year, the Secret Ballot Law had been passed by the Texas Legislature, so before the November elections booths were set up down town and the League explained how the shuffled ballots were marked, the stubs torn off, signed and placed in the locked and sealed stub box, and the ballots placed in the ballot box - and how all this made the ballot secret.

Fran
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Before this, poll lists had been obtained and, wherever possible, telephone numbers placed beside each name. Then 2 or 3 days before each election, League members telephoned the voters and urged them to vote at the up-coming election. In effect, VOTE AS YOU PLEASE, BUT PLEASE VOTE! Three times in as many weeks the League called, for there were 3 elections set exactly a week apart. (Quite a job, wasn't it? But you must remember there were not as many people in Brownsville then as there are now.)

Early in January they asked the County Commissioners for permission to serve as poll tax collectors. This had never been done before so the Court was rather hesitant. Finally, after careful screening, 5 League members were deputized. During the last week in January stations were set up at Den-Russ Pharmacy and what is now C & L Pharmacy. Altogether they issued 1710 poll tax receipts and, much to their surprise, were paid \$171.00! - They had thought that they were working for free - for the good of the community.

And - they held a COMING OF AGE party at the courthouse for the young people entitled to vote for the first time in 1950. They learned later that this was the first celebration of its kind ever held in the State of Texas.

And there is one last thing. A United Nations study group was formed and at League instigation the Mayor proclaimed October 24, 1949, United Nations Day.

Let me tell you of one thing the League did not do. It did not have a finance drive. All agreed that they would not go to the business men for financial support until they had proved their worth to the community.

Even so, they ended the League year with \$269.64 in the treasury - more than enough to cover the cost of printing the KNOW YOUR TOWN survey. (This was in 1950, remember, not in 1975 with its sky high prices). - There were 76 members then and they prepared their formal request for recognition as a full fledged Local League.

Recognition came on April 11, 1950, so the 5 delegates to the State Convention in Houston went, not as observers from a Provisional League, but as voting delegates from a Local League, a fully accredited member of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

Imagine! All this in 8½ months!

Mary WOW! No wonder the national president wrote that she had received a report showing "special enthusiasm for the work you are doing in Brownsville," and goes on to say "It is always exciting to know of a new group as successful as yours."

Fran And a State Board member wrote that "Brownsville is our fair-haired child among the Texas Leagues." - And in an editorial in the Brownsville Herald, the League was designated a "surprisingly potent force considering its short life."

Mary I'm wondering - Didn't they have any failures - make any mistakes?

Fran Well, annual reports do not usually cite failures, but I did find mention of one. - A very controversial annexation election was scheduled for the end of January and the League planned a radio program giving each side an equal opportunity to explain its position. But at the last minute, the speaker for the opposition backed out and the program had to be cancelled. - - - And there's one other thing.

Mary What's that?

Fran Well, there were 76 members on the roll at the end of the League year in March, but when the Charter Members signed up after recognition in April, there were only 54.

Mary What happened to the others?

Fran Some moved away, of course, but I have heard that many women, including a few of those who started the whole thing, came in with political axes to grind. Some wanted changes in City Hall, or in the Court House, others wanted special ordinances or laws. After they joined the League they found out that it did not work that way. The League takes no part in party politics; it neither supports nor opposes candidates, and it only takes action on a governmental issue after it has thoroughly investigated the matter and reaches the consensus of all its members. - So these mistaken members just faded away.

Mary Oh, I just thought of something else I heard about those early League members.

Fran What was that?

Mary When our delegates went to that first Convention, the State Board and members of the older Leagues were astonished to learn that the majority of the members were housewives.

Mary
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A few were business women - not executives, just clerks and bookkeepers. Only a few were college women, and, of these, not more than 2 or 3 had degrees. - On the other hand, a large number were very active church workers, and there is no other place where you get better training in organization than in doing church work. - - What they had in abundance was enthusiasm - and dedication.

Fran You know, Mary, that sounds like a very good description of our members today.

Mary We've taken quite a bit of time with this first phase. - Maybe we had better go faster on the rest.

Fran That's a good idea! Let's take one subject at a time and hit the high spots.

Mary Fine. - You left the KNOW YOUR TOWN report all ready to be printed. I'll take it up from there.

Just before we spent League money, the Brownsville Board of City Development asked to see a copy of our draft. Soon after, they agreed to print 2000 copies provided we turned over half to the Chamber of Commerce and distributed the other half to the service clubs, school and public libraries, hotels and other organizations. The copies remaining were left at the Post Office Newsstand for free distribution.

Fran There was a second edition, wasn't there?

Mary Yes, but it was not a true second edition, it was a completely new survey. - Seven years later, the Brownsville Board of City Development approached us again to ask if we had anything for them to publish, perhaps a new survey. - Well, Brownsville had grown tremendously in those 7 years and the League had many new members who did not know their town. In fact, many of the old members did not realize how much it had grown and how much it had changed. - So, we agreed to do it.

3000 copies were printed this time. Two new subjects were covered; Taxation and Voting Procedures. And there was a map and lots of pictures. - One review said, "In no other place can all these facts we found together; the book is unique."

Fran Jumping from Brownsville to the world scene, our League was very interested in the United Nations. Every October for nearly 20 years we paid tribute to the U.N. - Joined by Charro Days, the Chamber of Commerce and Matamoros, we had parades of U.N. costumes which traveled through down town

Fran
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Brownsville and Matamoros. U.N. services were held in the churches on the Sundays closest to October 24. There were window displays, U.N. essay contests in the schools, radio and television programs, townhall meetings, flags, posters and pamphlets - anything we could think of to call attention to and support of the United Nations.

Mary Why did we stop observing U.N. Day?

Fran Opposition to the U.N. died down and it became so firmly established that there was no longer any need to take the U.N. to the Community. - - Remember, Mary, when there is no longer any need to pursue one subject, or when League activity is being duplicated by another organization, the League turns its attention to something else that needs doing.

Mary Well, one thing we will never cease doing is Voters Service work since the Purpose of the League is "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government," or, to use an old slogan, LET THE PEOPLE KNOW, MAKE THE PEOPLE CARE, HELP THE PEOPLE ACT.

Fran Since the best way for people to make their voices heard is through the ballot box, we figured the first step is to become eligible to vote. The League helped there by making it easier for people to pay their poll taxes or receive their exemption certificates.

Mary Exemption certificates?

Fran Oh, yes, after that first year when League deputies proved themselves to be so accurate and trustworthy, they allowed us to issue exemption certificates, too. - Also the names submitted by the League were no longer questioned and gradually we increased the number of deputies to 25. There were increases, too, in the number of poll tax receipts and exemption certificates issued. - One time we went over 5000.

Mary Of course, we stopped collecting when the poll tax was abolished in 1966. After that we registered voters each January.

Fran The thing I like so much about Voters Service is that each phase requires a lot of members working very hard for a very short time. Then it's over and we go on to something else. It is truly a year-round activity, as they say.

Mary Like candidates meetings. We used to have them before every school and city election. When the election was very controversial, the people really turned out. Once at a school-

Mary
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170

college candidates meeting/attended, another time 250, and at a very hot meeting of the city candidates "over 500 were present," according to the Brownsville Herald. We held these meetings every year until 1969.

Fran I guess we stopped when the Jaycees began to take them over. But we have always cooperated with them, screening the questions, or something.

Mary I wish I had been there when we held the CITIZENS VIEW OF 52 meeting. LIFE Magazine sponsored non-partisan forums all over the country to find out what the people considered the most important issues of the time, - and Brownsville was one of the 6 or 7 Leagues in Texas invited to participate. You can imagine how flattered we were and how eagerly we accepted!

Our meeting of April 23 was well attended and many people expressed their views although only 123 cast their ballots. We tabulated the results and wired the results to LIFE before we went home that night.

Then on May 1, 1952, the grand forum was held in Cincinnati and broadcast over NBC and ABC television and radio. - - League parties were held to hear the presidential candidates: Estes Kefauver, Robert Kerr, Harold Stassen, W. Averell Harriman and Paul Hoffman, speaking for Dwight Eisenhower who was still in Europe.

Fran I'd like to have been there for the SOAP BOX RALLIES. They were held, late in the afternoon, a week or two before the July primaries in what used to be the Fort Brown Bandstand Park. The Bugle & Drum Corps gave musical programs, the Boy Scouts sold soft drinks, church women sold sandwiches and cookies, and the candidates, each on his own soap box or in a booth, talked to the people and distributed his campaign literature. All offices were represented from that of state senator down to justice of the peace. I've heard that there was also one candidate for governor at one rally.

Mary I guess television put a stop to that.

Fran I suppose so. Can you remember reading about any other Voters Service activities?

Mary What about the election skit? Of course, it was tied in with our State Program. - When we became a Local League one item on the State Program was election laws and since we came in late on the study, someone decided the quickest way to learn the law was by means of a skit. We called it a DAY AT THE

Mary
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POLLS. In it, we showed which was the right way and the wrong way to do everything.

The "premier" was held at a League meeting. A month later we stream-lined it for presentation in the Federal Courtroom at the Naturalization Ceremony for new citizens of the United States. Later we were asked to present the full program in Port Isabel and Harlingen. And again and again it was repeated at the schools for election officials at city, primary and general elections.

Fran What's more I read that the State Board was so impressed with the skit that they had it mimeographed and sent to every League in Texas. Many of the other Leagues staged the show. - I bet that filled our members with pride! Imagine - all over the state!

Mary Before we leave A DAY AT THE POLLS, I must tell everyone about the cast. - In addition to the usual election judge and clerks, other characters were:

MISS KNOW IT ALL who knew the procedure and voted properly

MRS. FIRST TIMER who needed instruction

MISS INEEDA PROP who came in with a marked ballot

MISS TRUDY TRANSCIENT who had moved from one precinct to another without transferring

MRS. T. R. JAMES who was blind and needed help

MISS I GOTTA WATCHEM, the supervisor, who had to watch the help being given the blind voter

MISS IMA REPORTER who came in asking the score on each race

There were several others, but I will not mention them since their problems concerned paper ballots and we have voting machines now.

Fran The League worked for voting machines, I bet.

Mary Yes, we did, but in cooperation with the Harlingen League. The County Commissioners put us off for years saying it was too expensive. Finally, in 1961, the Rotary Club took the lead in the movement and the County placed an order for 75 machines at a cost of \$140,000 - and asked the League to demonstrate them when they arrived.

Fran There are so many other forms of Voters Service we have rendered - like the Precinct Convention skit and the Legislative Reports every other year. - And the time we were forced to report an election law violation to the Grand Jury. (That was an awesome experience). - And, of course, we distributed thousands of VOTERS GUIDES every time there was a state election. We even prepared guides ourselves on local issues and candidates.

Mary I'd like to tell about JURY SERVICE FOR WOMEN. - The League began, you'll remember, as an outgrowth of the Women's Right To Vote movement. After the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920 the women who had worked for it organized the League of Women Voters.

Well, after that many states soon gave women the right to serve on juries, but not Texas. So we worked with other Texas Leagues for an amendment to the state constitution granting us that right. That was passed November 2, 1954, and just a month later a Deputy Sheriff appeared to ask the League to suggest the names of 10 venire women to serve on a jury the next day. Among the names we suggested were 5 League members. Much to the regret of 4 of us, only one League member was accepted. -

Soon after that Brownsville had the distinction of having the first woman in Texas to serve as foreman of a grand jury. - Since then many League members have served on petit juries in the state and federal courts as well as on grand juries and grand jury commissions in both courts.

In connection with jury service, the League supplied the District Clerk's office with the informative leaflet, WHO, ME? . . . SERVE ON A JURY! which the clerk enclosed in each jury summons. We began this in 1956 and continued the service until 6 or 7 years ago. The County paid for the printing after that until just recently when the jury summons was placed on a computer. There is no way to insert leaflets in this process.

Fran There are so many things the League does that take a long time to accomplish - like the business of voting machines and Jury Service for Women. We have been working since the early 50's for a new state constitution. It is coming up for a vote of the people this November, but so much organized opposition has developed that the outcome is doubtful. If it fails, we will just keep on working.

Mary Like the City Charter, we began that in 1953 and we still do not have all we think the City needs. I will not go into all the ups and downs on that issue, there are entirely too

Mary
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many. The Charter Amendment election this past July resulted in all the major changes the League was seeking, but we need an entirely rewritten charter, - one that is brief and well organized, one that practically everyone can read and understand. - That is what we are after now, so we will work for a Charter Revision Commission. It will take an election, of course, and with the city election just 2 months away, we think it is better to wait until after that is over before pursuing this.

Fran Let's see what else we should mention before we get to that item which has been with us always.

Mary You mean Health?

Fran Yes, but first let me just mention these few things. - in the course of much of our work we had to turn to City Ordinances and found them in such a mess that we asked the City Commission to have them codified. The Commission answered, in effect, "Good idea. You do it." - Not that we doubted but that we could (we have undertaken some mighty big things at one time or other), but it is the duty of the City to make its laws available.

Mary Some time after that the Chief of Police and a member of the FBI asked the League to participate in a two-week traffic training school. Our first thought was "No, it does not fit into our program. Besides, what do we know about traffic?" Then we remembered the ordinances. So we had an expanded unit meeting with the police giving them our findings on the ordinances. The police admitted that they found them completely useless, in fact, they were forced to cite traffic violations by state law rather than city ordinance and agreed to back us in demanding codification.

Fran Later on we prepared the KNOW YOUR BROWNSVILLE SCHOOLS booklet as a result of our "Study of the School System with Emphasis on the Drop-out Problem." - Now I think we had better get on to health which has been on our program since the very beginning.

Mary Do you know how it started?

Fran No, I must have missed that in the record.

Mary It started with the first KNOW YOUR TOWN survey which showed that raw sewage was being dumped into the river.

Fran Brownsville is charged with that now.

Mary That's right, but it is not as bad as it was 25 years ago. Then the sewage disposal system had not been in operation for years. - A year or two after the League started looking into Brownsville health facilities a bond election was called to provide, among other things, for an entirely new sewage disposal plant large enough to serve us for at least 50 years. - Little did we know then how fast Brownsville would grow!

Fran Knowing that Cameron County had the highest incidence of tuberculosis in the United States, the League persuaded the City Commission to pass an ordinance requiring annual chest X-ray examinations of all food handlers, and the school board to have patch tests made on all the children in the system. - 13% turned up positive.

Mary We fought every step of the way for a tuberculosis hospital in the Valley. First, to prevent the Harlingen TB Hospital from being closed, then about a year after it was moved to Moore Field, we fought, without success, against its closing when the field was deactivated; - then when we practically had our hands on Hill-Burton funds for a new TB hospital in Harlingen, another problem arose. Plans were announced for a privately constructed TB hospital in Brownsville, - too small to service the County, much less the whole Valley.

Well, we took our courage in our hands - and don't think it did not take a lot of courage! - We invited our State Senator, our 2 State Representatives, our 5 County and 5 City Commissioners, the president of the Cameron County Tuberculosis Association, and the people planning the small hospital to meet with us in the Council Room at City Hall. - We also invited the press and pledged them to secrecy before and after the meeting. The Herald editor objected to the secrecy, so we said, "Don't write anything before the meeting. Just come.. We trust you to use discretion when you learn what it is all about."

When everyone was assembled, we closed and locked the doors, and opened the meeting. The League explained the situation. The Senator told the fight he was having in securing the Hill-Burton appropriation for the Valley with other cities in north and west Texas clammering for the same money. The others took it up in turn. Finally, the small hospital people volunteered to cancel their plans.

Nothing ever appeared in the papers. Our legislators obtained the Hill-Burton funds and the tuberculosis hospital was built in Harlingen - large enough to service the whole Valley.

Fran We also worked with the County, the City and the hospitals for greater appropriations for the Hospital Care of Indigents. And, in connection with our work for rabies control, a city-wide vaccination program was held and a leash law ordinance passed.

And we recommended to the County Commissioners the creation of a Cameron County Child Welfare Unit. One of our League members, already trained and licensed in that work, became the first director; another member was appointed to the first 5-member Board of Directors. When she moved away, another League member was appointed, and later on, when she in turn left Brownsville, the League was asked to recommend a replacement.

Mary After all the discretion and secrecy in connection with the tuberculosis hospital, I'd like to tell about something that was spread all over the papers.

In the course of our health studies, we had seen alleys strewn with refuse, open garbage cans, overflowing boxes and tubs, - also alleys completely blocked with piles of brush. We asked the City Commission to do something about it and the Commission passed a very stringent garbage ordinance.

We waited a month to allow time for enforcement to get underway and then we inspected 22 blocks of alleys and the police blotter. We found 138 violations and nothing in the way of citation showing violation of this ordinance. A report of our findings was made to the City Commission, the Sanitarian, and the Brownsville Herald.

Two weeks later we went again, tabulated the violations and their locations, the blank police blotter, and reported as before. By this time we had gained the name of ALLEY ANNIES and the title was headlined when we made our third tour and report.

In all this time only 3 or 4 violations had been reported and suspended fines levied since the violators were unable to pay.

With so little attention being given to these periodic and partial reports, a grand city-wide tour was planned: 11 routes were marked in red ink on a city map, 11 cars with driver and companion to direct the way and tabulate the number of each type of violation. In 2½ hours they were all back and showed, in all, 762 garbage can violations and 394 piles of rubbish, brush and tree trimmings.

Mary
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The publicity given this report finally brought action from the City Commission. This took the form of a request to the League to devise a plan to remedy the situation. After four busy, busy days the League was ready with complete plans for a CITIZENS CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN which required the cooperation of 24 organizations. Two days later the City Commission adopted the plan and letters were sent out requesting each organization to assume its designated part. Nearly all responded, the campaign was waged, and the condition of Brownsville alleys was greatly improved - as our final report revealed.

A resolution commending the League was issued by the City Commission. - Gratifying as that was, our greatest pleasure was the write-up of our ALLEY ANNIES program in the Political Pilgrim's Progress series in the LADIES HOME JOURNAL.

Fran Think of that! No wonder they were thrilled! - We have made quite a bit of history.

Mary Don't talk as though it were all past. - Remember that old saying: "The world is made up of those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who have no idea what is happening." - This is followed by the question, "Which are you?"

And our answer is: "Members of the League of Women Voters make things happen." - We will continue to work for greater citizen participation in government - for better health and environmental conditions - for better administration of justice - and 25 years from now our children will be sitting together like this telling the people all about it.

The End.

For presentation at the 25th Anniversary Dinner
September 13, 1975

Actors:

Francis - Mrs. Max Marquis, Jr. (Frances)

Mary - Mrs. Robert H. Chase, Jr. (Mary)

MAILING LIST FOR 25th ANNIVERSARY DINNER

LWV. P.O. Box 3643

Members

Mrs. T. Aziz
~~Mrs. Max Beier~~
- Mrs. Richard Berry
- Mrs. Raul Cavazos
Miss Teresa Champion
~~Mrs. Robert Chase~~ Mrs. Henry Carmichael
- Mrs. Edw. Dunkelberg
Mrs. Frank Ervin
- Mrs. James Evans
- Mrs. George Graydon
- Mrs. J. W. McKnight
- Mrs. Vincent McNamara
- Mrs. Chester Metra
- Mrs. Basil Miller
- Mrs. Gerald Prepejchal
Mrs. Maria Rodriguez
- Mrs. Steven Sarossy
- Mrs. Harold Swayder
- Mrs. D. H. Unland
Miss Sylvia Vazquez
- Mrs. I. Zarate, Jr.
- Mrs. Raymond Rogers
Mrs. Rosa Jo Springman
- Mrs. W. M. Trickey
Mrs. W. A. Uselton
Mrs. Marjorie M. Grant

City Commissioners

- Mr. Jim Mills
- Mr. Peyton Conway
- Mr. D. F. Rios
Mr. George Saenz
- Mr. George Samano

County Commissioners

- Judge Ray Ramon
Mr. Adolph Thomae, Jr.
Mr. Russ Fowler
- Mr. Mike Cortinas
- Mr. D. J. Lerma

Mrs. Jean Marker, Pres. Harlingen LWV
Mrs. Mary Ellen Salinas, Pres. Edinburg-
McAllen LWV

Mrs. James Pinkerton
- Mrs. Andrew Glowacki
Mrs. Ruth M. Gabbert
Mrs. Jo McLean
Mrs. Horacio Barrera
Mrs. Mildred Froyd
- Mrs. Leonard Kane
Mrs. Sumter S. Arnim
- Mr. Ward Walker (Brownsville Times)
Mr. Minor J. Wilson (K B O R)



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of Brownsville will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a dinner at the Holiday Inn on Saturday, September 13th beginning

at 7:30 p.m. Invitations for the event are being prepared by Mrs. Juan De Pau, Mrs. Fred Manzke, and Mrs. Ersel Lantz.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BROWNSVILLE

Mailing list for the 25th Anniversary Dinner

- ✓ Adams Brothers No
- Mrs. Frank Anderson
- Mrs. Hohn Anderson
- Mr. and Mrs. Leon Armstrong
- ✓ Dr. and Mrs. Sumter Arnim No
- Mr. and Mrs. Robert Aziz
- ✓ Mr. and Mrs. T. Aziz No
- ✓ Mrs. T.C. Barber No
- Mr. and Mrs. E. Barbosa
- Mrs. Horacio Barrera
- Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Bates
- Mr. and Mrs. Jim Batsell
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Max Beier 12.00
- ✓ Mr. Henry Bell \$10.00 No
- Mr. and Mrs. Richard Berry
- ✓ Miss Harriet Berwin No
- ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Charles Braecht No
- Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Buck, Jr.
- ✓ Dr. C. F. Calderoni No
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Henry Carmichael \$12.00
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Carnesi 12.00
- ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Raul Cavazos No
- Mrs. Augustine Celaya
- ✓ Miss Teresa Champion No
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Robert Chase 12.00
- Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Claunch
- ✓ Mr. Alan Clint No
- Mr. and Mrs. Peyton Conway
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Mike Cortinas 12.00

Mailing list for the 25th Anniversary Dinner

- 1 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Keith Crowe 6.00
Mr. and Mrs. Joe M. Cruz
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Juan De Pau 12.00
Mr. and Mrs. Manning Dierlan
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Ed. Dunkelberg 12.00
Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Earley
- 1 ✓ Mrs. Frank Ervin 6.00
✓ Mr. and Mrs. James Evans NO
✓ Mrs. Kenneth Faxon NO
✓ Mr. and Mrs. Donald Ferguson NO
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Tom Fleming 12.00
Mr. Russ Fowler
✓ Mrs. Mildred Freyd NO
Mrs. Ethel N. Fry
- 1 ✓ Mrs. Ruth Gabbert 6.00
✓ Mrs. Dena Gallie NO
- 4 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Garrison 24.00 (2 guests)
Mr. E. de la Garza
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Ygnacio Garza, Jr. 12.00
✓ Mr. and Mrs. John R. Gillis NO
✓ Mr. and Mrs. Alton Gloor NO
- 2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Glowacki 12.00
Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Gonzales
W. J. Godfrey
- 1 ✓ Mrs. Marjorie H. Grant 6.00
✓ Rev. and Mrs. George Graydon NO
✓ Mr. and Mrs. Will Hardee NO
- 1 ✓ Mrs. I.N. Margis 6.00
Mr. and Mrs. James Hatch
✓ Dr. W. W. and Dr. Beatrice Hawkins NO

Mailing list for the 25th Anniversary Dinner

Mr. and Mrs. D. D. Henderson

2 ✓ Mr. + Mrs. W. J. Hughes 12.00

Mr. and Mrs. T. M. Hughston

Earl C. Hunter

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Kane

2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. James Kugel 12.00

Dr. and Mrs. M. Landin, Jr.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Lapeyre

Mr. and Mrs. D. J. Lerma

1 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Leyva 6.00

Mr. and Mrs. R. Lindeman

✓ John Lipps NO

Long, Chilton and Co.

2 ✓ MRS. F. MANZKE 12.00

2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. R. Marberry 12.00

1 ✓ Mrs. Jean Marker (MARIANNE BOWERS) 6.00

2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Max Marquis, Jr. 12.00

Mr. and Mrs. Edward McChesney

1 ✓ Mrs. Jo McLean 6.00

✓ Mr. and Mrs. J. W. McKnight NO

Mr. and Mrs. Vincent McNamara

Mr. and Mrs. Chester Metra

Mr. and Mrs. Basil Miller

Mrs. Morgan Miller

✓ Mayor and Mrs. Jim Mills NO

✓ Dr. and Mrs. H. D. Mireles NO

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Nussbaum

Mr. and Mrs. St. B. Oaks

Mr. and Mrs. James Ogg

1 ✓ Mrs. M. E. Owen (LENORE) 6.00

Mr. and Mrs. James Pace

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Perl

1 ✓ Mrs. James Pinkerton (FRANCES) 6.00

Mailing list for the 25th Anniversary Dinner

Mrs. F. W. Pitt

Mr. J. Thomas Pope

Mr. F. William Power

Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Prepejehal

Judge and Mrs. Ray Ramon

1 ✓ Mrs. Margaret Rendall 6.00

✓ Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Rentfro No

Mr. and Mrs. Carlton Richards

✓ Richardson Advertising No

Mr. and Mrs. D. F. Rios

Mr. and Mrs. O. H. Robertson

Mrs. Maria Rodriguez

✓ Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Rogers No

Mr. and Mrs. Al. Roser

2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. Richard Roup 12.00

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Rubio

Mr. George Saenz

Mr. and Mrs. George Samano

2 Mr. and Mrs. Steven Sarossy

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Settle

Southmost Savings and Loan

Mrs. Rosa Jo Springman

Mr. and Mrs. C. Staves

Mrs. Ralph Stone

Mr. and Mrs. George Storter

✓ Mrs. Thomas Sugihara No

2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. C. Sunrall 12.00

Swanson, Miester, Wilson and Claycomb

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Swayder

✓ Mrs. Mary Ellen Salinas No

Mailing list for the 25th Anniversary Dinner

✓ Sears, Roebuck and Com. NO.

Mr. Adolph Thoma, Jr.

4 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Trickey 24.00 (2 guest)

Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Unland

1 ✓ Mrs. W. A. Uselton 6.00 CASH

Miss Sylvia Vasquez

Mr. and Mrs. Virgil Versaggi

Mr. and Mrs. Ward Walker

Mr. and Mrs. David Warzecha

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Wiech

Mr. Miner J. Wilson

✓ Wilhite and Winans NO

2 ✓ Mr. and Mrs. I. Zarate, Jr. 12.00

2 Mr + Mrs. David Phillips

124 Total

For release Sunday, September 14, 1975
or September 21, 1975

In the patio of the old Chamber of Commerce building on Levee Street four officers of the League of Women Voters of Edinburg met with thirty-three Brownsville women to explain the purpose, organization and operation of the League. So impressed were the Brownsville women that, then and there, they banded themselves into the Provisional League of Women Voters of Brownsville.

Their first officers were Mrs. L. V. Terry, president; Mrs. J. W. Wiech, first vice-president; Mrs. Morgan Miller, second vice-president; Miss Peggy Sappington, secretary, and Mrs. E. A. Rendall, treasurer. The directors were Mrs. Augustine Celaya, voters service; Mrs. Maurice Pipkin, membership; Mrs. W. McK. Lambdin, publications; and Mrs. Kenneth Faxon, public relations.

Four months later Mrs. Terry moved away from Brownsville and Mrs. Rendall was appointed to the presidency by the other board members.

Know Your Town Survey

Under the leadership of Mrs. Miller, fifty-four of the members were divided into nine groups to explore every aspect of Brownsville; history, geography, political subdivisions, economy, education,

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religion, health, transportation and communications. Fact Finding was finished in early December, collected into a booklet called KNOW YOUR TOWN, and printed the following spring.

The booklet was considered unique in that it contained under one cover all the pertinent facts anyone would wish to know before moving to Brownsville. Because of its advertising potential, the Brownsville Board of City Development agreed to pay the cost of printing 2000 copies, half to be left with the Chamber of Commerce and half distributed to hotels, motels, public and school libraries, service clubs and such.

In 1957 a second survey was made with the addition of sections on taxation and voting procedures. Three thousand copies were printed, financed and distributed as before.

Poll Taxes Collected

With some reluctance the County Commissioners Court agreed to the appointment of five League members to serve as deputy tax collectors. At Den-Russ and Brooks Central Pharmacies, Mrs. Rendall, Mrs. Leonard Levy, Mrs. D. D. Henderson, Mrs. F. W. Pitt, and Mrs. O. R. Stillinger collected 1710 poll taxes the last week in January, 1950. In 1951, Mrs. M. E. Owen was named voters service chairman.

Every year until 1966, League deputies, sometimes as many as 25, collected poll taxes and issued exemption certificates - the annual total often exceeding 5000.

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The poll tax was abolished in 1966; thereafter, League deputies registered voters.

Coming of Age Party

A Coming of Age party was held at the courthouse January 27, 1950, with Mrs. Levy presiding. District Judge James S. Graham told the 21-year old guests how to mark the ballot and City Commissioner Ismael Zarate congratulated them on coming of age as citizens. This was the first party of the kind ever held in the State of Texas.

Many years later when 18-year olds were given the right to vote, literature and instructions were given them by members of the League.

Recognition

On April 11, 1950, the Brownsville group was recognized as a Local League, a fully accredited member of the League of Women Voters of the United States which itself was an outgrowth of the Women's Right to Vote movement. After the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920, the women who had worked for it organized the League of Women Voters.

Health Program

The facts revealed in the KNOW YOUR TOWN survey prompted the League to adopt a program on health for intensive study and action. This led in many directions, including, among others

- 1) Greater appropriations by County and City for the hospital care of indigents
- 2) Assistance in the securing of Hill-Burton funds for the construction of the Cameron County Tuberculosis Hospital in Harlingen

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- 3) Sponsoring the creation of the Cameron County Child Welfare Unit of which League member, Mrs. Agnes Barber, was the first Supervisor and Mrs. Levy, a member of the first 5-member Board of Directors. When Mrs. Levy left Brownsville, another League member, Mrs. A. E. Von Stilli, was appointed in her place. And when Mrs. Von Stilli, in turn, moved away, the League was asked to suggest a replacement. Its candidate was Dr. W. W. Hawkins.
- 4) For five years or more work was done with and for the Cameron County Health Unit
- 5) At League insistence many city ordinances were passed, including annual chest X-ray examinations of food handlers, the "dog leash law" and a very stringent garbage ordinance.

Alley Annies

To test the efficiency of the enforcement of the garbage ordinance, Mrs. O. R. Stillinger, chairman, directed periodic patrols under the direction of Mrs. Marguerite Henderson who, in time, dubbed her committee the "Alley Annies"

Despite the fact that the results of each tour was reported to the City Sanitarian, the City Manager, and the Herald, no violations were cited, fines levied, nor conditions corrected.

The League then organized a city-wide Alley Annie Patrol. In 2½ hours 22 women in 11 cars covered every alley in town and reported 762 garbage can violations and 394 piles of rubbish, brush, and tree trimmings - many of which blocked the alleys completely.

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This report brought action from City Hall - a request to the League to devise a plan to remedy the situation. In short order - four days, to be exact - the League presented written plans for a Citizens Clean-up Campaign requiring the cooperation of 24 organizations.

Two days later the City Commission adopted the plan and letters were sent out requesting each organization to assume its designated role. Nearly all responded, the campaign was waged, and the condition of Brownsville alleys was greatly improved.

A resolution commending the League was issued by the City Commission on October 11, 1951. - Gratifying as that was, the League was even more pleased with the write-up of the Alley Annie program in the Political Pilgrims Progress series in the LADIES HOME JOURNAL in the January, 1952, issue.

United Nations

For nearly 20 years the Brownsville League paid tribute to the United Nations with window displays, essay contests in the schools, radio and television programs, town hall meetings, and U.N. sermons preached on the Sundays closest to October 24. Perhaps the most unusual show of U.N. support was the joint effort of Charro Days, Inc., the Chambers of Commerce of Brownsville and Matamoros and the League in 1952 and 1953 in organizing parades of U.N. costumes which traveled through downtown Brownsville and Matamoros. - The first U.N. chairman of the League was Mrs. Henry M. Smith who became the^{second} president in 1953.

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Jury Service for Women

Having obtained the right to vote, the League of Women Voters and other organizations turned their attention to jury service for women. Many states granted this right long before Texas amended its constitution in 1954. Just one month after the November election the League was asked to suggest the names of 10 venire women to serve on a jury the next day. Mrs. Bailey Kenley was the only League member accepted. - Soon after that Brownsville had the distinction of having the first woman in Texas to serve as foreman on a grant jury - Mrs. Rendall. Some years later Mrs. P. J. Vivier, Jr. also served as foreman on such a jury. - Over the years many League members have served on petit and grand juries and grand jury commissions in the state and federal courts.

Citizens View of '52

LIFE MAGAZINE in cooperation with the League of Women Voters and the National Broadcasting Company sponsored non-partisan forums all over the country to find out what the people considered the most important issues of the time. Brownsville was one of the six or seven Leagues in Texas invited to participate.

On April 23, 1952, the public forum was held in the Cummings Junior High School Auditorium. Speakers were A. C. Moore, Jr., Crawford Cofer, Ygnacio Garza, Jr., Harold Sebern, A. E. Von Stilli, Don Morris and, as moderator, Oscar Longnecker.

Although many people abstained from voting, 123 ballots were cast, tabulated, and the results telegraphed to LIFE that same night.

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On May 1, 1952, the grand forum was held in Cincinnati with the following presidential candidates participating: Estes Kefauver, Robert Kerr, Harold Stassen, W. Averell Harriman, and Paul Hoffman, speaking for Dwight Eisenhower who was still in Europe.

Soap Box Rallies

A week or two before the July primaries of 1954 and 1956 soap box rallies were held late in the afternoon in the old Fort Brown Bandstand Park. The American Legion Bugle & Drum Corps gave musical programs, the Boy Scouts sold soft drinks, church women sold sandwiches and cookies, and the candidates, each on his own soap box or in his booth, talked to the people and distributed campaign literature.

All the offices were represented from U. S. representative and state senator down to justice of the peace. At one rally a candidate for governor participated. - Mrs. Hugh Biggs was voters service chairman at the time.

Ordinances

Chief of Police Gus Krausse and F.B.I. agent Cris Isbell sought the assistance of the League in a 2-week traffic training school beginning May 17, 1954.

There the League presented the data previously prepared by Mrs. Herman Jones on the condition of the city ordinances. In the course of the discussion that followed, it was brought out that police officers found the ordinances utterly useless and were forced to cite traffic violations under state law rather than city ordinance.

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The result was that the police agreed to support the League in its request for codification of the ordinances - Note: The ordinances were not codified until 1971 or 1972.

City Charter Revision

In 1953, under the leadership of Mrs. W. McK. Lambdin, the Brownsville City Charter was analyzed and compared with the Model Charter and the recently adopted charters of other Texas cities of comparable size.

The 22-year campaign for charter revision resulted in the adoption of the major changes proposed by the League at the Charter Amendment Election of July 12, 1975.

Texas Constitutional Revision

The Brownsville League, along with all the other Texas Leagues, has been engaged for over 20 years in a campaign to revise the Texas Constitution. - Mrs. Ben Gabbert was the first TCR chairman.

At long last, a new constitution has been written for submission to a vote of the people on November 4, 1975.

State Board and Committees

The three Brownsville women who served on state committees are Mrs. Hugh Biggs, Mrs. O. R. Stillinger and Mrs. David N. Phillips, each of whom served as president of the Local League.

Mrs. Rendall was elected to the State Board in 1952 where she served one term as voters service chairman, another as election laws chairman, and, finally, as legislative chairman and first vice-president.

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Tribute

In closing the 25th Anniversary Celebration, Mrs. Fred Manzke, president, paid tribute to the two hundred or more members, past and present, who had contributed so notably to the League's heritage.

THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS
OF THE
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BROWNSVILLE

Fran Twenty-five years is a long, long time! How can we cover everything that is in these Minute Books and Scrap Books?

Mary We can't. We just have time to cover the most interesting things. - I do think, though, that everyone would like to know how we got started.

Fran OK, I'll start there. - In the beginning, a group of 7 or 8 Brownsville women got together and decided to form an organization dealing with government. They had heard of the League of Women Voters, so they called the president of the Edinburg League and asked her to come down and tell them about it. A date was set and each one present agreed to bring at least 5 others to the next meeting.

In the patio of the old Chamber of Commerce building on Levee Street four officers of the Edinburg League explained League purpose, organization and operation. So impressed were the 33 Brownsville women that, then and there, on July 26, 1949, they banded themselves into the Provisional League of Women Voters of Brownsville.

The first task required of a Provisional League was a community survey. Divided into 9 groups the 54 women (the membership had increased, you see) collected data on the historic, geographic, political, economic and other aspects of Brownsville. Fact-finding began on September 1, reports were given and discussed as each phase was completed, the final report being made December 6.

Earlier in the year, the Secret Ballot Law had been passed by the Texas Legislature, so before the November elections booths were set up down town and the League explained how the shuffled ballots were marked, the stubs torn off, signed and placed in the locked and sealed stub box, and the ballots placed in the ballot box - and how all this made the ballot secret.

Fran
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Before this, poll lists had been obtained and, wherever possible, telephone numbers placed beside each name. Then 2 or 3 days before each election, League members telephoned the voters and urged them to vote at the up-coming election. In effect, VOTE AS YOU PLEASE, BUT PLEASE VOTE! Three times in as many weeks the League called, for there were 3 elections set exactly a week apart. (Quite a job, wasn't it? But you must remember there were not as many people in Brownsville then as there are now.)

Early in January they asked the County Commissioners for permission to serve as poll tax collectors. This had never been done before so the Court was rather hesitant. Finally, after careful screening, 5 League members were deputized. During the last week in January stations were set up at Den-Russ Pharmacy and what is now C & L Pharmacy. Altogether they issued 1710 poll tax receipts and, much to their surprise, were paid \$171.00! - They had thought that they were working for free - for the good of the community.

And - they held a COMING OF AGE party at the courthouse for the young people entitled to vote for the first time in 1950. They learned later that this was the first celebration of its kind ever held in the State of Texas.

And there is one last thing. A United Nations study group was formed and at League instigation the Mayor proclaimed October 24, 1949, United Nations Day.

Let me tell you of one thing the League did not do. It did not have a finance drive. All agreed that they would not go to the business men for financial support until they had proved their worth to the community.

Even so, they ended the League year with \$269.64 in the treasury - more than enough to cover the cost of printing the KNOW YOUR TOWN survey. (This was in 1950, remember, not in 1975 with its sky high prices). - There were 76 members then and they prepared their formal request for recognition as a full fledged Local League.

Recognition came on April 11, 1950, so the 5 delegates to the State Convention in Houston went, not as observers from a Provisional League, but as voting delegates from a Local League, a fully accredited member of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

Imagine! All this in 8½ months!

Mary WOW! No wonder the national president wrote that she had received a report showing "special enthusiasm for the work you are doing in Brownsville," and goes on to say "It is always exciting to know of a new group as successful as yours."

Fran And a State Board member wrote that "Brownsville is our fair-haired child among the Texas Leagues." - And in an editorial in the Brownsville Herald, the League was designated a "surprisingly potent force considering its short life."

Mary I'm wondering - Didn't they have any failures - make any mistakes?

Fran Well, annual reports do not usually cite failures, but I did find mention of one. - A very controversial annexation election was scheduled for the end of January and the League planned a radio program giving each side an equal opportunity to explain its position. But at the last minute, the speaker for the opposition backed out and the program had to be cancelled. - - - And there's one other thing.

Mary What's that?

Fran Well, there were 76 members on the roll at the end of the League year in March, but when the Charter Members signed up after recognition in April, there were only 54.

Mary What happened to the others?

Fran Some moved away, of course, but I have heard that many women, including a few of those who started the whole thing, came in with political axes to grind. Some wanted changes in City Hall, or in the Court House, others wanted special ordinances or laws. After they joined the League they found out that it did not work that way. The League takes no part in party politics; it neither supports nor opposes candidates, and it only takes action on a governmental issue after it has thoroughly investigated the matter and reaches the consensus of all its members. - So these mistaken members just faded away.

Mary Oh, I just thought of something else I heard about those early League members.

Fran What was that?

Mary When our delegates went to that first Convention, the State Board and members of the older Leagues were astonished to learn that the majority of the members were housewives.

Mary
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A few were business women - not executives, just clerks and bookkeepers. Only a few were college women, and, of these, not more than 2 or 3 had degrees. - On the other hand, a large number were very active church workers, and there is no other place where you get better training in organization than in doing church work. - - What they had in abundance was enthusiasm - and dedication.

Fran You know, Mary, that sounds like a very good description of our members today.

Mary We've taken quite a bit of time with this first phase. - Maybe we had better go faster on the rest.

Fran That's a good idea! Let's take one subject at a time and hit the high spots.

Mary Fine. - You left the KNOW YOUR TOWN report all ready to be printed. I'll take it up from there.

Just before we spent League money, the Brownsville Board of City Development asked to see a copy of our draft. Soon after, they agreed to print 2000 copies provided we turned over half to the Chamber of Commerce and distributed the other half to the service clubs, school and public libraries, hotels and other organizations. The copies remaining were left at the Post Office Newsstand for free distribution.

Fran There was a second edition, wasn't there?

Mary Yes, but it was not a true second edition, it was a completely new survey. - Seven years later, the Brownsville Board of City Development approached us again to ask if we had anything for them to publish, perhaps a new survey. - Well, Brownsville had grown tremendously in those 7 years and the League had many new members who did not know their town. In fact, many of the old members did not realize how much it had grown and how much it had changed. - So, we agreed to do it.

3000 copies were printed this time. Two new subjects were covered; Taxation and Voting Procedures. - And there was a map and lots of pictures. - One review said, "In no other place can all these facts we found together; the book is unique."

Fran Jumping from Brownsville to the world scene, our League was very interested in the United Nations. Every October for nearly 20 years we paid tribute to the U.N. - Joined by Charro Days, the Chamber of Commerce and Matamoros, we had parades of U.N. costumes which traveled through down town

Fran
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Brownsville and Matamoros. U.N. services were held in the churches on the Sundays closest to October 24. There were window displays, U.N. essay contests in the schools, radio and television programs, townhall meetings, flags, posters and pamphlets - anything we could think of to call attention to and support of the United Nations.

Mary Why did we stop observing U.N. Day?

Fran Opposition to the U.N. died down and it became so firmly established that there was no longer any need to take the U.N. to the Community. - - Remember, Mary, when there is no longer any need to pursue one subject, or when League activity is being duplicated by another organization, the League turns its attention to something else that needs doing.

Mary Well, one thing we will never cease doing is Voters Service work since the Purpose of the League is "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government," or, to use an old slogan, LET THE PEOPLE KNOW, MAKE THE PEOPLE CARE, HELP THE PEOPLE ACT.

Fran Since the best way for people to make their voices heard is through the ballot box, we figured the first step is to become eligible to vote. The League helped there by making it easier for people to pay their poll taxes or receive their exemption certificates.

Mary Exemption certificates?

Fran Oh, yes, after that first year when League deputies proved themselves to be so accurate and trustworthy, they allowed us to issue exemption certificates, too. - Also the names submitted by the League were no longer questioned and gradually we increased the number of deputies to 25. There were increases, too, in the number of poll tax receipts and exemption certificates issued. - One time we went over 5000.

Mary Of course, we stopped collecting when the poll tax was abolished in 1966. After that we registered voters each January.

Fran The thing I like so much about Voters Service is that each phase requires a lot of members working very hard for a very short time. Then it's over and we go on to something else. It is truly a year-round activity, as they say.

Mary Like candidates meetings. We used to have them before every school and city election. When the election was very controversial, the people really turned out. Once at a school-

Mary
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college candidates meeting/attended, another time 250, and at a very hot meeting of the city candidates "over 500 were present," according to the Brownsville Herald. We held these meetings every year until 1969.

Fran I guess we stopped when the Jaycees began to take them over. But we have always cooperated with them, screening the questions, or something.

Mary I wish I had been there when we held the CITIZENS VIEW OF 52 meeting. LIFE Magazine sponsored non-partisan forums all over the country to find out what the people considered the most important issues of the time, - and Brownsville was one of the 6 or 7 Leagues in Texas invited to participate. You can imagine how flattered we were and how eagerly we accepted!

Our meeting of April 23 was well attended and many people expressed their views although only 123 cast their ballots. We tabulated the results and wired the results to LIFE before we went home that night.

Then on May 1, 1952, the grand forum was held in Cincinnati and broadcast over NBC and ABC television and radio. - - League parties were held to hear the presidential candidates: Estes Kefauver, Robert Kerr, Harold Stassen, W. Averell Harriman and Paul Hoffman, speaking for Dwight Eisenhower who was still in Europe.

Fran I'd like to have been there for the SOAP BOX RALLIES. They were held, late in the afternoon, a week or two before the July primaries in what used to be the Fort Brown Bandstand Park. The Bugle & Drum Corps gave musical programs, the Boy Scouts sold soft drinks, church women sold sandwiches and cookies, and the candidates, each on his own soap box or in a booth, talked to the people and distributed his campaign literature. All offices were represented from that of state senator down to justice of the peace. I've heard that there was also one candidate for governor at one rally.

Mary I guess television put a stop to that.

Fran I suppose so. Can you remember reading about any other Voters Service activities?

Mary What about the election skit? Of course, it was tied in with our State Program. - When we became a Local League one item on the State Program was election laws and since we came in late on the study, someone decided the quickest way to learn the law was by means of a skit. We called it a DAY AT THE

Mary
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POLLS. In it, we showed which was the right way and the wrong way to do everything.

The "premier" was held at a League meeting. A month later we stream-lined it for presentation in the Federal Courtroom at the Naturalization Ceremony for new citizens of the United States. Later we were asked to present the full program in Port Isabel and Harlingen. And again and again it was repeated at the schools for election officials at city, primary and general elections.

Fran What's more I read that the State Board was so impressed with the skit that they had it mimeographed and sent to every League in Texas. Many of the other Leagues staged the show. - I bet that filled our members with pride! Imagine - all over the state!

Mary Before we leave A DAY AT THE POLLS, I must tell everyone about the cast. - In addition to the usual election judge and clerks, other characters were:

MISS KNOW IT ALL who knew the procedure and voted properly

MRS. FIRST TIMER who needed instruction

MISS INEEDA PROP who came in with a marked ballot

MISS TRUDY TRANSCIENT who had moved from one precinct to another without transferring

MRS. T. R. JAMES who was blind and needed help

MISS I GOTTA WATCHEM, the supervisor, who had to watch the help being given the blind voter

MISS IMA REPORTER who came in asking the score on each race

There were several others, but I will not mention them since their problems concerned paper ballots and we have voting machines now.

Fran The League worked for voting machines, I bet.

Mary Yes, we did, but in cooperation with the Harlingen League. The County Commissioners put us off for years saying it was too expensive. Finally, in 1961, the Rotary Club took the lead in the movement and the County placed an order for 75 machines at a cost of \$140,000 - and asked the League to demonstrate them when they arrived.

Fran There are so many other forms of Voters Service we have rendered - like the Precinct Convention skit and the Legislative Reports every other year. - And the time we were forced to report an election law violation to the Grand Jury. (That was an awesome experience). - And, of course, we distributed thousands of VOTERS GUIDES every time there was a state election. We even prepared guides ourselves on local issues and candidates.

Mary I'd like to tell about JURY SERVICE FOR WOMEN. - The League began, you'll remember, as an outgrowth of the Women's Right To Vote movement. After the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920 the women who had worked for it organized the League of Women Voters.

Well, after that many states soon gave women the right to serve on juries, but not Texas. So we worked with other Texas Leagues for an amendment to the state constitution granting us that right. That was passed November 2, 1954, and just a month later a Deputy Sheriff appeared to ask the League to suggest the names of 10 venire women to serve on a jury the next day. Among the names we suggested were 5 League members. Much to the regret of 4 of us, only one League member was accepted. -

Soon after that Brownsville had the distinction of having the first woman in Texas to serve as foreman of a grand jury. - Since then many League members have served on petit juries in the state and federal courts as well as on grand juries and grand jury commissions in both courts.

In connection with jury service, the League supplied the District Clerk's office with the informative leaflet, WHO, ME? . . . SERVE ON A JURY! which the clerk enclosed in each jury summons. We began this in 1956 and continued the service until 6 or 7 years ago. The County paid for the printing after that until just recently when the jury summons was placed on a computer. There is no way to insert leaflets in this process.

Fran There are so many things the League does that take a long time to accomplish - like the business of voting machines and Jury Service for Women. We have been working since the early 50's for a new state constitution. It is coming up for a vote of the people this November, but so much organized opposition has developed that the outcome is doubtful. If it fails, we will just keep on working.

Mary Like the City Charter, we began that in 1953 and we still do not have all we think the City needs. I will not go into all the ups and downs on that issue, there are entirely too

Mary
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many. The Charter Amendment election this past July resulted in all the major changes the League was seeking, but we need an entirely rewritten charter, - one that is brief and well organized, one that practically everyone can read and understand. - That is what we are after now, so we will work for a Charter Revision Commission. It will take an election, of course, and with the city election just 2 months away, we think it is better to wait until after that is over before pursuing this.

Fran Let's see what else we should mention before we get to that item which has been with us always.

Mary You mean Health?

Fran Yes, but first let me just mention these few things. - In the course of much of our work we had to turn to City Ordinances and found them in such a mess that we asked the City Commission to have them codified. The Commission answered, in effect, "Good idea. You do it." - Not that we doubted but that we could (we have undertaken some mighty big things at one time or other), but it is the duty of the City to make its laws available.

Mary Some time after that the Chief of Police and a member of the FBI asked the League to participate in a two-week traffic training school. Our first thought was "No, it does not fit into our program. Besides, what do we know about traffic?" Then we remembered the ordinances. So we had an expanded unit meeting with the police giving them our findings on the ordinances. The police admitted that they found them completely useless, in fact, they were forced to cite traffic violations by state law rather than city ordinance and agreed to back us in demanding codification.

Fran Later on we prepared the KNOW YOUR BROWNSVILLE SCHOOLS booklet as a result of our "Study of the School System with Emphasis on the Drop-out Problem." - Now I think we had better get on to health which has been on our program since the very beginning.

Mary Do you know how it started?

Fran No, I must have missed that in the record.

Mary It started with the first KNOW YOUR TOWN survey which showed that raw sewage was being dumped into the river.

Fran Brownsville is charged with that now.

Mary That's right, but it is not as bad as it was 25 years ago. Then the sewage disposal system had not been in operation for years.- A year or two after the League started looking into Brownsville health facilities a bond election was called to provide, among other things, for an entirely new sewage disposal plant large enough to serve us for at least 50 years. - Little did we know then how fast Brownsville would grow!

Fran Knowing that Cameron County had the highest incidence of tuberculosis in the United States, the League persuaded the City Commission to pass an ordinance requiring annual chest X-ray examinations of all food handlers, and the school board to have patch tests made on all the children in the system. - 13% turned up positive.

Mary We fought every step of the way for a tuberculosis hospital in the Valley. First, to prevent the Harlingen TB Hospital from being closed, then about a year after it was moved to Moore Field, we fought, without success, against its closing when the field was deactivated; - then when we practically had our hands on Hill-Burton funds for a new TB hospital in Harlingen, another problem arose. Plans were announced for a privately constructed TB hospital in Brownsville, - too small to service the County, much less the whole Valley.

Well, we took our courage in our hands - and don't think it did not take a lot of courage! - We invited our State Senator, our 2 State Representatives, our 5 County and 5 City Commissioners, the president of the Cameron County Tuberculosis Association, and the people planning the small hospital to meet with us in the Council Room at City Hall. - We also invited the press and pledged them to secrecy before and after the meeting. The Herald editor objected to the secrecy, so we said, "Don't write anything before the meeting. Just come.. We trust you to use discretion when you learn what it is all about."

When everyone was assembled, we closed and locked the doors, and opened the meeting. The League explained the situation. The Senator told the fight he was having in securing the Hill-Burton appropriation for the Valley with other cities in north and west Texas clammering for the same money. The others took it up in turn. Finally, the small hospital people volunteered to cancel their plans.

Nothing ever appeared in the papers. Our legislators obtained the Hill-Burton funds and the tuberculosis hospital was built in Harlingen - large enough to service the whole Valley.

Fran We also worked with the County, the City and the hospitals for greater appropriations for the Hospital Care of Indigents. And, in connection with our work for rabies control, a city-wide vaccination program was held and a leash law ordinance passed.

And we recommended to the County Commissioners the creation of a Cameron County Child Welfare Unit. One of our League members, already trained and licensed in that work, became the first director; another member was appointed to the first 5-member Board of Directors. When she moved away, another League member was appointed, and later on, when she in turn left Brownsville, the League was asked to recommend a replacement.

Mary After all the discretion and secrecy in connection with the tuberculosis hospital, I'd like to tell about something that was spread all over the papers.

In the course of our health studies, we had seen alleys strewn with refuse, open garbage cans, overflowing boxes and tubs, - also alleys completely blocked with piles of brush. We asked the City Commission to do something about it and the Commission passed a very stringent garbage ordinance.

We waited a month to allow time for enforcement to get underway and then we inspected 22 blocks of alleys and the police blotter. We found 138 violations and nothing in the way of citation showing violation of this ordinance. A report of our findings was made to the City Commission, the Sanitarian, and the Brownsville Herald.

Two weeks later we went again, tabulated the violations and their locations, the blank police blotter, and reported as before. By this time we had gained the name of ALLEY ANNIES and the title was headlined when we made our third tour and report.

In all this time only 3 or 4 violations had been reported and suspended fines levied since the violators were unable to pay.

With so little attention being given to these periodic and partial reports, a grand city-wide tour was planned: 11 routes were marked in red ink on a city map, 11 cars with driver and companion to direct the way and tabulate the number of each type of violation. In 2½ hours they were all back and showed, in all, 762 garbage can violations and 394 piles of rubbish, brush and tree trimmings.

Mary
(Cont)

The publicity given this report finally brought action from the City Commission. This took the form of a request to the League to devise a plan to remedy the situation. After four busy, busy days the League was ready with complete plans for a CITIZENS CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN which required the cooperation of 24 organizations. Two days later the City Commission adopted the plan and letters were sent out requesting each organization to assume its designated part. Nearly all responded, the campaign was waged, and the condition of Brownsville alleys was greatly improved - as our final report revealed.

A resolution commending the League was issued by the City Commission. - Gratifying as that was, our greatest pleasure was the write-up of our ALLEY ANNIES program in the Political Pilgrim's Progress series in the LADIES HOME JOURNAL.

Fran Think of that! No wonder they were thrilled! - We have made quite a bit of history.

Mary Don't talk as though it were all past. - Remember that old saying: "The world is made up of those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who have no idea what is happening." - This is followed by the question, "Which are you?"

And our answer is: "Members of the League of Women Voters make things happen." - We will continue to work for greater citizen participation in government - for better health and environmental conditions - for better administration of justice - and 25 years from now our children will be sitting together like this telling the people all about it.

The End.

For presentation at the 25th Anniversary Dinner
September 13, 1975

Actors:

Francis - Mrs. Max Marquis, Jr. (Frances)

Mary - Mrs. Robert H. Chase, Jr. (Mary)