

THE GIRLS STATE STORY

(In past years citizens of Bluebonnet Girls State have requested factual information they could use in writing term papers about Girls State. Through research in the files of the Headquarters of the National American Legion Auxiliary, Frances Goff put together a brief resume of Boys and Girls State in the nation and in Texas.)

Having read the preamble to the Constitution of the American Legion Auxiliary (which includes the Preamble to the American Legion), you are fully aware these two organizations, the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary, devote their energies toward "God and Country."

Because of this devotion the American Legion began an effort over five decades ago to educate our youth in the duties, privileges and responsibilities of American citizenship. The Legion resolved to give future citizens an opportunity to learn the problems of government by performing the same duties as real office holders in the everyday world; to inform them of the rights and privileges of American citizenship; and to instill a deep sense of the personal responsibilities and obligations which this citizenship entails. Consequently, the laboratories of practical applied political science known as Boys and Girls State were instituted as a part of the Americanism program of the two organizations.

Boys State was started by the American Legion Department of Illinois in 1935. More than 200 boys attended the first session held at the State Fairgrounds in Springfield, Illinois. This meeting proved so successful that in September 1935 the 17th Annual Convention of the American Legion adopted a resolution endorsing the Boys State movement and making it a part of the National Americanism program of the Legion. In 1936, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio joined the Boys State movement, and by 1940 thirty-five states were conducting these schools of government.

At the national meeting of the American Legion Auxiliary in New York City in 1937, the Americanism Committee urged the development of Girls State programs throughout the many departments during the year 1937-38. However, very little was accomplished until 1939.

Strange as it may seem, it is not a state that holds the honor of conducting the first Girls State, but the District of Columbia. This department could not adapt itself to a Girls State regime because it did not have a state government (the District of Columbia is governed by Congress). On January 15, 1938, they formed a Girls Nation Study Group using Boys State as a guide for the basic fundamentals of the program. During the Easter vacation of 1938, eighteen Washington, D.C. girls participated in the National Study Group at the nation's capitol.

Also in April 1938, the Department of Delaware held a one-day Girls State session in the state capitol at Dover. By 1939, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska and Rhode Island brought this citizenship-training program to their states, and by 1941, one-half of the departments in forty-eight states began sponsoring Girls State programs. During World War II most states abandoned the program due to rationing and transportation problems. At the close of the war the national organization stressed the importance of resuming this program, and by 1949 all states in the nation and the Panama Canal Zone were participating. In 1961, Hawaii held its first Girls State session.

Girls Nation, which is composed of two representatives from each Girls State, began in August 1947. The meetings are held in Washington, D.C., and follow the pattern of Girls State, except the government program is on a national level. One representative from Texas to Girls Nation, Miss Kennon Kethley of McAllen, was elected President of Girls Nation in 1948. The following have been elected Vice-president of Girls Nation: Mary Decker, Jacksonville, 1956; Tanya Starnes, Beaumont, 1970; Tammy Edwards, Houston, 1988; Ashley Chaffin, Piano, 1989; and Jennifer Hall, Buda, 1998.

The first two sessions of Bluebonnet Girls State were held at Baylor University, Waco, in 1941 and 1942. Texas was one of the states to abandon the program during the war, due to the transportation problems of such a vast area, but it was resumed in 1947 in Austin. Since that time and until 1970 all

sessions were conducted in Austin. The program in Texas has constantly grown and improved. The number of citizens has increased from 94 to 586. (See pages 19 through 23 relative to number of citizens each year.) In 1963, the American Legion of the Department of Mexico requested permission to sponsor two girls from their country. This request was approved by the Girls State Committee, and for the first time two girls from the American School in Mexico City were accepted. They were Miss Kathy Beckman and Miss Helen Niven. This program was continued each year until 1977.

A black-and-white silent film of Girls State was made in 1953. Also in 1953 began a series of recordings of the Girls State song and other favorites of the sessions. Cassettes replaced the records in 1986. Girls State printed a one-issue newspaper in 1942 while at Baylor University. The papers were mimeographed from that time until 1952, when there were two printed issues. During 1953 and 1954 the number grew to four and, at the 1955 session, was increased to six. Now, Girls State prints an annual of the session, the Bluebonnet.

During past sessions of Girls State, citizens have been privileged to hear many outstanding speakers other than Texas' own state officials: in 1954, Dean Clarence Manion of Indiana; 1955, Dr. Fred C. Schwartz of Australia; 1957, Mrs. Carl Zeller, National President of the American Legion Auxiliary. In 1958, Miss Bertha Adkins, assistant chairman of the National Republican Party, Washington, D.C., and Mrs. Dorothy Vredenburgh, executive secretary of the National Democratic Party, Birmingham, Alabama, addressed the citizens. Party sponsors for Girls State were initiated for the first time in 1958. During the 1965, 1966, and 1967 sessions former Miss America (1958) Miss Marilyn Van Derbur spoke to our citizens. Marilyn was a citizen of Colorado Girls State in 1954 and attended Girls Nation that same year. Her inspirational talk of "Goals and Dreams" was one of the outstanding presentations of those years.

Another first for the 1958 session was the use of the four flags presented by the Frances Goff Benevolent Fund which was created by the citizens of 1954, Miss Mary Mead, Governor, and continued by citizens of 1955, Miss Wanda Sumrall, Governor. These four flags are the United States, Papal, Protestant and Israel. The citizens of 1959 passed a resolution to add a Texas Flag to the set. This flag was purchased by the Girls State Committee and presented to the 1960 session by the 1959 Governor, Miss Ginger Mead. These flags are particularly impressive during the opening and closing ceremonies and inauguration. The 1958 session was the first, which the State Civil Defense Office requested representation from Girls State to the Youth Advisory Council for Civil Defense, a program that continued until 1962. In 1959, for the first time, counties were divided into precincts. This structure proved most profitable in stressing the importance of participating in precinct elections and activities. In 1964, Mary Mead who was celebrating her tenth anniversary as Governor of Bluebonnet Girls State gave the opening keynote address. An inspirational address, it set the spirit of brotherhood and oneness for the first integrated Girls State session.

Another feature of those years was the privilege of hearing the first African-American speaker at Bluebonnet Girls State, Miss Barbara Jordan, at that time administrative assistant to the County Judge of Harris County. Miss Jordan, an attorney and honor graduate of the Boston Law School, spoke on the dignity of man, a never-to-be-forgotten message. She later represented Harris County in the Texas Senate and was a member of the United States House of Representatives. For several years she participated in our program. She served as a professor at The University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs until her death in 1996.

The 1967 session offered a most exciting day when Mrs. Lyndon Baines Johnson, wife of the President of the United States, paid an official visit to Bluebonnet Girls State. Mrs. Johnson, with an entourage of magazine and newspaper reporters, television cameramen, and photographers, spent an hour visiting with our Girls State officials and later spoke to the general assembly. To our knowledge, it was the first time a First Lady of the Land had made a visit to any Girls State session. We are indeed grateful to Mrs. Johnson for her interest and consideration of our program. Another first for the 1967 session was the meetings of the Austin and Travis County officials with the city and county officials of Girls State. These meetings proved most beneficial in bringing the practical approach of everyday activities in these offices to our citizens. There were panel discussions, as well as question and answer sessions, which resulted in an excellent exchange of information and ideas. In 1969, the city and county Girls State officials were invited to visit their respective officials and offices of the City of Austin and Travis County. The citizens spent an

afternoon reviewing the activities of these offices. The warm reception given our citizens was a most informative experience and deeply appreciated.

In 1968, 1969 and 1970, it was our privilege to have as one of our guest speakers Miss Anne Hodges, Assistant Legislative Reference Librarian of the Library of Congress. Anne was a citizen of Girls State in 1957 and was one of the two representatives from Texas to Girls Nation that year. For many years she returned to Girls State as a member of the staff, serving as Speaker of the House of Representatives. During Anne's college career at North Texas State University, she won national acclaim as a championship debater and in 1962 won the International Debate Championship. Her interest in Girls State has never wavered, and her presentations at these sessions were certainly highlights of those years.

Perhaps the most electrifying moment of the 1969 session was the "surprise" (to the girls) visit of former President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson to our closing ceremonies. President Johnson delivered a memorable address to the citizens on "The Responsibility of Women in the American Government and Politics." He stressed to each citizen that the cornerstone of democracy is embedded in each person's willingness to give of herself to maintain our way of life. He pointed out that, whatever his failures or successes in the leadership of this nation, he had given of himself, no man or woman can do more for his or her country. Mr. Johnson pointed to the newly instituted University of Texas School of Public Affairs at Austin as a true extension of the goals and purposes that guide Girls State.

There have been many other outstanding Texans who have spoken to Girls State citizens. United States Senator John Tower spoke to our citizens during several sessions as well as United States Senator Lloyd Bentsen, and former President of the United States, George Bush, then a U.S. Congressman. Governors of Texas have always participated in this program. Governors Allan Shivers and Price Daniel not only participated but also gave strong support to the purpose of the program. Dr. Amy Freeman Lee, Texas Women's Hall of Fame, challenged the citizens in 1988. A multi-talented person, Dr. Lee was the Chairman of the Board of Regents of Incarnate Word College in San Antonio.

During the Girls State Session of 1972, United States Senator Lloyd Bentsen indicated an interest in establishing an Internship Program for twelve citizens of Girls State. The Girls State Committee recommended approval of this program which was ratified by the American Legion Auxiliary Executive Committee. Arrangements were made by the Director and Senator Bentsen to send twelve citizens of the 1973 Session and three chaperones to spend five days in Washington visiting the various departments of the federal government and the Congress. Senator Bentsen assumed the financial responsibility of housing and expenses of the group for their stay in Washington, and the Girls State Committee paid air transportation. July 8, 1973, the fifteen departed for a never-to-be-forgotten time spent with leaders of our nation. Senator Bentsen was most enthusiastic over the reception of this program and extended an invitation for it to be continued in 1974 and 1975. We are very pleased with the foresight of the Senator and the American Legion Auxiliary of Texas in sponsoring this program. To our knowledge it is the only one conducted for citizens of Girls State throughout the nation. We also wish to thank former National Commander of the American Legion Joe Matthews for his assistance in establishing this internship.

During the 1977 session of Girls State, a sound-color film was made. The film had been the dream of Director Frances Goff for more than a quarter of a century so the story of Girls State could be better understood by sponsoring Auxiliary units, organizations, schools, and interested individuals. The film was produced without any staging of any part of the program, and the filming process in no way detracted from the session. Cost of the film was borne by funds saved during several years of Girls State; the staff, counselors and citizens of the 1977 session; and gifts of friends of Girls State and Frances Goff. In 1989, a forty-minute videotape was made of the session, and again the filming process did not detract from the session. Funds for this video were raised by staff, citizens, and friends of Girls State and Frances Goff.

Also in 1977, it was our pleasure to have four out of five guest speakers who were former citizens of Girls State. All of these young women are professionals and most successful in their respective fields. They were Bea Ann Smith, Attorney, Citizen 1960; Martha Smiley, Attorney, Citizen 1963; Carole Keeton McClellan, Mayor, City of Austin, Citizen 1956; and Sharon Bintliff, M.D., Citizen 1952. The fifth guest

speaker was Dean Elspeth Rostow of The University of Texas, Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs.

Another former citizen of Bluebonnet Girls State who has given many inspirational messages is Ann Willis Richards. Ann's association with Girls State began in 1949 when she was a citizen from Waco High School and then one of two representatives to Girls Nation. She returned to Girls State as a junior counselor in 1950 and 1951; Texas was the first state to have such a program for former citizens. Ann served as a senior counselor until 1955. After graduating from Baylor University, she married, had four children, and became active in political races in Dallas and Austin. Ann was elected to the office of Travis County Commissioner in 1976. She resigned that position to run for State Treasurer and in 1983 became the first woman elected to a statewide office in fifty years. To our knowledge, Ann is the first former citizen of any Girls State in the nation to be elected to a statewide office. Ann, who addressed our sessions for nearly 20 years, often refers to Girls State as her "home base." In July 1988, she delivered the keynote address for the national Democratic Party Convention. Ann served as Treasurer of the State of Texas until January 1991, when she was inaugurated for a four-year term as Governor of the State of Texas. Governor Richards is the first former citizen of a Girls State in the nation to achieve this distinction. A number of our former citizens who have served on the Texas Girls State staff have been appointed by her to prominent positions in our Texas state government. We are all grateful for her exemplary citizenship and the role model she has been to our citizens. At the present time Bea Ann Smith is serving as a Justice on the Third District Court of Appeals, Austin. Martha Smiley was appointed to The University of Texas Board of Regents.

Inaugurations of state officials of Girls State have varied. Prior to 1955, they were conducted in the auditorium where the session was held or at a formal dinner at one of the Austin dinner clubs. In 1955, the inauguration and an inaugural ball were held in joint session with the citizens of Boys State at Gregory Gymnasium, The University of Texas. A survey of the citizens after the ball reflected that it was enjoyed by some but did not represent the purpose for which they were attending Girls State. In 1956, the inauguration was held in the House of Representatives at the Capitol, in 1957, the School for the Blind. In 1958, inaugurations began to be held in the Rotunda at the Capitol, and the Bluebonnet Girls State officials are escorted to their inauguration by their counterparts, the State of Texas officials. Currently, Girls State inaugurations are performed in the House of Representatives chamber. From 1948-1973, The Honorable Meade Griffin, now deceased), who served Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas administered the oath of office to every citizen of Girls State elected to a state office. Since then, the Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court has conducted the inaugurations. In 1993, for the first time, the inauguration was conducted by a former citizen of Girls State. Judge Bea Ann Smith, Third District Court of Appeals, administered the oaths of office to our elected state officials. All of these ceremonies have been most impressive.

The number of counselors and staff of Girls State have grown from twelve to seventy. In 1966, two new positions were created: Associate Director of Administration and Associate Director of Education. The first appointments to these positions were Dr. E. E. Manning and Dr. Virginia Kennedy, respectively, both former citizens. During the years 1947, 1948 and 1949, the Girls State sessions were held at the Texas School for the Blind. In 1950, we were relocated to the Texas School for the Deaf. From 1955 through the 1967, sessions were again at the School for the Blind. In 1968, the school began a full time summer school, and room was not available for both functions. In 1968, Girls State convened for the first time at St. Edward's University, and with the relocation was able to accept more citizens than in previous years. In 1970, the session was conducted at Texas Lutheran College in Seguin. At Texas Lutheran we found a tremendous welcome and extreme interest in our program. We shall always be grateful to the staff of the college, city officials, and citizens of Seguin for their genuine hospitality and warm reception.

The Girls State Committee is the policy-making body of Girls State. The four members are appointed by the President of the American Legion Auxiliary from its membership. The Department President and the committee select the Director who is responsible for the implementation of the policies set forth by the committee. Girls State requires an operating budget of approximately \$200,000.

For the first time in 1985, a former citizen was appointed chairman of the Girls State committee. Arliss Treybig, a citizen in 1952, was appointed to the committee in 1984 after serving on the staff for twenty-six years, -five years as a senior counselor, two years as an office assistant, and the remainder as office manager. Her years of dedicated service and those of other Auxiliary members and former citizens have provided the continuity, which is so important in the development of a highly structured educational program such as Bluebonnet Girls State.

Perhaps no former citizen has contributed more to the Girls State program than Mary Ellen Trahan, a citizen of 1958. Representing Thomas Jefferson High School of Port Arthur that year, Mary Ellen was selected to attend Girls Nation. She has continued to make an impact on the Texas program since that time as party sponsor, junior counselor, senior counselor, and Associate Director of Education, a position she has held since 1981. A teacher of social studies, Mary Ellen has shared her enthusiasm for government, her love for her state and her nation, and her dedication to the education of young people with the citizens of Girls State. Even during the four years that she pursued her own education and could not be present during the entire session, she worked on the program with the director. Her efforts can be seen in the continued development of the education program. From 1987-93, she was also a part of the Girls Nation staff, directing their education program. In her own special way, Mary Ellen Trahan embodies the motto of the American Legion and the Auxiliary: For God and Country.

Music has been central to the success of Texas Girls State. The first Talent Director was Mrs. Nedra (Clay) Ogle of Sweeny. At times she was assisted by Mrs. Mary (John) Lakeman of El Paso. In 1952, Dinah (Van Vandt) Dittert of Bellville returned to Girls State as a counselor. She had attended Girls Nation in 1951 and learned the Girls State Song, which was composed by Haroldene Anne Heeren, a citizen of Nebraska Girls State. In 1953, the first recording of the Girls State Song and other songs was made. Recordings have been made each year since. We have been blessed with some of the most musically gifted and talented citizens who have returned to provide us with many years of fun and happiness through their music. First, there were Rubyrae (Foster) Phillips of McKinney and Dede Duson of El Campo, citizens of 1955. Judy (Shields) Kay of Victoria joined us in 1956, and Rosemary Heffley of Stephenville became part of the staff in 1966. The Girls State rendition of "This is My Country" originated with Dinah Van Vandt in 1953. In 1960, Judy Shields and Dede Duson gave us "We've Got Spirit" ("I've Got Rhythm"). Junior counselors in 1961 came up with the words to "Hey, Look Us Over," and Virginia Kennedy wrote the FED song. Marilyn (Wood) Hill and Rubyrae adapted "Bloody Mary" for the NAT song. In 1961, Sue Merriman of Bay City gave us the words to "Bluebonnet Girls State" ("Over the Rainbow"). In 1966 "One of Those States" was introduced by Rubyrae. "Which Way America" was first presented by Jenay Wilson and Rubyrae in 1968. We added Dede's "Proud" in 1970. Debra Parker, a citizen from Happy, wrote the words to "Texas Girls State" in 1978 using the melody to "You Light Up My Life."

In 1975, Phyllis (Kurtin) Janke returned as a member of the talent staff and Sue Hudson of Bryan also appeared on the scene. Phyllis is multi-talented with instruments as well as piano and voice, and Sue is gifted on the French horn. Consequently, in the Bicentennial Year of 1976, we lowered the flag each evening with taps using the bugle with a French horn echo. Echo taps, performed by citizens, continues to be a Girls State tradition. The sounds of Girls State are many: singing in assembly, party chants on election nights, singing filling the capitol rotunda.

During the many years of the Girls State and Boys State programs in Texas, there have been only three occasions when both governors were from the same high school. In 1958 Girls State Governor Marilyn Wood and Boys State Governor Wendell (Jugs) Curry represented Donna High School. Needless to say, the Valley area was very excited about this accomplishment and declared a weekend of celebration in their honor. Governor Price Daniel was Governor at that time, and he participated in the festivities. Governor Daniel was always an ardent supporter of Girls State and Boys State and never failed to make his appearance during the Girls State session. The Valley was honored again in 1964 when Brenda Cook and Robert Shepherd of Harlingen High School were elected governor of their respective programs. In 1990 both governors were from Crosby High School: Tracy Edmondson, Girls State Governor, and Derek Eagleton, Boys State Governor.

In July 1991, former Girls State citizens, staff members, and other friends created the Frances Goff Scholarship Fund at the University of Texas Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs. This fund is used to provide internships in the Office of the Governor of Texas for students at the LBJ School for the three summer months. To qualify the student must have at least a 3.5 grade point and preferably is a former citizen of Girls State.

In the latter part of 1992, The University of Texas Library, Barker Section, requested an oral history of Miss Goff's life. The historical worth of this project soon convinced authors Lewis L. Gould and Nancy Beck Young that a book should be written about Miss Goff. In 1997, Texas. Her Texas, "The Life and Times of Frances Goff" was published for the Center for American History by the Texas State Historical Association. This book highlights the political and military career of Frances Goff, her efforts to establish The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and her more than forty-five years' association with the Texas Girls State program. The 1994 session marked the fiftieth anniversary of Texas Bluebonnet Girls State. Former and current staff members celebrated the occasion by presenting Frances Goff with a specially designed and crafted Lone Star pin. The pin was set with a star cut blue topaz, the state stone of Texas, and surrounded by diamonds. Girls State also celebrated its twenty-fifth year at the Texas Lutheran College campus.

1994 was a year to celebrate and a time to mourn. In September, we lost our long time director, Frances Goff, our teacher and friend. Our state lost a great Texan. "The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on..."(Walter Lippmann). Through Frances Goff's leadership and example, Texas Girls State will carry on always holding steadfast to her vision and dedication to the youth of this state.

The progress of Girls State in Texas could not have been accomplished if it had not been for the pioneers of Bluebonnet Girls State; the full cooperation and encouragement of the Department of the Department Presidents of the American Legion Auxiliary; former directors, members and chairmen of the Girls State Committee; the press, radio and television; school and state officials; interested individuals; most of all, the local units who sponsor you to the session; and, last but not least, you the citizen.

What does this history of progress mean to you, a citizen of Girls State? It means an obligation and a challenge. Not to those mentioned before who had the foresight to make plans and conduct programs to enlighten us on how to safeguard and preserve the freedom and liberty that is ours, but an obligation as a citizen of your city, state and nation to accept the challenge hurled at you in your everyday living. A challenge to accept and recognize that CITIZENSHIP IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING.

Your Director, CONNIE BRIDGES