



A Voice for Citizens A Force for Change

Celebrating 75th years



By Jan Beran

League of Women Voters of Iowa

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FOREWORD

In 1993 the League of Women Voters of the United States and the League of Women Voters of Iowa began planning the celebration of their 75th anniversary. This milestone was of particular significance to Iowa because it was Iowan Carrie Chapman Catt who meticulously planned and magnificently led the final five years of the 72-year-long effort to win universal suffrage for American women.

In 1993, Iowa League president Abbi Swanson asked me to plan and coordinate a number of events and projects to celebrate our 75th year. Among the plans was a project to document, in members' own voices, their involvement in League activities, studies and action programs. The project plans were developed and a grant proposal was submitted to the Iowa Humanities Board to assist with our costs. The grant was approved in 1994.

Several local Leagues planned membership events around the interviews with their long-time members. Other Leagues went to individual's homes, and to care centers where some of their League foremothers resided. Several of the local League members carefully prepared for the interviews, conducted the interviews and transcribed them. For other Leagues the technical requirements were somewhat daunting, and so I travelled to those Leagues and conducted videotaped interviews, later transcribing the oral histories gathered.¹ Although the tasks were time-consuming, I enjoyed the unanticipated opportunity to learn much about the League in Iowa, its impact on individuals, communities, the state of Iowa and our nation.

The testimonials, often passionately stated, were also characterized by humor and pathos. Clearly, they merited sharing with others. It is hoped that this narrative captures some of the impact the League of Women Voters has made upon individual lives, faithfully portrays the League as an agent of change in local communities, highlights its significance in governmental change at the state level, and illustrates that "in person or online, the League is democracy at its

¹ *The complete video and audio tapes and transcriptions and information from which this information was gathered can be accessed at the University of Iowa Women's Archives*

fabled best" ².

This account is by no means comprehensive. I will open with a brief account of our beginning, growing out of the woman suffrage effort, and highlight some of the events, particularly during the last twenty-five years, of the League of Women Voters of Iowa. For a history of the first fifty years of the League, the reader is directed to the earlier history published in 1969, "50th Anniversary Convention" For a recent history of the League of Women Voters of Iowa please consult Appendix I prepared by Shirley Koslowski.

I am, as is the LWVIA, indebted to Shirley Koslowski of the Black Hawk/Bremer League for her editorial assistance.

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President
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² Editorial, The Des Moines Register, February 19, 1996, p.8

SECTION ONE

Angels and Politics: The Suffrage Battle in Iowa

“**W**hat right have you men to prescribe the sphere of any human being? Did God give woman faculties which she must not use, powers which she must not possess, rights which she must not exercise?” Phoebe Palmer asked in an essay to the Farmer's Legislative Club in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1866. Her essay was the subject of the Farmer's Legislative Club weekly meeting. The Club was to discuss the matter of woman suffrage. To the lawmaker members of the club, her words were of such interest that two additional meetings were held devoted to this burning issue.

That same year, Iowa suffragist Annie Savery delivered a speech "**Angels and Politicians**" at the Polk County Courthouse in Des Moines, becoming the first Des Moines woman to publicly acknowledge that she wanted to vote. She knew that Oskaloosa Senator James Crookham had just introduced a bill containing a woman suffrage provision. What she could not have known was that it would be 51 years before Iowa would, in 1919, finally ratify the 19th amendment, the tenth state to do so.

Matilde Fletcher of Council Bluffs was invited to deliver a speech on woman suffrage in the Iowa Hall of Representatives in 1870, following in the footsteps of Amelia Bloomer. Many women campaigned in our state and suffered great ridicule.

The Des Moines Register on April 8, 1868, featured an article "The Female Lecture Mania" in response to the impressive number of Iowa women speaking on behalf of woman suffrage. Despite the criticism, suffrage groups formed in Iowa: in Burlington in 1868, Dubuque and Monticello in 1869 and in Marshall County in May 1870. They prepared the way for the first woman suffrage convention in Iowa in June 1870 in Mt. Pleasant. There, the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association was formed with membership open to all, regardless of race, color, or sex.

Two weeks later, the first suffrage strategy meeting was held in a Baptist church in Des Moines. And the number of proponents of woman suffrage grew. However, despite their efforts, the suffrage amendment repeatedly failed to gain sufficient votes for passage in the Iowa Legislature.

Mary Coggeshall was a dynamic leader for suffrage in Iowa. She was a charter member of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association, president several times and the first editor of ***Women's Standard***, the monthly newspaper of the Society. She was the long-time secretary of the Polk County Suffrage Society, and acted as spokeswoman for suffrage, addressing Iowa House and Senate committees. Her dedication to the cause provided a strong source of continuity and inspiration for other woman suffrage workers. She died in 1911, nine years before women gained the right to vote. But, she left a tremendous legacy.

Carrie Chapman Catt, the Iowan who led the final effort for suffrage at the national level, credited this strong leader: "Mary Jane Coggeshall is the Mother of Woman Suffrage in Iowa ... and my greatest inspiration". Catt, at the 1890 state meeting of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association, outlined a plan for convening a woman suffrage convention in each of Iowa's 99 counties.

Conventions and speeches, songs with suffrage themes, leaflets, cartoons, debates, postcards, pennants, paid advertisements, posters, pickets, petitions and parades, were used to persuade men to vote for woman suffrage. Although parades were deemed wild and dangerous in the early 1900s, that did not deter Boone suffragists from holding the third woman suffrage parade in the nation. When they marched in 1908, their parade featured a leading suffragette from England and women carrying placards following the town band. The band was all male, of course.

Despite the suffragists' well-planned promotional efforts, the legislation calling for woman suffrage failed to pass in both Iowa chambers during 22 sessions between 1866 and 1916. Eventually it did pass in both houses in two consecutive sessions, but the male voters of Iowa defeated it by a margin of 10,341 votes.

At long last, Iowa became the tenth state in the Union to approve the national suffrage amendment and the ratification was signed by Governor Harding on March 28, 1919. On June 4, 1919, the United States Senate passed the 19th Amendment granting woman suffrage. The language on the amendment had been drafted by crusader suffragist Susan B. Anthony and first introduced in 1878. State after state ratified the amendment and victory was finally achieved when Tennessee became the necessary 36th state to ratify. The date was August 26, 1920, and the deciding vote was cast by a 24-year-old man at the urging of his mother. The scene at the Tennessee Capitol was tense. "For a few seconds, silence reigned. Then the chamber seemed to explode. The roar could be heard for blocks ... Women and men yelled, clapped and stamped. Some women alternately laughed and cried, cheered and applauded, threw roses into the air. A bell clanged. " ³

The League of Women Voters was born in a dramatic manner, and with a deep commitment to

³ Cahn, William, "***The Man Whose Vote Gave Woman the Vote***" *Look*. August 25, 1970 pp. 60-61

the full enfranchisement of women. At the 1919 St. Louis Convention of the National Woman's Suffrage Association the members, knowing that the 19th Amendment would soon be a reality, discussed disbanding once their purpose was accomplished. President Carrie Chapman Catt, however, had a different vision. After forty years of personal involvement and leadership in the effort, she saw the task of educating women voters as a continuation of the mission.

She suggested that a League of Women Voters of the United States would be the "most natural, most appropriate and most patriotic memorial", ⁴ "to finish the fight" and "aid in the reconstruction of the nation" a living memorial dedicated to the memory of departed leaders and the sacrifices they had made for the cause. She spoke from her heart: "We need Democrats from Alabama and Republicans from New Hampshire so that women might redeem their promise to develop an intelligent electorate among the members of their own sex, so that women may use their new freedom to make their nation safer for their children and their children's children. What should be done can be done. What can be done let us do". ⁵

Two hundred members, responding to her challenge, assembled for the first citizenship session of the new League of Women Voters on February 14, 1920. They learned about their government, about their rights and obligations as voters, and about the candidates running for office. They went on to establish citizenship schools. These women, seasoned veterans of the struggle for women's right to vote, tackled the study of politics, the economy and government with the single aim of simplifying and presenting information to newly-enfranchised women voters.

Since its founding in 1920, the League of Women Voters has been a nonpartisan political organization that influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to all citizens age 18 and older. Each of the local Leagues nationwide has worked

- to establish positions on public policy issues through member participation and agreement,
- to take concerted actions that secure public policies consistent with League positions,
- to enhance citizen participation in federal, state, and local government decisions, and
- to increase citizen participation in the election process.

Iowa's suffragists also heeded Carrie Chapman Catt's call for a League of Women Voters. In the fall of 1919, at the 48th and final meeting of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association in Boone, the Iowa League of Women Voters was formed. Mrs. Joe Brown, chairwoman of the Des Moines Colored Women's League, addressed the group and joined in the discussion concerning the need for political training. Flora Dunlap, a social worker who had served as President of the Iowa Suffrage Association from 1912 to 1915, was elected the first President

⁴ Avis P. Carlson "*Trail Blazers in Citizenship*" *Survey Graphics*, New York, September, 1945 p.2

⁵ Louise M. Young *In the Public Interest* Greenwood Press, New York, 1989, p.10

of the League of Women Voters of Iowa. (LWVIA)

Mrs. Fred Pownall of Iowa City, who attended the founding of the Iowa League as a 21-year-old reporter for the *Des Moines Capitol*, remembered that meeting as composed of "quite middle-aged ladies--or so it seemed to me. And they wore very large hats. These gracious ladies could be volatile. But why not? Until the passage of the 19th Amendment, they were not only treated as, but really were, second-class citizens." ⁶

In March of 1920 the Iowa City League of Women Voters was founded as the first local league in the state. The Mahaska County League founded on April 24, 1920 in Oskaloosa County was not far behind and others followed. At an early meeting of the Mahaska County League .,. "members listened to a most delightful and instructive address by Flora Dunlap, a gem in itself because of its particular manner of presentation and its clear statement of the aims, ambitions, and mission of the League of Women Voters". ⁷

⁶ Archives, League of Woman Voters of Iowa, University of Iowa Women's Archives

⁷ "Minutes", Mahaska County League of Women Voters"

SECTION TWO

Snoops and Studies: Local Leagues' Impact in Communities

Deborah Conger, 1993 Johnson County President, wrote that year, "League is not only about the power of ideas but of the reality of teamwork and commitment required to move an abstract idea into a concrete reality".¹ As that League recently listened to five of their former leaders from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s recall their efforts, they heard testimony to the ideas, studies and actions that are the hallmarks of the local League.

During the L WVUS 75th anniversary other local Iowa Leagues considered their beginnings and reviewed their accomplishments. They, too, took pride in their efforts to improve local government, to assess community needs, and in their actions to meet those needs.

All League action begins with study. Study is at the center-the heart and soul-of the organization. Local studies involve ferreting out information by reading, researching, interviewing, confering, and gathering information from other communities. Then the material is compiled and presented in a cohesive whole for League membership to absorb. Lively discussion ensues.

League members strive to reach member agreement on the issue. Consensus is not always achieved, but when it is, a position is developed from which the League can take action. All League studies and actions are strictly nonpartisan.

State and national studies are also conducted on topics chosen as priorities by the membership. Study materials are developed and local Leagues can choose to participate in those studies. Usually they do so. Again, the memberships of the local Leagues come to consensus. State Leagues and the national League gather all those decisions and, based on the well-studied and carefully considered perspectives of the local Leagues, position statements are developed. Every study must have the potential for action. And the Leagues do act on the positions.

Just what does a local League do? In the words of Joan Lucas of the Pella League in 1995, "Our activities have ranged from the ridiculous to the sublime. We've worn hats and sashes, carried signs, put on pins and buttons, marched, danced and sung songs.

¹ **For full information regarding interview participants, program dates, and places, consult pages.*

We've held political rallies, candidates' meetings, town meetings, voter registration events, legislative coffees, and summer picnics, not to mention our regular general meetings and board meetings.

We've written and published "Myths about Housing - the Pella Story", "Sidewalks and Safety for the People of Pella" and bi-annual Political Directories.

We've presented testimony and statements, visited the Iowa legislature, and sponsored a regular radio show. We have observed local governmental bodies, run finance drives, supported bills, bond issues and constitutional amendments, and have addressed numerous service organizations on a variety of topics.

We have taken traffic counts and a sidewalk poll, and conducted surveys on telephone service, swimming pool hours and senior citizen transportation.

We have toured a coal-strip mine, the city jail, the public works office, the sewage treatment plant, the water works, the county court house and the county dump, the Ames Resource Recovery Center, local solar homes, the Herbert Hoover Library in West Branch, and the Newton Public Library.

We have taken action to support local issues: bicycle paths, a community center, notification of property taxes by mail, the highway by-pass, low rent public housing, improved senior housing and transportation, an emergency warning system, a new public library building, our recycling program and a safe sidewalk system."

Other local Leagues have been no less involved. In Grinnell they used skits and musical performances to "hook" the member interest on a particular study--once even composing lyrics to the Fantasticks music. It was a fun method and a means to attract new people to the League.

Muscatine members enjoyed recalling with Betty Smith the many skits they created to share what they had learned in their studies. Those now famous skits were only one way they informed and influenced people. Betty went on to lament the fact that with so many women now working outside the home, time is very limited and members don't have time for as many fun and social things. But, she says, League always gets down to business, studies and acts.

While the Johnson County League eschews skits, they are not above using other means to make their point. After they had studied the condition of the privately-owned city water system, they employed an effective means to influence public opinion. They purchased hundreds of tiny goldfish, then stationed themselves downtown on street corners and passed out those fish to passersby, emphasizing that their drinking water was so bad that fish could thrive in it. They made their point! Change resulted.

Several local Leagues were organized in the 1960s and 1970s. The requirement for organizing

a new League in a community was to do a "Know Your Government" study. Claudine Navens of Fort Dodge remembers that they went around to all the city and county offices to gather information about services, elected and appointed boards and commissions, city and county budgets, and the city library. She recalls it as "very, very, interesting" .

Claudine comments, "Some members had never been involved in government of any kind. It was very enlightening. We published our *"Know Your Government"* booklet in 1975. The efforts of Jan Davis and Jan Michaels carried it off. We were a vibrant and active group. We were somewhat unusual because our membership came from all walks of life. One of the delightful things that made it different from other groups was that we made it very clear that we did not spend our time discussing which cookie to serve. We concentrated on deeper subjects."

Louise Noun, leading Iowa feminist author, recalled an experience that questioned her culinary skills. The story needs to be told in her words: "In 1948 there was rising dissatisfaction with the local form of government. The League had recently been organized for the second time in Des Moines. The then-current government system had been in place since 1907 or 1908. Commissioners were elected. It was inefficient and crony-ridden. A council-manager form of government had been turned down once by the voters. Changing the form of government seemed to be a made-to-order challenge for the League. We got into the campaign. There were not too many of us but this was in the days when most women didn't work outside the home. We had time.

We started out with a big luncheon. There was a room full of women. Jane Radner, editor of the *"Better Homes and Gardens"*, had a fancy flip chart showing the information we had gained from a survey of other cities' governments. It was my first appearance at a public meeting. I had never talked into a microphone. All I did was say, "I want to introduce Kay Stroud". I'll give the League credit for giving me self-confidence and being able to express myself, but I never made a speech.

We started our campaign with great enthusiasm. Kay Stroud volunteered full time on this effort. She spoke to many groups. The labor unions were dead-set against the charter system of city government. It was the East side against the West side. Businessmen got scared. We got no support from them. It was the burden of the League to do the nitty-gritty work. We had to get a certain percentage of citizen signatures on the petition from both the township and the city. The West side was okay, but it was no shoo-in.

It was a cold, nasty, icy winter. League members hunched on down to the East side. We would be out going door-to-door for a whole morning and get only five signatures. People were either against it or afraid to have their names on a petition. It was just dogged persistence during all that time. In a way, it helped us. We were doing educational work.

We invited the 'father' of the council-manager form of government, Richard Childs of the National Municipal League, to speak at the Des Moines East High auditorium. He was a gentleman of the old school, a mild-mannered man. He debated an opponent of the council-manager form.

It became a raucous meeting. He was practically booed out of the meeting. Policemen were all over. Tensions were high.

Mr. Childs went back to New York and told his co-workers, "Those two women are working so hard in Des Moines, and they are going to get beat."

The referendum date was set in April, the same day as the Drake Relays. The opponents were hoping that the West side citizens would be at the Relays and not vote. The council-manager form won by four hundred votes! We really just squeaked through.

Kay and I went on the radio during the campaign. It was my first experience on radio. My mother wasn't much help. She told me, "Oh, with your voice and enunciation you'll be terrible". That was before TV, so radio was the means of communication. So, there we were. Two bright women who could answer every question that callers phoned in. One man called, "Well, you two women seem to know all about city government, but can either of you bake a cake?" You know our feminist consciousness was nil, and we started to praise each other's cooking." Noun chuckles at the memory.

With the adoption of the Council Manager Plan for Des Moines government, the Des Moines League prepared a 'yardstick' for judging council candidates and educated citizens via newspaper, candidates' meetings and a speakers' bureau.

In recognition of their heroic accomplishment, the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) awarded Des Moines League the national Lane Bryant Award in 1949.

Studying city government was League's specialty in the 1960s. When asked if she was involved in the study of city government, Carol Williams of Ottumwa, laughingly responded, "Heavens, yes, but all League members could say they were involved. It took the longest time. After having studied the home rule charter process, we reached consensus that the Ottumwa form of city government should be changed. We petitioned for a charter commission and suggested names of available people to serve.

We held innumerable meetings, and the League was very helpful in seeing that city government provided places to meet to explain and discuss the charter. We studied it. We endorsed it. We went through an election which was a disaster; and lost. Then the League looked at the different forms of government to realistically assess which form would work for us. We decided on the city manager-council form with the option of appointed administrators. League member Darlene Siegel was active in this.

It was finally accepted but there have been challenges every six years. We still have that form of government but we are no longer concerned that we cannot beat back the challenges".

Carolee Kern, also part of that effort, adds, "We learned that we need to work with other groups. We never would have been able to do it without them." Many Ottumwa members, as elsewhere,

drew on their League experience as they were appointed to volunteer boards and commissions in city and county government, and became candidates for public office.

A long-time activity of League members is observing the proceedings at meetings of city and county governmental bodies. Pella League member Marlys De Wild recalls that members first went to City Council two-by-two so that one could 'orient' the other. Then the second member would go with yet another member the next week. All League members were involved. She says that in the first weeks they were regarded with suspicion. They found city government and the way in which it was conducted to be rather casual. They asked for agendas so they could be better-informed, or their interest motivated the council to be more accountable. Her husband, referring to the League, asked her, "Are you sure you want to be involved with that group?" Marlys replied, "Yes, I do!" Another Pella member recalls, "We were sometimes called the leaky women voters."

Gwen Faber of Des Moines remembers that they were sometimes considered snoops. And, at times, League members were even labeled "The Plague of Women Voters." Corrine Chapman, Johnson County observer chair, says, "We were spies. We knew what everyone was doing. We demanded open meetings. Once when I was observing, a judge ordered me to stop knitting in his courtroom."

In other communities, the League also had to forge its identity. The League is nonpartisan, but Barbara Woodstra of Muscatine recalled in 1964/65 when their League started they were thought to be Communists or must have had some ulterior motive-you either had to be Republican or Democrat. Dorothy Forrester chimed in, "They were suspicious of us. At any Council meeting, someone would literally follow you around. Once when we observed the City Council meeting, the poor mayor was in such a snit that he called up all the Aldermen and said those women are coming tonight-you better be prepared. I think they thought we were going to storm the place."

Gayle Sayles, Muscatine, describes the dramatic change and respect the League engenders in League communities. "In the years to follow, they were so delighted when those women walked into the council chambers. That was the pool from which they could ask some people to serve on various boards and serve as elected officials ... we became the people that were generally respected ... people who were interested in doing something for the city or the county". And in community after community where there is a League, League members are appointed or elected to city and county positions. All cite their training through the League as a preparation for public service.

Leagues persevered and brought about change. The Johnson County League tackled urban renewal. At the time, Iowa City residents barely knew what the term meant. There was strong opposition. Merchants were afraid they would be replaced, and no one wanted to change anything. There were still WWII era barracks in downtown Iowa City.

The League went to work on studying the downtown betterment issue. They wrote lots of letters to the local newspaper. They would gather in a member's home and write the letters together. But they always went out signed by the president, Carol Spaziani. She explained the Iowa City situation, "People would land at the airport and hail a taxi to take them downtown. They'd get downtown and the passenger would say, "I told you to take me downtown." "We're here," the driver would respond. There were no trees, no benches, false-front building, housing...

In 1961, Professor Wheeler of the College of Business at the University of Iowa, sparked interest in his class with a model of an enclosed downtown shopping center. Carol tells the story. "It was such a radical idea! But, the Johnson County League took a stand in favor of using federal funds for urban renewal. That, then, became our League position and it was our job to carry the flag for a viable urban core.

We began to talk with all the businesses about the plan. Nancy Siberling rented a bus and invited the urban renewal committee and all our League members to travel by bus to East Moline to see the John Deere urban executive center. She was an arts advocate and she wanted us to see how that center had invested money in art. Nancy also wanted to show the business people the value of art." Carol goes on, "There we were, trapped for 90 minutes with all these men who were against the idea of public art!

We went to all the city council meetings. We were still working on urban renewal in 1966. Nancy Spicer led that effort. It ended with our succeeding in getting comprehensive city planning. Later we worked on Project Green. Even later, as part of a League initiative to get a minimum-standards housing ordinance passed, we went on a tour of places where people lived that had no windows-and these rooms were being rented! The League women interacted with a lot of men leaders. It was a real transition ... a time of real activism. We had more than 250 members then, and three-fourths of us were involved in study and action. We also had an older group that was the opinion makers. We felt we were a real presence in the city."

As League members snooped and spied, they saw more that needed doing. Newton worked for urban renewal, too. At the yearly state conventions, members shared their efforts, strategies, successes and failures. Bonds developed between members that provided the energy to carry on. In Newton the League was particularly concerned about the urban renewal plan's impact on low income residents. Mary Manatt says, "We made a difference for low-income people. We raised and provided money for places for those who had to move because of urban renewal. It wouldn't have been done by the city." Ruth Wormley concurs, "Cities don't often study. They just go in and clean out a blighted area, but they don't consider if there's a place for people to go."

Observing at meetings of governmental bodies, boards and commissions increased members' understanding of community needs. Many League efforts were directed toward cleaning up the towns and cities in their local area.

Clara Denney moved to Grinnell in 1948. She recalls the many unpaved streets and that people

would sometimes have to walk knee-deep in mud when they went out. "We had boards and planks along the streets to help to keep out the mud as much as possible ... the League lobbied a lot for good streets. Another thing that was very bad was that some people still had outhouses. There was running water, but not all people were connected to the sewer lines so the League took a survey of the city. I remember counting how many outhouses there were so I could bring that information to City Council."

Cleaning up cities also meant dealing with garbage. Ames League members' efforts on that issue started in the late 1950s. Jean Petersen says, smiling at the memory, "We had just put garbage on the League program when I joined. We were trying to get covered garbage trucks." Longtime Ames member Loya Getz, who served as state president from 1959 to 1963, remembers being so involved in the garbage issue that the first place she took her husband's aunt when she visited was to the Ames garbage dump. Loya comments, "The League puts government down where you can reach it". Ames League members continued their efforts for many years, culminating in the state-of-the-art 1970s Resource Recovery Plant. The facility was visited by many other local Leagues when their groups studied the handling of waste.

Elsie Maxam, Pella League environmental leader, declares, "No one would go to the city dump alone. You just don't pick up and go there. The places that the League members find exciting are not what everyone thinks exciting. But League members find these things interesting and fun. We've learned a lot. It's good to be informed."

The Ottumwa League, also, was a leader in drawing other community organizations together to resolve the problems of waste disposal. Darlene Peta, heading that effort, used her coalition-building skills to bring various groups together to work on the issue. She developed a successful grant proposal which resulted in a commendable accomplishment in proper handling of waste.

The Sioux City League was recognized for their contributions in securing a permanent citywide Recycling Plant which became financially independent in its first year of operation in 1995. Donna Wooldridge shares some insight as to how that became a reality: "A lot of members worked on that-Eileen Helvig, Mary Jane Wille, Roberta Flanagan, Elaine Seubert. We had been given a \$5000 legacy from Mildred Anderson and, earlier, \$2000 from a local physician. We used some of that money to rent a semi-truck and we parked at the water treatment plant. The first day some people in cars came with their junk. So every Saturday, starting in the 1980s, we'd be there.

We collected magazines, plastic bags and bottles, pop bottles. We'd smash the milk bottles. They smelled horrible. Our kids would be there helping-they liked the smashing part. But that was the start and we had a great time."

Claire Miethke, also of Sioux City, remembers that when she first joined League in 1970 they were working on solid waste and landfill use. "It was rather amusing. I remember talking to one of the city officials. He kind of lightly said, "We've got plenty of ravines. We'll just fill them up."

In Oskaloosa, the League developed an exhibit about proper containment of hazardous

materials and got permission to display it in the large windows of Alsop's, the most prominent dress shop in town. This exhibit and other educational presentations caught the public's attention. The League held study meetings in members' homes and also invited people beyond League membership to attend. The efforts resulted in elected city leaders listening, and the council and city manager went on to work to modernize the disposal of hazardous waste.

More recently, at the invitation of the Department of Natural Resources, local Leagues statewide participated in monitoring and educating retailers about display of hazardous materials. Sandy Waschkat, leader of the Black Hawk/Bremer effort, happily commented, "It was so rewarding to revisit stores where I had done the educating talking with the store manager about how to display and label things. Then when I got back to the store months later it was great to see that all of these things had been done."

Close to the issues of sanitation, city planning and housing is land use. The Dubuque League, according to Bobbe Ames, "... studied land use endlessly, and that has impacted the local community, the state and the nation. A lot of what we favor and work for has served the country well.

We made a bus tour of some areas here. We saw a lack of parks in new housing areas. We worked to change that. We worked for improved transportation, a north-south freeway. We worked for the proper care of public buildings.

All of these things have made a difference. Dubuque is a more attractive city and we have saved some of our historic buildings. For example, we made a tour of the old courthouse. We saw how truly bad it was-there were bats in the belfry, oats stored in bins in the basement. After study, we issued a statement that it should be preserved. There was no consensus among the citizens. The first vote was a split vote. We decided to educate the citizens. We made it a priority. It eventually was accepted. Now we have a beautiful, restored old courthouse, and a very fine Law Enforcement Center there, too."

The Ames League saw their old train depot targeted for removal. They went to work and studied the history of the railroad through Ames. They ferreted out many colorful stories related to the depot and its centrality to the Ames community. They made endless presentations. They designed and wore T-shirts with the message, "Save the Depot". And they, too, were successful.

All Leagues have been active on education issues and in the human services area. Newton is justifiably proud of League efforts to bring about the county's fine mental health facilities. As Loretta Wendt of Newton said, "Our mental health facilities are a great thing. We're proud of what we accomplished. I'm happy with the League. Another thing we studied and were active in was increasing the fluoride content in our drinking water. We were victorious in that, too." As a forty-year member of the Newton League, Loretta was extremely active in those and many other crusades.

Historians consider the 1950s to be a time of rather minimal activism on the part of women. The activities of the members of the Leagues in Iowa contradict that image. Many of those endeavors were in areas of traditional concern to women and mothers. But many went beyond those immediate concerns.

Joan Lipsky, former State Senator and Cedar Rapids/Marion member, gives some insight into what happened in her city in the 1950s, "Women were losing jobs when men came back from the service. We didn't like being put back on the shelf, so we joined together. We had been essentially pushed out of government. One of the things we did in a cooperative way with many other women's organizations (not all, but most) was to join together to try to get women appointed to boards and commissions in city government. Does that sound familiar? We specifically wanted to get a woman on the Board of Education. It was a common practice that when a seated member decided to retire, he would retire a few months before the end of his term and then a replacement would be appointed. That man then became the incumbent and it wasn't really an elected board. It became a self-perpetuating board. People just sat down and didn't do anything. So when a vacancy was announced several of us went to the school board president and told him, "We want you to appoint a woman. We have a woman who is very well-qualified and we suggest you appoint her. And if you don't appoint her, we have the votes to defeat your candidate". So Georgie Nye was appointed to the school board and went on to a very distinguished career on the board. She eventually became President of the State Board of Education."

The Grinnell and Oskaloosa Leagues studied school consolidation, a hotly-debated topic in the fifties and sixties. Mary David Jones of Oskaloosa recalled "I wrote a little play about the changing school situations. We dramatized the League's position that it is time to close the one room school. It was a big success".

School districts examined ways to meet declining population. And Leagues were regularly taking positions, only after studying, of course. Clara Denney of Grinnell remembers, "Oh, the school bond issues were the things. It took three times before we got the bond issues for a new grade school through. In fact, to me, that has been our biggest effort. We eventually got two new schools, Fairview and Bailey. Disappointments came when the time went by and we couldn't get them passed because there was always very loud opposition. Boy, were they against the school bond issues. We had to have a 60 percent majority of the voters who voted for the bond issue."

In 1996, the League worked for a change in Iowa law on bond issues-to reduce the required approval from 60 percent to a simple majority of 51 percent. The Iowa Legislature did not pass it. The League will persevere.

Mori Constantino of Johnson County League vividly remembers her interest and involvement in civil rights and individual rights. She was nominated by Mayor Fred Doderer of Iowa City to be on the first Civil Rights Commission in Iowa. She was then appointed by the Governor to the State Commission. She related the experience, "Fred told me he got me on the Commission

and I said to him, "How come I got only one year?" He answered, "Mori, cool it! It's a wonder I got you on it at all. So whatever you want to do, you have one year". So I knew that I had to get to work. Housing was abysmal for minorities. I attacked it full force. League was hesitant to take it on because we hadn't studied. I said, "My God, you can see it, you don't need to study it ...". We got a printout from the city with all the housing statutes and it included a list of all the landlords in Iowa City.

We picked out 500 of the biggest. We divided the list and went out door-to-door. Each person was assigned ten landlords. Fifty women were involved. We had a questionnaire and we would ask the landlords the questions and fill in the blanks. The landlords told us they didn't discriminate against anybody.

After we had finished the formal part we'd stay and chat informally. Then, after we moved on, we'd scribble furiously what they'd said in their informal remarks. We tabulated the results based on their responses on the questionnaire and to the interview. A pattern of discrimination was evident. We went to work and studied all the statutes in the country and picked out the most salient ones. We considered such things as how many people you could rent to before it became a business, we decided the number should be four. The city council said six.

We had to convince the Realtors in town and the city council. We talked to the ministers and the Chamber of Commerce. We did eventually convince even the Realtors that the city needed a fair housing code. It passed in a year-the first in the state. It was monumental. It was masterful and fast."

Leagues took an early leadership role in the child care area. Mt. Vernon/Lisbon studied the child care needs in their community and were largely responsible for the eventual start of the community-wide child care program in the 1980s. Johnson County began their study of child care in 1969-70 because women wanted to go back to school or work and they needed care for their young children. Ruth Bonfiglio told the story, "We went to the school district and told them what we were doing. The response was, "Why don't you do something about the junior and senior high students? They are the ones giving us fits! Why don't you do something about them? After all, the day-care age kids are still loved by their parents". That added another angle to our study. We found out more than we wanted to. There were 500 instances of runaways in Johnson County. Children were not in trouble with the law, but they were running away because they were abused, or their parents couldn't or wouldn't take care of them. We studied about day-care centers and determined they were needed. But we also held a public information meeting-something the League does well. Out of that came an older teens' study group and that group introduced the idea of homes for young runaways. Ours were the first in Iowa".

Hamilton County League studied whether it would be financially feasible to build a new jail in their county or whether they should just continue with a temporary holding facility, transporting prisoners to other counties to serve jail time. The League concurred that maintaining the current system was best, and shared that information in public meetings. Hamilton County also

studied another hot topic, the privatization of the county care facility. As Bemeta Balsley shared, "We studied it and came to the conclusion that it was the best way to provide nursing home care. The facility was privatized. We were very involved in helping along the way because there was a lot of opposition".

The Black Hawk-Bremer League studied the Waterloo, Cedar Falls and Waverly public library systems in 1992-93, especially looking at services, hours of service, building accessibility, and funding sources/needs. The League membership toured all three facilities, endorsed and worked for the successful passage of a library levy in Waterloo to increase service hours, endorsed the renovation of a vacant utilities building in Waverly for a new expanded, accessible library, and is committed to assist Cedar Falls as that city begins building its new facility. In 1996 Black Hawk/Bremer L WV is studying the libraries of Evansdale, Hudson, LaPorte City and other communities in Black Hawk County.

In the 1980s the Ames League and other Leagues were studying and taking positions in support of increasing government support for affordable housing. The number of local Leagues identifying the lack of affordable housing in their communities prompted the L WVIA to adopt support for increased assistance for housing as a legislative priority in 1996.

In addition to study and action items, local Leagues have been influential in making government accessible through candidates' forums, legislative forums and coffees, town meetings, radio programs and voter registration drives, as well as other voter service activities.

Chiquita Lee of Metro Des Moines and others in large cities distribute voter registration cards to new citizens at naturalization ceremonies.

Chiquita explains, "They are so eager to be good citizens. I talk to them about rights and responsibilities of citizenship."

Each league annually publishes a Voter's Guide and Political Directory. These identify all elected county, city, school district and community college officials by name, address, position, and term expiration date. Most also include information about city boards and commissions, plus basic information on how and where to register to vote, and poll hours for election days. Leagues distribute these pamphlets to schools and colleges for government and political class use, to city halls and court houses, driver licensing locations, local libraries, businesses and agencies, and to others who request them. The Black Hawk/Bremer League makes their directories available to new residents through the Welcome Wagon. Local businesses and banks are usually pleased to lend financial support to their local League for this important community service.

In 1996, the Black Hawk/Bremer League distributed 24,000 new Voters' Guides in their two counties, and are still receiving requests. In the 50s and '60s, Cedar Rapids distributed their succinct booklet, "*How Your Government Operates*" door-to-door throughout the city. Joan Lipsky said, "We went to every household. It's hard for you to imagine the effort it took. We

spent hundreds of hours on such projects. These voter service efforts have proven to be an effective means of showing people how to contact their public government officials and have played a major role in keeping government open and accessible to all."

SECTION THREE

Activists and Advocates: League's Impact on State Government

Working to bring change at the local community level is challenging and relatively visible, sometimes yielding results almost immediately. Working to bring improvement in state government is likely to be more challenging, always requiring a careful, long-term study, followed by statewide consensus, and carefully-constructed strategy. That can take years. But the League of Women Voters is equal to the task. It is a force for change, a voice for citizens.

Ferne Norris, Grinnell member and 1957-59 state president, describes it this way: "I feel that we lay a lot of groundwork and sometimes we may not succeed at the moment, but we lay the groundwork and plant the seeds and eventually it comes to fruition. You can't really say that the League did it, but behind it all, we know that at least we prodded it along quite a bit ...I think that the League does make a difference and I would hate to see it not being active".

Laura Wieman, also of Grinnell, told of her sister commenting that being in League was a waste of Laura's time because the League doesn't make an impression. Laura shared the response she made to her sister: "A stone wears away drip by drip." This is very, very true. I'm sure that we can all remember in the 1950s the state issue for local Leagues was redistricting." The goal was to achieve more equitable representation in the state legislature, based on the principle of one person, one vote. By the 1960s the L WVIA was pressing for maps to be drawn by a bipartisan group rather than by partisan legislators.⁹

League members frequently travelled to the Capitol from their local communities to lobby their legislators for reapportionment. Marguerite Wright of Dubuque recalled her identification with the effort, "We were forever on reapportionment. I felt like Mrs. Reapportionment. We wanted to unite counties so they would be more equitable, and we would have fewer courthouses. We were usually ahead of the public." Mrs. Catt would approve of that! She once commented that

⁹ Jean Lloyd-Jones, "Iowa Voler" League of Women Voters of Iowa, Vol. 24, No.7, 1975, p.2

when the League ceases to be five years ahead of everyone else, its reason to exist is no longer.

The Grinnell members were active in the efforts for reapportionment. Ferne Norris, Bea Wall, Candance Lambie and Laura Wieman all deserve part of the credit for that successful effort, but Bea and Gwen Faber of Metro Des Moines credit Betty Kitzman of Ames for being the leader in the effort. Bea explains, "When I was on the state board I got acquainted with Betty Kitzman who was very active in state League ... she was the one that finally got reapportionment through the state legislature. She used to stay up 'til all hours using her calculator and working to get everything balanced as near as possible... We talked to our legislatures, we really lobbied. She told me what to say. I would buttonhole these legislators, so I'd persuade them and it was fun".

The League's call for maps drawn by bipartisan groups went unheeded. When the maps were drawn after the 1970 census, the districts were so badly gerrymandered that it was obvious to Iowans that something was amiss. The legislature approved the plan anyway. And the LWVIA was faced with a momentous decision. Jean Lloyd Jones, President, L WVIA 1971-74 describes it in the 1975 *Iowa Voter*: "There was the unprecedented hour-long conference telephone call when State Board made the decision to join the court suit challenging the General Assembly's reapportionment plan. It cost \$127, but it put League on the playing field instead of up in the bleachers.

So in 1972, the state League and four other groups challenged the constitutionality of the apportionment. To prepare for the court hearing, fourteen years work and every scrap of mimeographed paper the League had ever produced on reapportionment were introduced as evidence. The attorneys were able to show that League's attention never wavered, and that we had never ducked the opportunity to speak out on the reapportionment issue. The victory was great for L WV morale." Betty Kitzman went before the court and presented the League's plan, which she had developed. She remembered that there was a seven percent deviation in her plan, but that the plan that was finally accepted, developed by Mr. Burke of the Legislative Service Bureau, had only a .7% margin of error. She complimented Burke on his brilliant work. She said, "I just could not understand how he could get the margin of error that low". Nevertheless, she was pleased with the League plan she had presented at the Supreme Court hearing, feeling she had done her best, and she exulted with the other League members when the legislature's plan was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.¹⁰

Since that time, the Legislature Service Bureau has been given the responsibility of producing a plan every ten years that can be altered by the legislature, but which must be approved by both chambers and the governor.

¹⁰ Betty Kitzman sheepishly recalled that after speaking before the Supreme Court she was so pleased and excited that when she went to pay her parking fee and the attendant extended his hand for her money she extended her own and said "thank you very much," she was so caught up in the effort she thought he was congratulating her on the League's success.

Jane Teaford, 1979-81 state League president and member of the state legislature from 1985 to 1992, emphasized, "This has served as a warning to legislators that citizens would take them to court if things are not handled properly." Gwen Faber commented that it was not only in this judicial challenge that the League worked for accountability, but that the League is largely responsible for the fact that Iowa has an Open Meetings law. The League was active for years in the effort to 'bring sunshine into public meetings'. Just as local Leagues observe public meetings and bring about accountability at the local level, they also make a significant impact at the state level.

The Johnson County League and Minnette Doderer, longtime League member and veteran member of both the Iowa House of Representatives and the Iowa Senate, described League's impact on state government at a Johnson County League meeting in 1993: "I don't think you're taking enough credit for what the League did at the state level. We were instrumental in judicial reform, we were way ahead of the curve in state district reapportionment—we spearheaded that! We were way ahead when we lobbied for the term provision in the 1960s. We tried shortening the ballot. We got four year terms for all state offices. We reformed state government just like we did local government! Now we have to work on the Congress!"

Jean Lloyd-Jones summarized efforts during 1971-74, "If I had to sum up the major accomplishments of the Iowa League during the past four years in 25 words or less, I would say: 'Fair legislative apportionment; better judicial system; more accountable executive branch; greater public awareness of revenue sharing and day care needs; making land use a household word.'"

"Mostly we chipped away, we chipped away we got DEQ*¹¹ and the DOT, four-year terms, repealed some incongruities in the Constitution. We have a lobbying corps which is indefatigable. Big, dramatic court cases are exciting, but most progress is made by the day in, day out vigilance of people who know their job"^{3 12}

Other members recalled the efforts to bring good government changes to reality. Gwen Faber of Metro Des Moines remembered being at the State House day after day to lobby for reapportionment. Candace Lambie of Grinnell (state president 1957-59) gave an example of the steady efforts by the League. "When I was state president the topic was introducing Reapportionment. I spoke before the Iowa Legislature and we found that the legislators did not know the word reapportionment. It was our duty to inform them. We sent out 5000 flyers to various people and organizations in the state explaining reapportionment. After some time, a lot of talks, and a lot of paperwork, it was recognized that it was a good idea."

¹¹ *Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Transportation*

¹² Jean Lloyd-Jones, "Iowa Voter" League of Women Voters of Iowa, Vol. 24, No.7, 1975, p.2

The League's study and action process also prompted changes in the juvenile justice system. As George Belitsos of Youth Shelter Services said in 1996, "The League had a huge role in the Juvenile Justice Code under which we are now operating." The Johnson County League and Minnette Doderer rightly take credit for that. It started in Iowa City with an extensive League child care study. As a result, a public informational meeting was held. The large group of 110 who attended prompted the formation of three groups, one of which eventually introduced the idea of group homes. Their resulting efforts "ensured that youth were regarded as more than chattel. The state legislature had not changed laws governing youth since its inception. It was a monumental task." Ruth Bonfiglio of the Johnson County League reminds us, "Minnette deserves a lot of credit!"

In the 1960s, as the state League studied government, members came to concurrence that a Legislative Service Bureau would be useful to legislators. The League was successful in advocating for that bureau which continues to fulfill an important role today.

The League also worked successfully for the passage of five constitutional amendments during the 1965-67 sessions. League members studied, researched, compared other state governments, and then came to consensus, first at the local level, then at the state. And then they went into action. They lobbied. Former state senator Joan Lipsky of the Cedar Rapids/Marion League related this experience: "Once when I went to Des Moines to lobby, I invited a couple of legislators to lunch to talk about the issues the League was concerned about. They were gracious and happy to listen. I told them about our concerns on a couple of issues. I was astounded that I knew a hundred times more about the subject than they did, and I knew that I didn't know that much! So I decided to make a run for the legislature ... I was brought up to think that Father knows best, that all men had this wisdom and capacity, that they could always take care of you. I was taught that I didn't need to worry about all these matters. League taught me that wasn't necessarily true, and that was the beginning of my career in public service.... My broad experience has led me to know that if you know what you're talking about people will listen. Most legislators don't have a good background on issues. The legislators are addressing 300 to 400 issues a year."

Jane Teaford, Betty Jean Clark of Rockwell, an Iowa lawmaker in the 1970s and 1980s, Doderer, and Lipsky agreed that the League lobbyist is most helpful because when the legislators are working on an issue. The League lobbyist can be counted on to provide accurate and current information that is nonpartisan and is based on study and research. **In 1996** the League spoke against the efforts to limit terms in the General Assembly. Because the League had recently studied the Iowa Legislature, and had come out in opposition to limiting terms, League's lobbyist and members could convey with authority the negative aspects of artificially-achieved term limits. As a legislative leader said, "The League is opposed to term limits and they work for good state government!"¹³

¹³ Steve Grubbs, State Representative, Iowa General Assembly, February, 1996

The L WVUS was not in the frontline to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment. But, in 1972 delegates at National Convention voted to add the word "sex" to the categories of citizens entitled to equal rights. Following that action, the League in Iowa was a leader in the effort to achieve passage of the national and state Equal Rights Amendments. Jean Tompkins of Cedar Rapids/Marion dug into her League memoirs and shared this memory, "You see, Iowa was the seventh state to ratify the national ERA amendment ... and we were trying to get the state one through ... This is the memo from Louise Moon, state president to the local Leagues in 1977. It tells us what we are to do at the rally on Monday, May 16, at the State Capitol. It says "History in the making don't miss it!" And we went up by cars and on Interstate 80 you'd find these other cars with yellow ribbons. We got as many other League members and supporters as there were available ... and it was very thrilling to go. And it happened to be Minnette Doderer's birthday, May 16. And there were also two buses from Illinois that came up. They were Mrs. Schlafly's buses, and also a busload of people from Sioux City and Mason City came that were in opposition. But this was a beautiful example of local, state and national Leagues working together."

Gladys Nieuwsma, Pella, coordinated the state League's efforts and worked in conjunction with many other groups. "We printed a lot of material. We spoke to a lot of other groups. We did so many things ... and it didn't pass!" she finished as she bowed her head and wept. "I didn't have the heart to work on it the next time it came around." Other Pella League members lamented the misconceptions about the Equal Rights Amendment.

Jane Teaford also recalled the many things that did not relate to equal rights that were used by opponents to defeat it and that there was so much misinformation about the Amendment. Pat Jensen, Johnson County, represented the League on the state-wide committee during the second effort to pass the Iowa ERA. Although again it had passed in two consecutive sessions of the General Assembly, once more it failed in 1992 to gain the requisite number of votes from Iowa citizens.

Shirley Koslowski of the Black Hawk/Bremer League, a veteran of the struggle for federal ERA ratification, as well as both efforts for the Iowa ERA, kicked off the first League effort in the state for the Equal Rights Amendment as Black Hawk/Bremer League president in 1991. The League went all-out. They arranged a Speaker's Bureau, produced and distributed window signs, buttons (in Shirley's own calligraphy), ERA text cards and even business cards designed by brandnew member Julie Snider. They, as other League members in the state, appeared in marches and parades, they spoke on the ERA at numerous forums as well as on radio and television, and they worked hard to get out the vote.

Shirley recalls, "It was our job to expose the misinformation and outright lies put out by the opposition ... and the outrageous statements about what the word gender in the Amendment

really meant. We're still wondering what some people find so threatening about equality and about adding women to our Constitution."

She concludes, "It was heartwarming to have so many churches and religious leaders working with us, and the bonds we formed with them and with other organizations are still strong. As we think of all those who fought for suffrage for 72 long years, we know we cannot give up. We must be ready to give our all again in another campaign for the ERA. As Susan B. Anthony so often proclaimed, "Failure is impossible!"¹⁴

League members always looked forward to state convention. Members recalled it was sometimes a fight to be heard on issues, because so many wanted to speak. Members showed their relish for stimulating discussion on study items. Mary Manatt, Newton, explained, "Studying the issues before taking positions helped me to learn the depth of the issues in government." During the Vietnam War, state president Nan Waterman was opposed to the United States' involvement. Bea Wall recalled that she, too, wanted the League to come out in opposition to the U.S. participation. She went on, "I think that's partly why I was asked to be editor of the state Voter and to come to the state board meetings. Nan wanted to have a little backing. But she had a very sad experience during the war, because her son was wearing a shirt that was made of a flag. They were from Muscatine and they went into a hotel there, and he was arrested. I don't remember all the ups and downs, but she had a miserable time with that."

Throughout the League of Women Voters of Iowa's 75 years, the League has worked through civic activism to focus on political and social issues important for the citizens of Iowa. Through education and advocacy we change government. We are a voice for citizens and a force for change.

¹⁴ Shirley Koslowski, Personal Communication, April 1996

SECTION FOUR

Friendship and Personal Growth: League's Impact on Individuals

League members testify to the importance of the organization in their personal lives. A sampling follows:

"League was a lifesaver for me. I came to Dubuque in the 1950s from a law career. I wondered how I could adapt to being a housewife with no career. I had a new baby. I thought bridge was wonderful but I wanted more of a challenge. Then, I found the League of Women Voters.

We had tremendous studies, especially on the national level. We studied international issues, we studied the Middle East. We hosted several speakers. Before that, people didn't even know about the Middle East!

We also studied the United Nations. The League was always in support of the U.N. We studied the admission of China to the United Nations. We studied about the Soviet Union, and the League came down in favor of trying to learn more about them and negotiating with them. I attended a national convention of the League of Women Voters. We toured the United Nations. It was an education to study these issues and know what was happening in the world." Marguerite Wright, Dubuque, member since 1947.

In the early 1960s Loya Getz, state president, travelled by train to visit Leagues all around the state-riding the train in the morning, attending the meeting, arriving home late at night. Loya also attended a national convention, this one in Washington, D.C., in 1963. "When I was state president and went to national convention we were invited to the Rose Garden. Let me show you my gloves. I wore these gloves. I shook President Kennedy's hand. I haven't washed them since." She concludes with a smile.

"I went to my first meeting in September soon after I came here to teach in the community

college. I found out that the League was really doing something. Other groups that I had been part of socialized with all the treats but they didn't get anything done and didn't have a whole lot of depth," Bette Conkin of Fort Dodge remembers. She continues, "The League demands a lot. It really is very challenging .. I always got involved in the national studies. Just ask me about GATT or world trade. I could tell you all about those. I got a lot out of the world trade study."

Mary Manatt, Newton, says "Today, the issues are so complex. The League's process of study and action provides so much background that makes government and other issues understandable. Today, sometimes people are not so willing to take the time to do that hard work. I am so happy to be in League to gain the background to be active in my community."

Jean Farley of Sioux City has been a League member since her service in the United States Navy during World War II. Following the war, she married and was active in the League in Chicago. When her husband was considering accepting a job in Sioux City, she told him that one requirement for her to make the move was that there had to be a League of Woman Voters there. Fortunately, for her and that League, there was a League in Sioux City. She states, "I decided when I was in the WAVES during World War II that I was never going to be as ignorant again. That's why I joined the League of Woman Voters when I lived in Chicago."

According to Jean, one of the values to members of the League is that "League keeps members involved in their community-agencies, local issues and problems. Studying the issues before taking positions helped me to learn the depth of the issues of government. Becoming interested in local problems like juvenile justice matters keeping young offenders out of city jail-like settings are important to me."

"Being a member of League spoiled me as far as other organizations are concerns." Elsie Maxam of Pella, says. "The League accomplishes so much. We don't meet just to meet. We tackle substantial issues."

Candance Lambie, Grinnell, comments, "The League has the ability to take you out of yourself, into your community, your state, your nation, to do some deep thinking. I fully believe in it and I think it's a shame, in a way, that the world has changed so much that the younger women are so busy that they don't have time to expend on League or maybe church or anything else. I remember so well the very fine discussions we had in those morning groups. It was educational; it was just like going back to college."

The Hamilton County League, with the strong leadership of Mary Shultz and Lois Grove working with other city and county leaders, wrote a successful grant proposal to strengthen women's rights in the Newly Independent States of the former USSR. Two women, Oksana from Ukraine and Natalya from Stavropol, spend three weeks in Hamilton County as interns with the League learning about democracy and democratic institutions. Community members hosted them to observe local elections, to meetings of the City Council, and to the State Capitol. They visited the court of Hamilton County's only female magistrate, visited homeless shelters and observed programs that assisted abused women.

Equally as important as the planned events were the more personal ones. As Mary Shultz summarizes, "Relations are changed forever between our countries because the visit by our two friends from abroad was such a meaningful experience in international relations. Our community came together to provide a wide range of activities for them ... League members in our community are still in weekly contact with Oksana and Natalya."

Ruth Hamilton, Ames, credits League for giving her the confidence to run for public office which in her case was for the School Board. She eventually became the Board's president. More than half of the female lawmakers at the state level have been League members. League members who have held elected positions on school boards, city councils, county boards or supervisors, or in the Iowa General Assembly, and those who have served on or chaired boards or commissions cite the League as the beginning of their interest and involvement in public service. In fact, in surveys, the League of Women Voters is the organization most often cited by female elected officials as their training ground for public office.

Janet Shipton, Johnson County League, shares a different kind of experience. "I got a new nickname. It was 'Flash'. I would go hither and yon. You see, I was an immigrant and I hadn't been to high school here. I knew nothing about government. The League educated me on local, state and national government. We studied a slew of things, including mental health issues. Iowa was the first to say most mentally ill people don't need to be in hospitals. We found out that patients were warehoused; they just sat on radiators. In the 1970s, the rest of the nation decided to throw them out of the hospitals. We said, let's take them out and manage their care. We studied the problem locally and decided there was a need for mental health centers. I testified before the Board of Supervisors...I read a lot. I learned a lot. I cranked out papers on the mimeograph. I owe all my political education, at every level of government, to the League."

Joan Lipsky tells of the dilemma faced by the Cedar Rapids League. "There was a general rejection of studying things that had popular appeal. At an earlier time there was no treatment program for juvenile offenders in Cedar Rapids. The YWCA held a forum and they were eager to have the League study the problem. Our League members believed that if we adopted a juvenile study it would put us back into women's role. We wanted to do government study. The men would respect us more that way. They were probably right-a study of the forms of government would be taken more seriously."

Teddy Shuttleworth, also of the Cedar Rapids League, recalls that representing League at naturalization ceremonies for new citizens was extremely important for her. Chiquita Lee, of Metro Des Moines, attending naturalization ceremonies for years in Des Moines explains, "It is so meaningful. They want to be good citizens." Chiquita notes that she belongs to the League because, "It makes me a better person."

Mary Schmidt, of the Dubuque League, says that League created interest for her in many different areas, and Dubuque's Bobbe Ames brings this perspective: "My family was impacted a

lot by the League of Women Voters. My husband definitely moved from being chauvinistic to being very much the other way. My two daughters are independent young women in their own careers. They think about things and ask questions, they speak up about issues and they do that because they have seen me do that-and I do that because of the League of Women Voters."

Longtime League members recall that they worked for no pay, yet had careers in volunteerism. They recognize that those jobs were things for which they could have been paid well. But they do not regret those efforts. Rather, they count them as appropriate and rewarding. They made close friends, were up to date on issues, and were an example to their children. As they look back, they remember how League and how League involvement, promoted stimulating discussions at the dinner table.

A third generation L WV member, Abbi Swanson, reflected on years in League upon receiving the League of Women Voters of Iowa Carrie Chapman Catt Award in 1996. "I've been very lucky. I have a fabulous family, wonderful friends ... in these things I have been lucky, but I have also made some wise choices like involving myself in organizations such as the League of Women Voters ... the League continues to take a prominent role in my life whether I want it to or not.

I was reminded of that last summer as I sat, as many of you did, and watched the coverage of the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. I thought of the way the League does business. We don't go out and recommend to people that, to get their point across, they go and kill people. We listen to people, we talk, we debate with reason and rationality, and we learn through the League of Women Voters that there is more than one point of view and that tolerance and respect for other views is of paramount importance.

I attended my party caucus last month ... a fellow was reading a resolution on the 'takings' legislation. I was thinking that this was pretty good stuff. Then after he got through all the 'whereas' at the end, he referred to the opposition party as our enemy. I stood up and said, 'This is the League in me but it is also decency as a human being. I will not vote for this, and I encourage everyone to vote against this resolution, if you do not accept an amendment to remove that language which is divisive.' The offensive language was taken out, I voted for it, it passed. This is partly what the League is about, disagreeing civilly.

What a shame that the people who did the bombing in Oklahoma City thought they had to use bombs rather than words... "

Postscript

When she founded the League of Women Voters, Carrie Chapman Catt predicted that "The real struggle for emancipation is yet to be won on the inside of the political parties." Members of the League of Women Voters of Iowa have responded to her challenge: "Arise, women voters ... strong of faith, fearless of spirit ... and pledge all that you have and all that you are to a new crusade."

This year, the League of Women Voters of Iowa, in conjunction with Cornell College, and thanks to the vision of Abbi Swanson and the skills and commitment of her husband, Jim Freeman, presented to the citizens of Iowa a remarkable gift, a state of Iowa home page on the Internet World Wide Web. It provides Iowans ready access to their state government, allowing them to scrutinize bills and amendments the legislature is working on, and to view pictures of the legislators proposing the bills. The information available includes the full texts of the current Iowa Official Register, the Legislative Directory and more. Iowans, as never before, have the means to inform themselves about state government and to become involved.

In recognition of this gift, the Iowa Senate with the House of Representatives concurring, adopted SCR 114 on March 14, 1996, "recognizing the contribution that the League of Women Voters of Iowa and Cornell College have made to the state, including affording citizens of the state a greater opportunity to access law and legislation and to participate in our democratic system of government." SCR 114

The Des Moines Register editorial of February 26, 1996, noted that "this Legislative Information Server (home page) may be the most important development ever in terms of public access to the legislative process in Iowa. The League of Women Voters and Cornell can take great pride in this public service."

The same newspaper, on February 19, 1996, lauded the League of Women Voters of Iowa: "Shunning empty rhetoric and loaded language, the League's tools are nonpartisan study, discussion and consensus. Its mission: get people involved in government. That the League in Iowa does!"

Oral History Interviews

The complete videotapes and audiotapes listed below along with transcriptions are available from the League of Women Voters of Iowa.

League	Interviewees	Interviewer	<u>Date</u>
Ames (Video)	Loya Getz Ruth Hamilton Jean Petersen	Jan Beran	9/21/95
(Oral)	Betty Kitzman		3/6/96
Black Hawk! Bremer (Video)	Helen Hoy Jane Teaford Rachel Fulton	Jan Beran	3/3/96
Cedar Rapids/ Marion (Video)	Joan Lipsky Teddy Shuttleworth	Joanne Oxley	10/96
Dubuque (Video)	Bobbe Ames Mary Schmidt Marguerite White	Maxine Griep	1/19/96
Grinnell (Audio)	Clara Denney Candace Lambie Feme Norris Rea Wall Laura Wieman	Lynn Cavanagh Laura Wieman Kathy Kemp Joan Mohan Dorrie Lalonde	11/25/95 11/12/95
Hamilton County (Video)	Berneta Balsley Mary Shultz	Jan Beran	2/28/96
Johnson County (Video)	Ruth Bonfiglio Corrine Chapman Mori Constantino Janet Shipton Carol Spaziani	Deborah Conger Pat Jensen	9/30/93

League	Interviewees	Interviewer	<u>Date</u>
Metro Des Moines (Video) (Video)	Louise Noun Gwen Faber Chiquita Lee Margaret McCollum	Jan Beran Abbi Swanson Jan Beran	11/11/94 3/13/96
Mt. Vernon/ Lisbon (Audio)	Jean Tompkins	Abbi Swanson	10/11/93
Muscatine (Video)	Dorothy Forrester Betty Smith Gayle Sayles Barbara Woudstra	Jan Beran	3/21/96
Newton (Video)	Cathi Fouts Loretta Wendt Mary Manatt Ruth Wormley	Jan Beran	2/22/96
Oskaloosa (Video)	Minnie Voigt Mary David Jones Margaret Collison	Mary Palmer	1996
Ottumwa (Video)	Carol Williams Darlene Peta Sara Larson Nelson Mary Gaskill Sally Steffen Carolee Kern Gail Quinn Rosemary Corbett	Jan Berean	3/3/95
Pella (Video)	Joan Lucas Elsie Maxam Marlys De Wild Gladys Nieuwsma	Jan Beran	12/28/96
Sioux City (Video)	Jean Farley Elaine Seubert Claire Miethke Mary Jane Wille Donna Wooldridge	Jan Beran	1/13/96
Webster Cnty. (Video)	Bette Conkin Claudine Navens	Jan Beran	2/28/96

Two additional tapes, "The 1996 Carrie Chapman Catt Awards" and a composite of the 75th Anniversary Events at the State Capitol on February 14, 1995, are also part of the collection.

A composite of excerpts of these interviews entitled "An Informal History of the League of Women Voters" is also part of the collection which is housed at the League of Women Voters of Iowa and the University of Iowa Women's Archives. Three different length tapes are available for rent (45 minutes, 41 minutes, 30 minutes). They are Public Cable Access quality.

Presidents - 1920-1997

League of Women Voters of Iowa

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
1919-20	Miss Flora Dunlap	Des Moines
1920-21	Mrs. Walter Brown	Des Moines
1921-22	Mrs. Dante Pierce	Des Moines
1922-23	Mrs. I.H. Tomlinson	Des Moines
1923-24	Mrs. Clark Daniels	Des Moines
1924-25	Miss Ann Drake	Des Moines
1925	Mrs. Max Mayer	Des Moines
1926-28	Mrs. Clarence Knutson	Clear Lake
1928-30	Mrs. George W. Martin	Iowa City
1930-33	Mrs. Frank A. Stromsten	Iowa City
1933-35	Mrs. Homer Cherrington	Iowa City
1935-37	Mrs. Ernest A. Hunt	Des Moines
1937-39	Glady Nelson	Newton
1939-41	Mrs. L.V. Phelps	Grinnell
1941-43	Bernadine Smith	Onslow
1943-44	Mrs. E.D. Strong	Grinnell
1944-46	Lois V. Holler	Ames
1946-48	Laura DeGowin	Iowa City
1948-49	Mrs. Glenn Cray	Burlington
1949-51	Mrs. H.A. Arthur	Ames
1951-53	Louise Ross	Grinnell
1953-57	Mrs. R.L. Finkbine	Atlantic
1955-57	Candace Lambie	Grinnell
1957-59	Feme Norris	Grinnell
1959-63	Loya Getz	Ames
1963-65	Mrs Richard Chambers	Davenport
1965-69	Mary Dresser Curtis	Mason City
1969-71	Nan Waterman	Muscatine

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
1971-74	Jean Lloyd-Jones	Iowa City
1975-79	Louise Moon	Des Moines
1979-81	Jane Teaford	Cedar Falls
1981-83	Mona Martin	Davenport
1983-85	Janet Adams	Webster City
1985-89	Jean Meyer	Keokuk
1989-91	Joan Hartsuck	Des Moines
1991-93	Jackie Manatt	Ames
1993-95	Abbi Swanson	Mt. Vernon/Lisbon
1995-97	Janice A. Beran	Ames

Appendix I

Historical Time line

Decade of the 20s

The League of Women Voters of Iowa is chartered. The new organization goes to work on

- Children's Issues, and
- Succeeds in getting the word 'MALE' removed from the state Constitution as a necessary qualification for candidacy to the Legislature.

Decade of the 30s

In Iowa, League's successes include a law prohibiting women in public employment. The Iowa League also works on

- Public Housing, and
- Setting up a state Juvenile Court System.

Decade of the 40s

The state League of Women Voters successfully supports a bill setting up the Iowa Aid to Dependent Children program.

Decade of the 50s

In Iowa, state and local League organizations dedicate their time and efforts to the issues of racial equality, fairness in government and clean water.

Decade of the 60s

In the 60s in Iowa,

- The League of Women Voters fights for fair apportionment for representation in the Iowa legislature,
- achieves the establishment of the Iowa Legislative Service Bureau and the State Public Information Office, and
- succeeds in bringing about revision of the Iowa Code to reform the judicial selection process.

Decade of the 70s

In the 70s, in Iowa, a very active and determined League is successful in its Supreme Court challenge to the Iowa Legislature's unfair reapportionment plan. Other successes include

- The Iowa Open Meetings Law,

- Home Rule for Cities and Counties,
- the Beverage Container Deposit Law, and
- the Establishment of Area Education Agencies and the Campaign Ethics and Disclosure Board.

Decade of the 80s

State League successes in the 80s include

- Land Use legislation,
- Groundwater Protection, and
- Funding for REAP (Resource Enhancement Protection Act)

-- and during this time, Iowa's state and local Leagues join others across the country in completing community and state profiles documenting the extent of unmet human needs for food, housing, income assistance and health care.

Decade of the 90s

In the 90s at the state and local levels, Leaguers have been working on

- Universal and affordable accessible health care, focusing on both national and state initiatives,
- Mental Health Care and Funding,
- Household Hazardous Materials public education,
- Campaign Finance Reform, and
- Children at Risk.

Finally, in 1996, the League of Women Voters of Iowa, in partnership with Cornell College, announced their World Wide Web home page on the Internet, offering full general information, bills and daily information on Iowa State Government.

Photo Gallery



LWVIA Fall workshop led by Chiquita Lee 1982



LWVIA State Board: L to R: Donna Wooldridge, Jean Meyer, President 1985-89, Joan Hartsuck, President 1989-91, Mary Curran, Judie Hoffman; Back: Carol Patterson, Gladys Colwell, Sandra McJimsey, Darlene Peta, Dorothy Baumhover



Jean Meyer, LWVIA President 1985-89, Louise Noun, Metro Des Moines & Mona Martin, LWVIA President 1981-83



Jean Pokorny of Sioux City leading a tour at LWVIA State Convention in 1976



Black Hawk/Bremer League of Women Voters Participated in My Wtareloo Days Parade in 1985



Left, Louise Moon, State President 1975-79, Jean Lloyd Jones, LWVIA President 1971-74



Governor Robert D. Ray signing L WVIA's 60th Anniversary Proclamation in 1980, Jane Teaford on his right, President 1979-81



Left, Jan Beran, LWVIA President 1995-97, Catt Awardee 1995, Shirley Koslowski, LWVIA State Board, 1994-95, Catt Awardee 1994



Jackie Manatt, LWVIA President 1991-93, accepting Conservation Organization Award from Iowa Wildlife Federation



Speakers, LWVIA 1992 Convention, L to R, Pat Jensen, ERA Chair, Merle Fleming, State Budget Study Chair, Rosemary Deming, State Health Study Chair, Ruth Gersh, Assoc. Press Iowa Bureau Chief



L to R Janet Adams, LWVIA President 1983-85, Abbi Swanson President 1993-95, 1995 Catt Awardee