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ITS BEGINNINGS  
THE OAK PARK LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Hazel Hanson

1976

PAST PRESIDENTS

<i>Mrs. A. F. Holden</i>	1924-26
<i>Mrs. Guy W. Cornwell</i>	
<i>Mrs. W. R. Stephens</i>	1926-28
<i>Mrs. W. B. Wiesner</i>	1928-30
<i>Mrs. James L. Fyfe</i>	
<i>Mrs. Wm. Bryant</i>	1930-33
<i>Mrs. Wm. Welker</i>	1933-35
<i>Mrs. Wm. Sansom</i>	1935-37
<i>Mrs. I. J. Spiesman</i>	1937-39
<i>Mrs. C. T. Robertson</i>	
<i>Mrs. F. L. Bradfute</i>	1939-41

## FOREWORD

In recognition of the Nation's Bicentennial Commemoration we look backward to review events and activities which, since its beginning in 1924, helped shape the Oak Park League of Women Voters. Limitation in time and missing records have necessarily caused a number of omissions. We regret that all favorite personalities and anecdotes could not be included.

My gratitude to Leaguers Beatrice Huggins and Jean Dean who have helped with guidance, editing and typing. To the writers who will follow the historical trail after 1940 and continue this summary my heartfelt appreciation.

H. H.

"If the time ever comes when women shall come together purely and simply for the benefit and good of mankind, it would be a power such as the world has never known."

Matthew Arnold  
1822-1888

"Matthew Arnold, we have started  
Toward the goal that was our dream  
But we find the road obstructed  
With indifference, greed extreme,  
Bitter foes which we must vanquish  
By a process tried, not new,  
Education, love of mankind  
And hard work will take us through."

Mrs. Guy W. Cornwell  
President O.P. LWV - 1925-26

The minutes, reports and news clippings from 1924-1940 which tell the story of the Oak Park League of Women Voters have been reviewed. The assignment, as understood, was to prepare a summary which might be helpful to any researcher in the future eager to learn of the early beginnings of the local League. In summarizing it is difficult to isolate Oak Park, as an historical review of activities here is but a part of the whole story incorporating the county, the state and national leagues.

One finds no basic contradiction on positions held by the Oak Park League over the years, only a changing emphasis as the program has grown to include new concerns. Although "the League has tackled highly controversial issues, rarely has it done so on a clear-cut party line." The stand it has taken to support or to oppose legislation has been based not on political bias, but on principle and League principles have not changed.

The purpose, the vitality, the discipline of membership plus its educational services to the community have earned for the Oak Park League the respect it now enjoys. Long association is an enriching motivation. One cannot think about it or write about it without pride.

When did the story of the League of Women Voters begin? History of an organization, like that of a person, is measurement in time. We are told the idea was nourished in the Temperance and Anti-slavery activities. When Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met in London in 1840 at a world anti-slavery convention they agreed to start a women's rights movement in the United States.

Eight years later with sixty-seven women assembled, the first convention demanding rights for women was held in Seneca Falls, New York. In 1875, thirty-five years later, Susan B. Anthony wrote a proposed constitutional amendment: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex." Forty-five years passed before those words became law.

The gestation of an idea had stretched over eighty years. Buffeted by disappointment, stupidity and ridicule it struggled to be born. The suffragettes must have loved the cause they served for they exercised determination and infinite patience. In explanation of the stubborn resistance the Christian Science Monitor (12/19/55) points out, "the idea challenged the fundamental concept of man's superiority."

In 1919 with victory in sight women gathered for a Jubilee Convention in St. Louis. Carrie Chapman Catt, a veteran of many hard-fought campaigns, speaking at that convention, urged "the vote not be an end in itself but an indispensable tool for making a contribution to human welfare." Committees were organized. The following year they made their reports in Chicago when the National Suffrage Association was converted to the National League of Women Voters.

Convinced there were no limits as to what they could accomplish, sixty-nine items as statements of principle and recommendations for legislation were submitted. An introductory paragraph explains: "It is not expected that this entire program or even the major part of it will be completed in one year's work;"

yet it was the judgment that the program could be realized in five years' time. Some of the aims still have not been achieved and, like the suffragettes, Leaguers too have learned to persevere.

As early as 1909 a Suburban Civic and Equal Suffrage Association was active in Oak Park. It is of interest to note that issues pertinent today were of concern in the Village in 1916 when a committee was appointed to study the need for movie censorship. In 1917 members of the Association debated the question of a Junior High School for Oak Park.

After equal suffrage became a reality the organization shortened its name to the Oak Park Civic League. For a brief period it was a member of the Illinois League of Women Voters. Until in May, 1924, when an historic meeting was held at the Oak Park Arms Hotel at which the following resolution was adopted: "Be it resolved that the name of the Oak Park Civic League be changed to the Oak Park League of Women Voters." Thus the local League began.

The chapter of our earliest beginnings must not close without words of praise for the dedicated women who forged a new idea and brought it to fruition. They stood up to the bigotry of that time and the hard-won success made their victory more triumphant. Involved intellectually and emotionally they left a heritage that we and our granddaughters must not forget.

With a presidential election only months away the new League decided to begin with that section of the program which would be of most value to themselves and to the community-- that is, voter information.



The opening meeting took place on October 9, 1924 at the Oak Park home of Mrs. E. W. McCready, member of the State Board, an activist with an enviable record in many areas of social reform. Two hundred invitations were sent out and the response was overwhelming. A friendly neighbor offered her home to care for the overflow and where the three speakers repeated the program. A Republican, a Democrat and a member of the LaFollett Progressive Party spoke on the subject Presidential Nominees and Party Principles. Miss Jane Addams was scheduled to represent the Progressive Party but sent her regrets because of the death of a friend. Laura Hughes Lunde who came frequently to speak at League meetings over a long period of years, served as an able substitute for Miss Addams.

The first citizen school was conducted on September 25, 1925 and during that year a Community Interest dinner was held at which fifteen local government officials and community leaders gave three-minute talks. In '28 the advisability of adding the 18th Amendment as a study item was considered. In '31 President Hoover's conference on Child Welfare created discussion and a need was expressed to merge federal, state and local agencies. A motor drivers' license bill was suggested. Also, the necessity to raise the compulsory school age from sixteen to eighteen years because "the machine age in which we now live makes employment of boys under eighteen too hazardous." On October 26, 1931 one hundred new voters attended a League-sponsored party.

No community or people remain unaffected by the march of events. The years between the two world wars offer a dramatic

period in the nation's history. In 1927 Charles A. Lindbergh made the first solo non-stop flight from New York to Paris and returned a national hero. Introduction of the Model A Ford, the first talking picture and the announcement of a new invention, television, soon to reach the market were indications of the limitless resources of American ingenuity. Into this heady milieu, however, crept other events less intoxicating. Across the land troubled voices were heard protesting the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, two Italian anarchists in Massachusetts.

Tragedy deepened in '29 when rural America was gripped by the forces of drought, dust and depression. From the farms an exodus of exhausted hungry people poured into the cities, adding to the long bread-lines, the soup-kitchens, homeless people sleeping in the streets. Prosperity had evaporated. Government problems were monumental as New Deal agencies were activated and jobs pumped into a stagnant economy. Public debate was vigorous yet unafraid of ideas, the League entered in the cross-fire as it, too, struggled to stay alive.

The very earliest membership count recorded by the Oak Park League is 600. In 1930 it had dropped to 414 with a membership fee of one dollar. On November 21, 1934 it reached its lowest point with only 56 members. In 1937 membership had climbed to 174 and dues were raised from two to three dollars.

A state drive for membership was instituted in 1933 and in the contest Oak Park won third place. No doubt many prospective Leaguers were persuaded to join the ranks by the ditty, words written by Mrs. Guy W. Cornwell and sung to the tune of On Wisconsin.

"On Oak Parkers, on Oak Parkers,  
 Let us forge ahead.  
 We must get a thousand members,  
 Make our good work spread,  
 On Oak Parkers, on Oak Parkers,  
 Show the world we're right.  
 Work, Leaguers, work!  
 And we'll win this fight."

Membership dues have never covered total expenditure, as the sources of support for the county, state and national leagues originate at the local level. In 1937 the budget estimate was \$860.00. As the concept of a finance drive had not been instituted, to meet the budget the League conducted Book, Food, Christmas Card and Rummage Sales. Silver teas were held, style shows, also benefit card parties and a number of movies at the Lamar Theater. The desire to think positively and look on the bright side apparently motivated sponsorship in 1925 of a benefit play, Pollyanna, performed by the Marion Players at the Warrington Theater, located at South Boulevard and Marion Street. In 1934 a chain luncheon arrangement was tried which brought over \$100.00 into the League treasury.

In Oak Park the impact and early success of the League was due in part to the cooperation of other community organizations, primarily the Nineteenth Century Woman's Club in whose lovely building, completed in 1930, the League held day-long monthly meetings including luncheons. "It was the desire of both organizations to introduce Oak Park women to a vista of greater civic activity." Public buildings were open for League meetings, such as the Village Hall, libraries and schools.

Generous assistance also came from the churches. Full day meetings usually scheduled in December, co-sponsored with the

Woman's Church Federation, plus the Council of Jewish Women in 1928, were held at one of the following locations: First Baptist, First and Pilgrim Congregational, First and Euclid Methodist, First Presbyterian and the Universalist. The joint meetings began on December 9, 1926. In keeping with the spirit of Christmas the sessions became known as Peace Programs.

The subject for discussion was usually international in scope as indicated by such captions as: Agencies Working for Peace, The Kellogg Peace Pact, American Disarmament, War Debts and Reparations, China and Japan - Bringing the World Together, The Problem of the Jew, Danger Points in the World, and in 1942 League members and church women learned of the desperate plight of the Refugees.

Many prominent men and women speakers came to help give information and leadership. Louise Leonard Wright, Dr. Harry Gideonese, Clark Eickelberger, Rabbi Louis Mann, Mrs. Clifton Utley, Dr. Walter Laves and Professor James Yard are on this distinguished list.

In December 1936 Frederick J. Libby, one of the founders of the National Council for Peace, was the speaker. He said the Versailles Treaty harbored the seeds of another war. He deplored the action by French munition makers opposing efforts toward peace and reconciliation in Europe. "If we cannot prevent war," said Mr. Libby, "we must not become involved no matter how alluring the slogans. The struggle is actually for economic power. We can help other countries by refusing to become an arsenal for them."

Speaking at the morning session, Dr. Rufus Bowman, President of Bethany Seminary in Chicago, had this to say about World War I: "We mourn ten million killed, three million missing, millions more wrecked in health while at the same time we recognize 25,000 new millionaires. In the aftermath of war Democracy itself emerges the chief casualty."

To further world cooperation the League lobbied against restrictive trade policies. It endorsed the Kellogg Briand Peace Pact and the World Court. "If countries need courts for themselves, it is evident they need courts to settle questions arising in regard to their relationship with each other." The League failed to give total support to the League of Nations, later to acknowledge regret after this brave attempt at international organization failed.

Action on legislation by the local League was perhaps less coordinated during this period than it is now. Not until the late thirties is there record of a legislative report at an annual meeting. Yet members were urged to write letters, send telegrams and talk to their legislators. In 1929 the Multilateral Treaty, a forerunner of Dumbarton Oaks and the United Nations, was endorsed as was Senator Gerald P. Nye's request in 1935 for \$100,000 to continue the munition inquiry. The League supported aid to Loyalist Spain in '38 and urged cancellation of old neutrality laws "which by no means expressed neutrality." The League opposed a national referendum on the war.

In 1937 May Estelle Cook, chairperson on foreign policy, with some discouragement writes: "We are willing to admit that

we haven't yet made much impression on the United States Senate. In spite of our desire to prevent war by cooperating with other nations to remove the causes of war and to establish peace, Congress is still unable to see that necessity."

League activists today may hold a faulty impression that thirty or forty years ago membership was less demanding. From the beginning the League of Women Voters has been soundly structured with program for study and action. Membership has demanded physical as well as mental stamina.

At local annual meetings as at National and State Conventions there has often been protest against adoption of too weighty a program, the result of which tends to departmentalize the organization; members of a committee study and may become proficient in only one area of interest. In the 1930's the Oak Park League attempted to correct this situation by scheduling reports from chairpersons at the morning sessions before the luncheon. These thoughtful reports reveal how blessed Oak Park has been with women of rare capability.

In defense of the loaded program it must be recognized that some problems defy time and solution. Leaguers are persistent. Many new concerns arise and thus the program expands. Leagues with large memberships such as Oak Park have an advantage in division of work load.

The slow pace of progress, however, activated a group of Oak Park Leaguers in 1941 when they organized themselves as "Clamor Girls." The purpose was to limit their concentration to only three issues and then raise clamor. The local press

took notice: "The Clamor Girls of the League of Women Voters closed their busy season with a gala party at the Oak Park Club on May 29. The occasion was one dizzy whirl with exciting accounts of legislative clout. An enthusiastic review of the past year's program was presented by Mrs. E. W. Huggins, one of the League's legislative experts."

League concern for effective legislation in the field of Welfare began in the '20's, outran the decade of the '30's and continues today. At all levels of government the League campaigned for a Constitutional Amendment as a protection against child labor. The campaign started in 1924. Illinois did not ratify until 1933. The amendment was never adopted as it failed to receive ratification by 36 states. The battle for Mothers' Pensions and the Eight-Hour Day for Women, first introduced in 1910, also outran the '30's.

In 1934 the League supported the Baby Blindness Bill making the use of silver nitrate at birth mandatory. It promoted the requirement of a license for boarding houses and child welfare agencies, plus an adoption law which would remove any reference to "illegitimacy." A bill providing for a State reformatory for women had passed in 1919, yet appropriations for it were defeated numerous times until in 1927 when Leagues joined with other groups and helped establish a reformatory for women at Dwight. This involvement prefaced a wide study of detention, prisons, the whole gamut of courts and equal justice in Illinois.

In its study of the Court System at this time the Oak Park League is indebted to Anna W. Ludlow, State Welfare Chairperson, able and knowledgeable in many areas, who came to speak at

numerous meetings over a period of years. Leaguers visited the courts and detention facilities. During one visit to the Juvenile Court where Judge Mary M. Bartelme presided, she urged the creation of a boarding system for delinquent and dependent children. "Let us board rather than hoard our children," she pleaded.

The League opposed the bonding system as discriminatory against the poor. It felt that severity of punishment only increases the volume of crime. It advocated trained personnel, judges assisted by social workers and psychiatrists, to deal with the juvenile delinquent. Members toured the School for Boys at St. Charles and were shocked over the treatment the boys received. In 1939 dependents were housed with hardened delinquents.

Skeptical of the prevailing political climate in Oak Park, the League first opposed the establishment of a Municipal Court. Later, in 1954, it endorsed the plan. The Municipal Court supplanted a Magistrate Court system. Through the Gateway Amendment the Municipal Court was dissolved in 1964 and a Circuit Court established.

The crusade for the right of women to serve on juries began in the mid-twenties but legislation was not won until eighteen years later. In this battle the Oak Park League quite by accident held the spotlight. The story began in 1925 when Hannah Beye Fyfe, a prominent Oak Parker and active Leaguer, received a letter addressed to H. B. Fyfe. This letter contained a summons to jury duty. Mrs. Fyfe answered the summons yet because of her



sex was denied the right to serve. Using this denial as a test case legal proceedings were started.

Opposition to women jurors is somewhat difficult to explain. The Wyoming Territory voted Woman's Suffrage without resistance, yet women sitting as jurors in judgment over men met stiff opposition. According to the Christian Science Monitor, "Women jurors became such a terror to evil-doers that a stampede began among them and many left the state forever."

In 1930 women were serving on juries in twenty-one states. Judge Florence Allen, an advocate, had this to say, "Women on juries will double the chance of getting good juries. They will never play cards or throw dice to decide the vote. We have in Illinois today women lawyers, women court attendants and women judges. Their exclusion from jury duty is an anachronism in this 20th century."

In preparation or training for jury duty a creative program was presented by the local League on October 18, 1939, when a mock trial was conducted. To give credence as well as prestige, Justice Joseph Burke from the Appellate Court of Illinois presided. It was a personal injury case. Local attorneys offered their expertise, one for the plaintiff, another for the defendant. Leaguers participated as plaintiff, defendant, bailiff, deputy and jurors.

With skill and resourcefulness Leaguers have poured originality into programming. Learning need not be dull. Games, polls, contests motivated interest. Before the television era and recent promotion of visual aids the League had already moved

in that direction. Oak Park members took part in radio broadcasts over stations WJJD and WBBM sponsored by the State League. In the 1950's over WOPA Oak Park broadcast its own original programs, Listen and Learn with the League and At Home with the Herricks.

To give pleasure and entertainment before the afternoon lectures musical numbers were offered by members. Sometimes outside talent was solicited. On May 10, 1928, "Miss Violet Code, prima donna in the operetta The Love Call, playing at a Chicago Loop theater, gave a delightful group of songs which were enthusiastically received."

Mrs. Guy W. Cornwell added script-writing to the many talents she offered during her active membership. It is unfortunate that these scripts were not preserved. Some were set to music. One-act plays were presented at the High School and to outside organizations.

The Economic Depression which began earlier on the prairies moved relentlessly to envelope the Nation. Measuring poverty and despair in human terms, League concern widened beyond the welfare of women and children to include all people in need. "Relief conditions were at an emergency state." Appeals for action were sent to Governor Henry Horner. In '32 the League supported adoption of the Illinois Relief Commission, although it advocated federal responsibility, and helped formulate the Social Security legislation of 1935.

The League of Women Voters stood behind the government's drive to end unemployment. "With every billion dollars spent a

million men will be put back to work." Not bound by stereotyped attitudes it conducted a study of unemployment insurance, of co-operatives and a program of federal Aid to Dependent Children.

It investigated poverty in the Village. The West Town branch of the Illinois Employment Service reported 500 employable people on relief in Oak Park. Employers took advantage of the surplus labor market in wages, hours and conditions of work. A lay council was recommended by the Employment Service "to bring employers to time. There are a number in Oak Park who need that sort of discipline."

In November '31 the League did an extensive survey of women workers in the Village. Forty establishments were visited. The questions asked ranged from number of working hours, wages paid and practice of hiring as related to race and creed. The League learned that 50 percent of the laundresses employed were black with a pay scale from 25 to 50 cents an hour. Women working in dime stores and small shops earned \$12.00 a week working eight hours daily and ten hours on Saturday. In the four hotels wages were \$50.00 a month, not including room and board. Race and creed were considerations in hiring. At the employment agencies the survey committee were told that the call for domestic help had dropped about one third of what it was two years before. "An advertisement offering a position paying \$10.00 a week brought replies from women who formerly were stenographers, office clerks, factory workers and salespeople." Housewives who could afford outside help took advantage of the desperate need for employment. "Wages fell as low as \$3.00 a week."

The League recognized teachers as wage earners and included them in the survey.

Labor unrest and a strike at Republic Steel Company in 1937 that resulted in what is now referred to as the Memorial Day Massacre moved the League to study the Labor movement. It was not only the brutality of the Chicago Police Force but its total ignorance of the rights of Labor which was appalling. The League supported an amendment to the National Labor Relations Act which protects the right of Labor to bargain collectively.

A Forum on Housing was held on December 12, 1934. The possibilities and weaknesses of public housing were reviewed by authorities from the State and Metropolitan agencies. Mr. D. E. Mackelman, executive director of Public Housing in Chicago, was one of the speakers. Leaguers toured through wretched conditions of housing on the South side. In conversation with people living there they learned of "the unbelievable cruelty of the police toward the Negroes."

In its determination to improve quality of life and remove social inequities the League had strong support. Generous with time and information, speakers came to share their deep concern-- Julia Lathrop, nationally known pioneer in welfare administration; Charlotte Carr, director of famous Hull House; Emily Taft Douglas, talented wife of the Senator; Lillian Herstein, prominent Chicagoan, active in the Garment Workers' Union; Florence Fifer Bohrer, Leaguer, only woman to be senator in Illinois and daughter of a former governor, Joseph W. Fifer; and Mrs. W. W. Ramsey, vice-president of the Illinois League of Women Voters, "one of the most beloved speakers throughout the state."

"The blessings of liberty must be paid for through taxation," said Laura Hughes Lunde, member of the State Board. "A fundamental difficulty in Illinois is the taxing disparity set up in the 1870 Constitution. We need to build a modern tax system to compensate for the neglect of over a hundred years."

The League supported the Retailers' Occupational Tax in '31 though in principle it opposed a sales tax. Yet mindful that relief expenditures added to the rising cost of government it began a study of assessment procedures, taxes, revenues, appropriations and efficient administration. In '31 the Oak Park League was represented in Springfield to give active support to bills for the reorganization of assessment machinery in Cook County.

In 1939 in more than 43 states where legislatures were in session a Merit System was recommended. The campaign for better government personnel in Illinois began in 1934, yet Civil Service for public employees advocated by the League was not adopted before '55. In promotion of the Merit System the Oak Park League entered a nation-wide slogan contest, but did not win. The slogan judged best was: "Find the man for the job, not the job for the man," which by today's consciousness would be considered chauvinistic.

In the '30's with all jobs at a premium the League held the position that ability should be the criterion and it moved to protect the right of married women to hold paying positions. In '39 the League worked to defeat proposed legislation which would prohibit wives of men making \$1,500 or more annually from having

remunerative jobs. In 1940 the Oak Park League took a stand for academic freedom when a local teacher was not reappointed because of "unconventional dress and a desire to dance."

New leaguers may be surprised to learn that one of the first committees set up by the State League was that of Equal Status and Uniform Laws. Yet until recently the League did not endorse the removal of discrimination against women by means of a constitutional amendment. It judged the suggested proposals might jeopardize certain protections already won. This argument in 1976 is still used by the opposition. The League of Women Voters now supports the Equal Rights Amendment.

The League has always encouraged women to become active politically and to run for political office. Mrs. Dorothy Charlton Kerr was honored at a luncheon in May 1927 as a newly elected Village Trustee.

Laura Hughes Lunde, who carried the Education portfolio for the State League, was Oak Park's inspired, guiding spirit in the study of schools and education. She was the headline speaker on many occasions. In '39 at a Citizenship School she had this to say, "Government cannot survive without an intelligent citizenry--it is fundamental to educate just as a matter of self-preservation." She pointed out the disparity of taxes between the districts and the state's responsibility in providing education of standard quality for every child.

The League worked for the consolidation of school districts and a State Board of Education. It supported teachers' tenure and higher standards in training. It promoted improved methods

in conducting School Board Elections. It endorsed increased state aid with the insistence that monies be spent wisely and accounts be audited. In 1937 it studied the need for a free public Junior College for Oak Park. In 1939 it adopted a resolution opposing "the use of public funds for private school purposes--a stand later upheld by the Supreme Court of Illinois."

Although the League approached school problems with organized thoroughness, teaching methods and subject matter were left to the professionals. That policy may have changed over the years as new, young Leaguers, recent college graduates with small children, now comprise the bulk of active members in Oak Park. They share ideas as to the value of a racially integrated school system. They are familiar with new innovations and hold quality of education first in their priority of interests.

As a reviewer one would be remiss in not spotlighting Mrs. William Bryant who moves through the pages of these records with purpose and vitality. To her the League of Women Voters was an effective vehicle for constructive expression. Although president of the Cook County League and State Board member she was ever mindful of improving the structure and efficiency of government in Oak Park.

There were problems on the home front. "Deep channeling had been recommended for the Des Plaines River." The Village incinerator was worn out. Flooded basements indicated need for a more adequate sewer system. A \$50,000 bond issue for a branch library must be supported. During the local election in '27 a comprehensive lighting system was an issue and "with the expressway moving westward changes should be anticipated."

In the Health Department "personnel had remained the same for fifteen years." It was felt that greater attention should be given to the prevention of disease. As early as '25 the Oak Park League examined laws pertaining to hygiene and social diseases. In 1937 news reports across the country showed that deaths had resulted from the distribution and use of sulfanilamide. At a League session Mrs. Orville N. Foreman, State Board member, expressed her indignation. "Two things stand out in this elixir episode," she said. "First, the only penalty which the law now provides is a \$100 fine for wrong labeling, certainly not a deterrent in itself. Second, in order to prevent such deaths the law must be tightened much more than is suggested at present." In 1938 the League studied the provisions of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. In '39 it conducted an institute on the subject of National Health.

To every committee Mrs. Bryant offered help and encouragement. She worked tirelessly to reform State Election laws. Statutes had been accumulating since 1818. The League supported codification, also the short ballot and voting machines "as neat and clever in its field as the motor car on the road."

Permanent registration was another reform needed. Periodic registration had allowed for "chicanery and fraud." In 1934 the Oak Leaves paid tribute. "The publicity the League received in its promotion of permanent registration should give courage to all citizens. It proves that a small, well-informed, high-minded and energetic organization can make an impression on our vast democratic government." Credit for the adoption of permanent



registration in Illinois belongs to a small committee "representative of the League's ablest strategists and persuaders" of whom Emily Bryant was one.

In '35 the Oak Park League suggested that planning for the future of the Village begin and that a Manager form of government be instituted. It was not until 1951 that permissive legislation was passed in Springfield. Mrs. Bryant played a leading role in establishing Manager government in Oak Park.

The local League inaugurated a "Know Your Town" study in 1938. Members visited government departments in the Village. They inquired about milk inspection, more effective garbage and rubbish disposal, the possibility of track removal on Chicago Avenue, the substitution of trolley buses for streetcars and health inspection in the schools. In an interview with Mr. J. A. Howe, the Village president, discussion centered on a proposed Plan Commission. Mrs. Francis Baldwin edited the findings of a later study and a book, Oak Park, the World's Largest Village, was published in 1951.

In the early '30's the League examined the Griffenhagen Report on Local Government and gave careful attention to the Township organization. At that time there were 1,436 townships in the 102 counties in Illinois. The League advocated consolidation for the sake of efficiency, also wiping out the offices of township collectors and assessors.

To the average Oak Park citizen the League of Women Voters was identified then as it is now with its long record in Voter's Service, such as pre-election booths and distribution of

publications, mock conventions and candidates' meetings, registration and "get out the vote" campaigns, schools for judges and demonstrations of voting machines. The League then as it does now also served the community through a speakers' bureau and by helping the Girl Scouts in attainment of their government badge. Its nonpartisan stand as to political parties and candidates was and is respected.

Accepted by the community as a reliable source of information on elections and issues, the philosophy of the League of Women Voters is best understood by members who have helped sustain the organization. Basic education is for those who care and work to understand. It is they who can look backward over an enviable record and with deep appreciation for the gallant women who have served the League and with service have enlightened and inspired.

Hazel Hanson

March 1976

SOME HISTORICAL DATA  
IN CONNECTION WITH  
THE OAK PARK COUNCIL ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

For a number of years (the 1930's through the 1950's) the League maintained direct affiliation with the Oak Park Council on International Affairs through its study group, known as No. 6 in the Council. However, we often used as our focus of study the program recommended by the National League which included such items as: The Lend-Lease Bill (a proposal to lease to the U.S.S.R., before we entered World War II, a specified number of fighter planes), organization of the United Nations, U.S. Reciprocal Trade Agreements, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The League participated actively in making arrangements for the annual meeting and forum sponsored by the Oak Park Council on International Affairs. This was one of the highlights of the year, and was at that time a two-day event, beginning with a banquet on one evening and an outstanding speaker as well as an elaborate exhibit set up by the Library of International Relations of Chicago, and continuing the next day with prominent speakers and discussion groups. This occasion received much publicity and drew several hundred people, many from surrounding suburbs.

Among League members who were active in conducting our monthly study groups were Miss May Estelle Cook, Mrs. William Wiebe, and Miss Helen Burget.

Among some of the old League records, a treasured letter came to light written by Mrs. Henry W. Austin (in her own handwriting) dated February 11, 1938, and addressed to Mrs. Guy Cornwell,

one-time president of the Oak Park League, in which she describes in great detail how the Oak Park Council on International Affairs came into being. It reads:

Dear Mrs. Cornwell,

In '27 or '28 Mrs. McCready (E. W.) invited some members of the State Board (LWV) and about fifteen women from Oak Park to her home for a luncheon. The Oak Park group decided to form a study group of International Affairs. I was asked to be chairman of the group.

The group was not limited to members of the League, nor did they follow each year the League's outlines for study. They constantly used the literature made available, and such as they could procure from the League of Nations Association, the Cause and Cure of War Committee, the Foreign Policy Association of New York, and other such agencies.

I was asked about this time to be chairman of The Committee on International Affairs (tho it had another name - a long name I've forgotten). Under that Committee we organized other study groups of twenty-five members each, which met in the members' homes once a month and usually had a member lead the study for the day. We felt the great value of the group was having the members themselves take the leadership in the programs. There were small dues, just enough to carry postage for the monthly notices. The organization was most informal - merely a chairman, a secretary-treasurer, and a program committee.

As the groups grew in numbers and interest, we felt we should have a project of some kind. So, joining with the Association of Women in the First Congregational Church, the combined groups planned and executed an Institute on International Affairs. Both the church groups and the League groups worked unceasingly for the success of the Institute. There was continued growth in the project; beginning with one day's program it grew to a three-day program, the last day being devoted to a Junior Institute made up of High School students and selected delegates from the 7th and 8th grades. This we considered a great work.

We have interested other organizations in the Institute such as the Service Clubs, all the local Women's Clubs, all the Church Societies, the Association of University Women, the Business and Professional Women's organizations, Girl Scouts, etc., etc.

With all these other organizations interested we formed a Council on International Affairs made up of delegates from the original two (i.e., the League and the Women of First Congregational Church) and all these other allied organizations. This Council does 2 things: 1st, The Institute; 2nd, it forms new groups for study. The Institute is going well each year and we have 14 study groups.

Mrs. Paul Fox is Chairman of the Council, and Miss May Cook is Chairman of the Study classes.

I trust, Mrs. Cornwell, this will help you in your writing.

Most sincerely,

EDNA AUSTIN

A yellowed clipping from one of the local papers tells of the Seventh Annual Institute on International Affairs held at the Nineteenth Century Club on October 26, 1938, in two sessions, one at 10 a.m. and one at 2 p.m., with a buffet luncheon served in between sessions. Speakers on that occasion were Carroll Binder, well-known Foreign Correspondent for the Chicago Daily News, whose topic was "What's the Next Move in World Affairs;" Dr. William A. Biddle, writer, who spoke on "Democracy in a World of Propaganda;" and Dr. Charles W. Gilkey, popular Dean of the University of Chicago Chapel, who chose, "Bridges Into the New Order."

Compiled by Bea Huggins

November 7, 1975

From the minutes of the  
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF COOK COUNTY

- March 14, 1924      Miss Rockwood reported that on March 26th the Oak Park Civic League will discuss organizing a League. As it is reciprocity day, representatives from other clubs will be present. They will be asked to join in calling the first meeting of the League in May.
- June 13, 1924      Miss Rockwood reported that the Oak Park League of Women Voters was organized on May 13th, electing Mrs. A. F. Holden as President, and had been accepted as a branch of the State League by the Vice-President.

*Selections chosen from the records of the*

*LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST  
1940-1970*

*Compiled by:  
Eileen Subak*

*for the:  
League of Women Voters of Oak Park-River Forest  
P. O. Box 712  
Oak Park, Illinois 60303 .*

*April 1977*

*LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS*

- . *Manuscript Division, Chicago Historical Society:*
  - League of Women Voters of Illinois*
  - League of Women Voters of Cook County*
  
- . *The Library Manuscript Collection, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle:*
  - League of Women Voters of Chicago*
  - League of Women Voters of Oak Park-River Forest*
  
- . *Offices of the League of Women Voters, Room 1408, 67 East Madison, Chicago:*
  - League of Women Voters of Illinois (recent)*
  - League of Women Voters of Cook County (from 1923)*
  - League of Women Voters of Chicago (recent)*
  
- . *NATIONAL UNION CATALOGUE OF MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS, published by the Library of Congress (an index of collections throughout the United States).*



PAST PRESIDENTS

Mrs. F. L. Bradfute	1939-41
Mrs. W. Eissler	1941-42
Mrs. Walter Bain	1943-46
Mrs. Walter Schwalm	1946-47
Mrs. Ray Gislason Mrs. C. A. Siler	1947-49
Mrs. Charles G. Hurlbut Miss Ruth T. Maxwell Mrs. Dean H. Whitehead	1949-52
Mrs. Francis Baldwin	1952-53
Mrs. Henry Hanson (1st term)	1953-55
Mrs. Ralph White	1955-56
Mrs. Andrew Hoigard, Jr.	1956-58
Miss Marie Alsager	1958-59
Mrs. Earl Jacobsen	1959-60
Mrs. Colin O. Higgins	1960-61

*PAST PRESIDENTS (continued)*

<i>Mrs. Dwight Follett</i>	<i>1961-63</i>
<i>Mrs. John Goltermann</i>	<i>1963-64</i>
<i>Mrs. Robert Markens</i>	<i>1964-65</i>
<i>Mrs. Carl Tamminen</i>	<i>1965-67</i>
<i>Mrs. A. P. Remenchik</i>	<i>1967-69</i>
<i>Mrs. Henry Hanson (2nd term)</i>	<i>1969-71</i>
<i>Mrs. Henry Reid</i>	<i>1971-73</i>
<i>Mrs. Robert E. Slayton</i>	<i>1973-77</i>

## PROLOGUE

A few caveats:

In contrast to the preceding narrative, this section should not be considered finished and ready for the files. Many of the participants are among us, still eager, active and contributing their talents not only to league but to the wider community.

Consider these, not as history, but my personal selections of highlights from the league records.

Although I have tried to retain original meanings, keep in mind that all quotations are taken out of context.

Where there were hard choices, I tried to emphasize the broadest possible range of programs and activities, rather than the accomplishments of individuals. Many deserving names were sacrificed in the process.

And a request:

So that we can make our local league records as complete and as exciting as possible, ask yourself: (1) Do I have or know anyone who has league papers that should be preserved? (2) Can I add anything to the I WAS THERE account?

And

If Hazel Hanson's act were not difficult enough to follow, Hanna Beye Fyfe's words are still more humbling.

When asked at our 40th anniversary to reminisce a bit for us, she said: MY MOTTO IS NEVER TO LOOK BACK, ONLY TO LOOK FORWARD and she wished for us A WONDERFUL FUTURE.

I hope we may be excused for reminiscing a bit as we continue OUR WONDERFUL FUTURE...

April 1977

Eileen Subak

"It is good to know," *THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR* is quoted in a local paper dated March 9, 1944, "that back of the men in uniform, back of the nation, is a great organization of women, the League of Women Voters, who are doing the spade work for good government informing themselves and other voters and getting action," for 1944, the year of the Allied Invasion in Europe, of war in the Far East, was a presidential election year. Women, serving in factories, in offices and on farms to relieve men for military service, had another responsibility: informing servicemen how to register, under the slogan: *BALLOTS ARE BULLETS*.

Local league women cooperated with the Get-Out-the-Vote-Council and in doing so, according to a contemporary press report, "...are learning much about the psychology of citizens with regard to the franchise." One woman, having found a man at home, asked whether he was going to the polls, was bowled over at his answer: "Yes, I'm the precinct committeeman." "Then why aren't you doing this calling on people?" "Well," he replied reluctantly, "my mother did call on some of the folks across the street." The article went on to add that "the women were often suspected of ulterior motive and found a general feeling of complete incredulity that there can be anyone interested in the mere matter of getting out the vote."

But the league was already thinking about the peace to come. In 1944 Mrs. Raleigh Stone, president of the League of Women

Voters of Cook County (LWV CC) chose the topic: *LEAGUE LOOKS AT THE POST WAR WORLD*, and Mrs. Quincy Wright came to the fall tea in 1944 with "proposals for the establishment of a general international organization." League members, already familiar with the World Court, the peace pacts following World War I, the problems of refugees and restrictive trade policies, formed study groups on Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods. They were ready in 1945 to "urge citizens to watch carefully the discussion of the Charter and let their Congressmen know how they feel." Their interest shifted from the San Francisco Conference to the seminar at Lake Success, New York, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWV US). Here was a beginning, a new opportunity, which would occupy league interest and commitment: *STRENGTHENING THE UNITED NATIONS*.

The commemoration of United Nations Day was a tradition in the League of Women Voters of Oak Park-River Forest (LWV OP-RF). In 1951 the sixth anniversary of the UN was celebrated with a game of Twenty Questions and a birthday party tea. In 1967 at Rosary College, after a program of poetry, dance and song by the foreign students, Rosary president, Sister Candida Lund, who had just returned from Israel, spoke of the role of the UN in handling conflict there.

In an earlier cooperative effort with other community organizations, league had conducted a "massive street corner poll of villagers at the time of the Israeli-Egyptian eruption. One of the five questions was: "Shall we set up a permanent police force in the UN?"

But in 1945 a new and urgent matter became the focus of league attention: the atomic bomb. The board in a meeting in 1946 approved a telegram to Illinois Senators "to do everything in their power to have the control of atomic energy put in the hands of civilians rather than the military"...and a motion, pending approval of the state board, to urge President Truman that "stockpiling of atomic bombs should be stopped immediately."

In 1948 the local league called a special board meeting to discuss the Marshall Plan...the LWV US was "urged to support economic assistance by the United States to hasten reconstruction and support reciprocal trade agreements." Marion Siler, president at the time, recalled later that one of her most vivid impressions during her presidency was "trying to convince our villagers of the merits of the Marshall Plan...some organizations would not even let us leave literature with them."

A tireless foreign policy chairman, Bea Huggins, passed out food conservation pledges for signature. League sent letters supporting assistance and developmental loans. "Mrs. Howie was proud of the cooperation and hard work of the league on the trade survey." These actions were logical extensions of the work done before the Second World War. But another field of foreign policy took a completely different turn.

Earlier minutes reflect China as a war-time ally, such as an invitation to hear Dr. C. P. Woo, of the Chinese Consulate Office, in a 1945 program on *WORLD FRIENDSHIP IN CHINA*. This policy was radically changed as the United States took a strong stand against the Communist government in Mainland China.

When the program item *STUDY OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD CHINA* was adopted, Eleanor Teng, whose husband was born in China, became committee chairman. Under her direction league members covered 4,000 years of Chinese history and foreign policy. One of the highlights was the speaker, Charles Rhee, nephew of Syngman Rhee of Korea.

One of the panelists of this study was Louise Rome who presented *CHINA'S RELATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD*. When relations between the United States and China were normalized, the League of Women Voters of Illinois (LWV ILL) was one of the first organizations to apply for a visit. In January 1976 Louise and her husband Sam were members of the group that made this very special trip to China. Louise was the featured speaker at our annual meeting in 1976 sharing with leaguers her slides and her impressions of her visit, which in itself was sort of a symbol of league study and persistence. Truly, as the Oriental wisdom says: *A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP.*

If atomic power had changed the face of international affairs, the role of minorities and women had in the Second World War won for them a larger place in the participation of world affairs. Neither the energy of the atom nor the energy of people could be returned to the *status quo ante*.

In 1945 the LWV US celebrated its 25th anniversary. "Before August 26, 1920," it was recalled, "the entire female population of this country was legally classified with children and idiots.." No doubt that seemed quaint to readers in 1945. Yet from the vantage point of thirty years later, we may be startled to find:

that league programs featuring guests with special expertise and known stature were listed in the local paper on the pages reserved for *WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES...SOCIAL EVENTS*. League was not yet, obviously, mainstreamed. And a headline of 1950 above an article on voter information, *THE MEN WE ARE VOTING FOR* would not reflect the political realities of 1976 as more and more highly qualified women ran active campaigns for public office.

"'A *WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE LEAGUE*,' said vivacious, nay, sparkling state league president, Mrs. Harper Andrews, at the Annual Meeting of 1960." And local league president, Priscilla Higgins, added a hearty, "Amen."

Some of the changes were trivial perhaps. Newspapers no longer used the title "Mesdames"; the form "Janet Smith" replaced "Mrs. John Smith"; the filing cabinet and the typewriter made the hand-written journal of minutes obsolete. Less and less frequent was the reference to, "adjourned for tea" or "the members were invited to join Mrs. Siler at luncheon where a delicious repast was enjoyed by all." One has the impression of a more simple, less hurried life. By 1966 the president suggested, "since we are always under such pressure for time, I would ask that you bring along a sandwich...for lunch so we may continue our meeting in the afternoon."

X And we find that "because no one can be found to act as chairman of the Tea Committee," Mrs. Jacobsen asked the board in 1949, "if they wish to continue serving tea at league meetings." Perhaps someone volunteered--leaguers usually rise to the occasion--but could this have been a shadow of what was to come



as women took a new look at themselves, the circumstances of their world, the communities in which they were raising their families and chose, instead, to pour--indeed--their talents and energies into the issues of the day.

One of the issues requiring energy was a growing concern over the environment. Local interest ran high. There were tours of the Cal-Sag Waterways, visits to the Metropolitan Sanitary District plant, the Hanover Tertiary Treatment Plant, there were meetings, studies, scrapbooks, with positions on water, air and thermal pollution, land use and energy.

Someone may have said that water is the "most friend making" item the league ever had. At the Lake Michigan Basin Seminar on Land and Water Use held in Milwaukee, Louise Rome spoke extemporaneously when a speaker failed to show, making a strong statement on Illinois' lagging action. Her speech was quoted in a Chicago paper January 30, 1969. Louise's photo appeared in the *ILLINOIS VOTER* October 1967, representing league at the signing of the Water Bond Referendum Bill. By 1970 Louise was a technical consultant to President Nixon's Water Pollution Control Advisory Board.

League members usually returned from meetings filled with enthusiasm but on one occasion the record says, "several leaguers who attended a water meeting commented that the presentation was, "--yes--"a bit too dry."

Other environmental concerns were raised: Mildred Erhardt reported that "the league was influential in 1967-1968 in persuading the River Forest Park Board to spray park elm trees with

methoxychlor, less toxic than the DDT which had been in use. And there was a glass bottle recycling project successfully demonstrating to the Village of Oak Park that a recycling center was feasible.

League members who worked on the Congressional study in the 1960's may be surprised to learn that league conducted a *BETTER CONGRESS CAMPAIGN* twenty years earlier. Critics said, "The present organization and procedures are clumsy, out of date and place Congress at a disadvantage with the executive department." In 1944 the committee was chaired by May Estelle Cook, author of *LITTLE OLD OAK PARK*.

In 1950 league involved itself with the Federal budget and studied the Hoover Commission reports. League opposed constitutional limits on tax rates (the so-called *LIBERTY AMENDMENT* which would tie the abolition of a Federal income tax with limitations on the powers of the president in treaty making.)

Of concern too was an item *LOYALTY-SECURITY*. In 1953 Edgar Bernhardt, director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) told league, "There are no subversive opinions, only subversive acts." League pressed for "commonsense" security precautions and opposed their extension to non-sensitive positions such as the Community Action Programs of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

But emotional issues sometimes made enemies and we find on one occasion that the national league sent a letter "containing helpful suggestions how to combat attacks on league."

Steadily, the franchise was widened...voters' rights in the 1960's...a petition drive for representation in Congress for our *LAST COLONY*, the District of Columbia. There was concern too over the Electoral College.

And a growing realization that legislative bodies did not conform to league's "one-man, one-vote" principle. Reapportionment, redistricting..opposition to the Dirksen Amendment..all of this took hard work but in the end, league was successful. Who will forget the "bedsheet ballot" of 1964, two and one-half feet long, for an at-large election of 177 state representatives. Why? Because there was no agreement on redistricting.

The world was shrinking. Originally, go-see tours involved the local scene. In 1971 it was possible as in the Pep Corps visit to Washington, D.C., for local leaguers to see first-hand how their national government worked.

The world had changed in another way. Membership growth is always of concern to any group but, as a grass roots organization, it was essential for league to broaden its membership base. Irville Baldwin recalled that during her presidency she "put pins into a precinct map and found (membership) was concentrated in less than twenty precincts and was over 90% WASP. Something had to be done about that! We tried for contacts among people we knew to be active in the community...people who lived outside of those twenty precincts....result: a hundred new members before the end of the year."

Noting that drop off in membership renewals is most prevalent among first-year members...Mrs.Baldwin, "asked if it would be too

much for each board member to be responsible for three members in her community, cultivating a friendship and more interest in the league's program."

X The Welcome Wagon brochure in 1965 asked: "May we offer a helping hand? Don't be an angry young woman. Are you strangled with CC (child conservation)? Are you bored with HR (household routine)? Are you resentful of HOG (husband on the go)? Then (turn page) to find out about League."

Material for the Welcome Service Organization was "good public relations for the 1,500 newcomers each year." Once introduced to league those "first year members" were invited to new members teas. One in 1964 at the president's home offered a short program to acquaint them with the various programs and committees." This idea expanded into a comprehensive series of New Member Units. Many of today's active members will remember the get-acquainted-parties for new members, board members and husbands at the Remenchik home on Linden Avenue.

In 1969 the president recounted her most rewarding experience was "to see the new members accept responsibilities and to become involved...there seems to be no area of community activity in which league members are not active..I suppose this is why we have the problem of keeping our 'older' members with us. They branch out and this is one of our prime purposes."

One member who "branched out" was Hazel Hanson who tendered "her resignation from the Board in view of her candidacy for member of the Oak Park Board of Trustees." Then too there was Elsie Jacobsen who resigned in 1960 after a year's presidency to run in a contested election for the Oak Park-River Forest High School

Board. There were "regrets of losing a fine president tempered by pride and comfort in possessing a capable and clear sighted school board member...Elsie became the first to vacate an office in the league in accordance with league by-laws."

We read that Mrs. Bryant, member of the state committee on nonpartisanship discussed the meaning of this policy..our league had expressed concern that this would weaken the caliber of the local league if active political workers were not permitted to participate on the board. Mrs. Lee stated that active political workers could serve the local league as resource chairmen and Mrs. Philipps, that local boards should determine what constitutes political activity.

In 1964 the league president admitted, "my concern for the nonpartisanship policy in the midst of hot elections has not made me very popular. What many of us fail to realize is the valuable role the league can play in an election by presenting both sides clearly, exposing candidates to the public, clarifying the issues."

By 1971 local board members, with the exception of the president, voters service chairman and the finance chairman, were free to act as individuals in supporting candidates of their choice. League had, apparently, resolved the issue by encouraging individual members to become active, yet working objectively as an organization.

Working in the public interest and supporting programs does require money. From the perspective of 1976, dues raised to \$4.00 in 1947 from \$3.00 the year before, seem modest. In the same year the general membership endorsed a Metropolitan Finance Drive, described as "an efficient, successful means of a league's fulfilling its financial obligations to the national and state leagues, at the same time that it wins friends for the league and cultivates the good will of the community."

And a growing awareness that.... "The League does not raise money with lunch sales and teas for women because league work is public service that deserves the support and understanding of all community leaders."

Increasing costs of national and state programs were to receive comment from successive local boards: "It was decided to contribute the amount requested and at some more appropriate time explore the possibility of more economy in the state office." "National writes their limited finances means services suffer.. and the answer is obviously greater local contribution to national." Or, again, "Pay part of the pledge" and "the rest at some later date," adding cautiously, "provided the Treasury could afford it." One president expressed "alarm at the continuous yearly increase in local league pledges so that leagues must be so pre-occupied with money."

A positive reaction, "League must do such an outstanding job in the community that everyone will want to support the League," and a pragmatic answer to the question, "What is your overall estimate of your league's fund raising efforts?": "There must be an easier way."

There was praise too. "As for the 50th Anniversary Drive, remember our headaches. Riveting out contributions is laborious and we owe these hard workers our admiration and applause." One earlier chairman "was named worthy of appreciative praise because of her personal notes of acknowledgement to each contributor to the drive."

And there was a willingness to set priorities..in May 1970: "...the basic message is to cut expenditures. We will cut mailings, handprint invitations, serve only coffee at units, have more units in homes, charge a fee for baby sitters...we will not slash voters service."

And a bit of humor. When Gretchen Thomson and her committee were authorized to make the final decision on printing costs of the yearbook we read: "keeping in mind, of course, that a penny saved is a penny earned," and adding somewhat wistfully, "if only Benjamin Franklin were alive and well and printing in Oak Park."

The LWV OP-RF has had a long and close association with the League of Women Voters of Cook County (LWV CC) and its predecessor, the Cook County Council. Local league members who served as presidents of the LWV CC include: Mrs. William M. Bryant (1937-41), Mrs. Francis Baldwin (1953-54) and Mrs. Harry R. Ansel (1955-58).

A special contribution was made at Interim Council on the occasion of LWV CC's 50th anniversary in 1973 when Jan Newbery, Priscilla Higgins and a starring cast of local leaguers put together the anniversary skit.

Visits to the Cook County Board of Commissioners has been a long tradition. In 1967 "Following the meeting, Board President,

Richard B. Ogilvie, will introduce the commissioners, outline their duties and speak to leaguers on selected topics."

Over the years the local league furnished three Juvenile Justice chairmen. Anita Miller revised *JUVENILE JUSTICE IN AN URBAN SETTING*. Gordon Montgomery arranged for visits to the Juvenile Court and the Detention Center for league members throughout Cook County.

In 1965 Anita Miller reported: "This year we had one of the best tours to Family Court and Audy Home..where Family Court had one full-time judge when our study began, today they have five full-time judges. We saw an improved Department of Clinical Research, an improvement in the boys' department..we noticed more case and probation workers."

League worked for improved shelter care of children by urging the commissioners to provide funds for Herrick House. Similar concerns were raised at the state league level. In 1955 Naomi Hiett, executive secretary of the Illinois Commission on Children and Youth, spoke on *VISIONS AND VINEGAR*. "Citizen programs," she said, "must be based on knowledge, decision and action, and the second step, decision, should not be skimmed over lightly."

And decisions there were. Telegrams to the legislature in 1950 asking for an allocation of funds for dependent children. There was action in 1965 when the new Juvenile Court Act was before the General Assembly, bills on child abuse and juvenile correctional procedures.

Samuel Sublett, Jr., Superintendent of St. Charles Training School for Boys, was the speaker at the annual meeting in 1966. After his appearance, the chairman wrote: "All of us were greatly impressed with the obvious warmth and compassion you bring to your



position and your talent in communicating with others. It is good to know," she went on, "that someone with feelings and understanding is helping side-tracked children get a fresh start in life."

Adult corrections received attention. An early visit to the House of Corrections resulted in "a sending of books and clothes." But it was not to be the last visit league would make. A tape recorded by Elvira Rubinstein in her fine English accent give her impressions:

"...The air seemed to be heavy with sordidness and misery. This heavy feeling pervaded the entire inspection..the cells were unpleasant to a degree..the library equally depressing, small and badly in need of new material...the room was being painted and as soon as one room is finished they immediately start work on the next one and by the time the whole building has been painted, it is time to start again ... it is a process apparently that never ceases...the second building we were taken into..it was unbelievable..the odor of accumulated years of humanity hung around us like a heavy mist..the will to live must be very strong indeed to survive the debilitating effect of this dreadful environment... but to judge from our particular perspective is possibly misleading."

League contributed to the formation of a Cook County Department of Corrections, observed the courts and studied bail bond.

In 1968-69 a Crisis committee under the leadership of Anita Fletcher met and discussed the Kerner report. ACLU executive director, Jay Miller, came to describe the inequities of bail bond following the civil disorders of 1968. League members under the guidance and training of the ACLU involved themselves in a summer

program of court watching, observing the setting of bail and gained valuable experience in court background.

Other social issues were examined under the national item: *DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES*. Equality of opportunity for employment, education and housing. Enthusiasm and excitement over the War on Poverty...go-see tours of Urban Progress Centers...a summer tutoring program during the Chicago riots..... We read of individual league members who were volunteers for Women in Community Service (WICS), serving as Legal Aid case workers, and working with Head Start.

Then too the *PUBLIC AFFAIRS FORUM* played a role in communicating important issues of the day. "For a number of years, the league, American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the 19th Century Women's Club had held a joint meeting on Citizenship ...and in 1945 it was decided to ask the cooperation of others.. It continued until 1961," wrote Hazel Hanson. "In competition with so many meetings it ran out of steam. I was chairman...(A program) I recall vividly..was on Mental Health. We took a bus tour to Chicago State Hospital, which left a profound impression, and motivated a number of us to volunteer for tutoring and other services at the institution."

Perhaps league as a grass roots organization makes its greatest impact on the local community. The LWV OP-RF record is rich in accomplishments, varied in scope, highly visible and broadly based.

There was hardly a school issue, study or referendum that did not receive attention from the league. New needs and a high birth-rate made school renovation a high priority, first in the elementary systems and later at the high school.

In 1957 league members saw a student-produced film, *THIS IS OUR HIGH SCHOOL* showing the inadequate facilities for the library, art studio and cafeteria. In 1965 the financial needs of education was under intense discussion. Three issues were to go before the voters and we read: "If every cent of the nine million dollar request were investigated to everyone's complete satisfaction, the league could never take a position." "Expensive frills," had been a criticism. "I see no frills here," said a league member on a tour after the dedication ceremony, "I see only the things needed for a good education."

League members turned from finance and construction to program content and policies: the school lunch program, open classrooms, human relations and alternative schools.

An important contribution to the community was highlighted at our 40th anniversary by Katherine Bain as she described the most memorable accomplishment of her presidency.

"In conjunction with the AAUW we worked hard to get a full-time Health Department for Oak Park. One can't imagine (why) but there was violent opposition from some quarters..we hung on until

we got a full-time department with a public health trained commissioner and a five-member Board of Health, one of whom, Marion Siler, was a member of the league."

Further on we read that someone reported that, "River Forest people think there are no health problems in that village and need to be made aware of the creeping movement for county control. They must decide whether they want to be under county jurisdiction or controlled only by their own Health Department."

Mrs. Bain described league success as "merely the beginnings of an adequate program and we do not feel that the work of the Public Health committee should be regarded as finished."

In 1948 the Commissioner of Public Health in Oak Park was asked what the citizens could do to assist the department as it initiated changes. His reply, "If the league could furnish an observer to sit in at the village council of the Board of Trustees, it might serve as a check on the trustees and keep us informed of the decisions made and actions taken."

It is possible that the practice of having league observers dates from this period. In the same year there was discussion of sending "a representative to the meetings of the Board of Education to observe and take back information to the League as is done in the Evanston league." By 1955 league was asked to appoint regular representatives to both the Oak Park and the River Forest Village Boards and to the Municipal Court sessions.

In 1964 Eileen Markens stressed the importance of having observers at all meetings of local governing bodies..it was suggested that letters be sent to Planning, Park Board, Recreation, Zoning Board of Appeals, Human Relations and ask if a league observer

would be welcome. They were apparently, for not many years later a chairman would have the Observer Corps as her sole league responsibility, and, on occasion, a day's league meeting might be set aside for a summary of the material gathered.

Possibly league observing was first seen as an information-gathering tool, for keeping abreast of issues which might require league action..but it was to do more. It had a positive effect on those elected or appointed, as Mildred Erhardt pointed out: "The Park Board is interested in having a league observer at their meetings since usually the only people present are those with complaints. It is a nice comment on our league to see the importance of our members in the eyes of this and other boards."

At least one other observer agreed. "...Citizens heated up about one particular issue often stay on for the remainder of the meeting and have 'immediate' solutions for all other problems facing the board...If we as league members are indeed attempting to be informed citizens, why don't we as individuals attend meetings as a positive, interested voter and lend support if warranted or informed criticism for that matter so the administration and employees of the village will know that most of us are grateful that they are representing or working for us."

Observing was to do still more. Rosemary Bailey in her 1968 annual report, "There must be other ways to learn how local government works but I think being a league observer is one of the best. Not only have I learned a great deal but it's been interesting and exciting to see elected officials grapple with public problems and decisions." So it was only logical that league members themselves would "grapple with public problems and decisions" as they were appointed or elected to public offices.

In April 1977 Rosemary Bailey was the highest vote getter on the Park Board election...but it was not always so...The annual report of 1950 quoted, "League was promised a post on the Playground Board for one woman and that promise was not kept." Letters were sent to members of the Village Board but there was only one reply. He "saw no necessity for a woman member on the Playground Board when Miss Josephine Blackstock attended all meetings. It is understood, however, that Miss Blackstock (Oak Park Playground Director) is anxious to have a woman on the board."

Although observers do not speak to issues, the information they brought back to committees and to the board was useful when league took action. A president in 1969 summed it up. She was "very gratified when league speaks before various boards and commissions to know that it is listened to with respect."

A local project with high visibility was the *KNOW YOUR TOWN* booklet, patterned after the publication by the Evanston league. Marion Siler regarded this "adventure" as one of the highlights of her presidency.

As a result of research for *KNOW YOUR TOWN*, the league committee noted that there was no cross file for finding information in the village records. "The Village Clerk is supposed to publish ...all new ordinances but these do not seem available. Some committees and commissions no longer function." There were comments too on the Department of Public Works and the Zoning Board.

Zoning, planning and community conservation were to occupy league attention for another quarter century. In 1954 Doris Hoi-gard gave "a most excellent report on a property conservation conference which emphasized that poverty, greed and ignorance were

the causes of blight...communities have the weapons to fight and must do it." Oak Park began to sharpen its weapons...it began to face the problems that meet "a number of middle aged, middle class neighborhoods...and came up with a three-point plan: preventive, creative and community interest. Protection was not to be an exclusive process."

There was special attention to the zoning ordinance. Doris Hoigard and later Marge Hospodar served on the Oak Park Zoning Commission. Eventually there was agreement that the amendment process could go only so far and that an entirely new ordinance was needed.

In 1964 the league committee met in the summer to study the recommendations of the Oak Park Planning committee to the President and the Board of Trustees of the Village, urged other groups and private citizens to obtain copies of the report. "Working out solutions to problems before they occur is just what Oak Park needs to continue as a very much alive and wonderful place to live."

In September 1966 league testified at an all-day hearing. "Many features were praiseworthy," they said, "but voiced regret at the lack of time for a real study of the ordinance." League testimony was so expert that one observer was heard to remark: "Those women must have had legal counsel. They couldn't have worked up this testimony themselves!" But they did, "themselves" were league president, Dorothy Tamminen, committee chairman, Mary Remenchik, Rosemary Bailey, Helen Bayless, Miriam McCafferty and Barbara Walsh.

From the time Mrs. Bryant was appointed to the Village Planning Commission, to the study of Oak Park's thirteen-point comprehensive plan, there was study, fun and hard work. Leaguers were

enlisted to drive on inspection tours in 1963 to help on Oak Park's *CLEAN UP DRIVE*. Thirteen years later Geraldine Montgomery appealed for "vacation help." *Garbage, Alleys and Rats*. Make five assigned calls with check list. No signatures. No pay.

But on at least one occasion community conservation made league *THE TALK OF THE TOWN* when a printer's error in the newspaper credited league with community conversation, rather than community conservation.

A clipping from the *CHICAGO TRIBUNE* in March 1949 shows photos of organized dishwashing and baby sitting...*NOVEL POLITICAL TECHNIQUES USED IN OAK PARK'S HEATED MUNICIPAL CAMPAIGN*.

The spotlight was on municipal government...the pressure for a Manager Plan. Mrs. Follett writes that the General Assembly had passed enabling legislation. "On April 28, 1952, I conducted a public meeting for the AAUW which explored the Manager Plan as a solution for Oak Park's governmental impasse...On the panel that night was Emily Bryant...this public meeting was the 'opening gun' in the ground swell of citizen concern that led to the referendum in the November election..Oak Park citizens voted to adopt the Manager Plan."

Mrs. Bain "member of the steering committee, gave thaks from the committee to all leaguers who worked for the adoption of the plan. The unofficial figures were 3½ to 1." We read that leaguers "had contributed 2,580 working hours to the community...this did not include many hours spent in planning." League learned not only to request and urge action but to send congratulatory letters to newly selected or elected officials and to commend for stands taken as well.



If the village had a new form of government, the schools new buildings and programs, the library too had outgrown its old home. *WHY OAK PARK NEEDS A NEW LIBRARY*, a presentation with color slides "caused interest to soar." Mrs. Follett recalled at the 40th anniversary that the highlight of her presidency was the passage of a referendum for a new Oak Park Library. And in 1964 "it was announced that Hazel Hanson, would be specially honored at the dedication of the new public library building on May 31 and presented with a plaque for her efforts with the Committee of 500 and in the community as a whole."

But there were other meanings of the word COMMUNITY. True, there had been problems when Dr. Percy Julian first moved to Oak Park but the local conscience was aroused in early 1963 by the dismissal on racial grounds "of a negro musician by the Oak Park-River Forest Symphony Orchestra." League records show that in February a special meeting was called to...draft a letter of league position. Later June Heinrich outlined "proposals for study of the local item..she stressed the varieties of people and organizations involved in such a study and the need for fact finding to ascertain the current attitudes and needs in the community."

In response to the league questionnaire, many expressed interest in an integrated community and felt that the village government and the community relations commission should assume leadership in this area.

Early cooperation with the National Council of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) focused more on religious than on racial matters. But in 1965 league cooperated with NCCJ in workshops and inter-racial home visits. Christine deTroy reported "the tour to

Kenwood and the discussion offered visible proof of the very real possibility of people of different races living as good neighbors."

In March 1964 league sponsored a workshop on, *THE FAIR HOUSING BILL AND REFERENDUM ON FORCED HOUSING*. There were 300 in the audience and as Christine deTroy reported, "From various sources we have been reassured that it was a good airing out of the problems."

At the time of the state consensus on equal housing, the local league agreed that municipal governments also had responsibility in finding solutions to this question. Twenty-eight communities had local ordinances in operation. League embarked on an intensive study and a search for a form applicable to Oak Park. The findings were submitted to the Human Relations Commission in March 1968. It was read by Connie Ronnow and a contemporary bulletin comments, "the position expressed was OUR position; the poise and courage shown was all Connie's."

In 1947 the name League of Women Voters of Oak Park was changed to include River Forest.

Records from the LWV CC dated January 11, 1924, tell us, "Mrs. Benson reported that she did not know what would be the chances for a league in River Forest at present but she felt very strongly that the league members in the whole seventh district needed to get together to consider their legislative representation and bring pressure to bear..for the things which the league favors." And on October 20, 1925, "Miss Rockwood reported on progress of organization in Cook County..steps are being taken

toward organization in..River Forest and Maywood." Nothing seems to have come of this.

Local agenda itself came on the scene belatedly. As late as 1948 national "pointed out league has no local agenda nor any allowance in our budget for local program."

Oak Park, with its larger population and earlier start, tended to dominate the scene. At the annual meeting in 1951 "attention was called to the fact that there is no item concerning River Forest on our local agenda," and in 1963 the suggestion was put forth "that at least one local agenda item to be considered should be of interest to River Forest."

But interest was developing. "Martha Schauss gave a very complete report on the schools in River Forest telling of the study and recommendations for modernization and additions for the four River Forest schools." "League was thanked for unbiased information given River Forest voters for the April election. Approximately 40% more people voted than had voted in recent elections." And league communicated to *OAK LEAVES* and *FOREST LEAVES* the request "each paper carry the election returns of the other village."

In 1966 two league members were appointed to the newly formed Planning and Advisory Committee of River Forest: Mrs. Schauss and Mrs. Slaughter.

And finishing a four-year term of office in 1977 was President Edith Slayton, from River Forest.

Not all league activities fell under specific program items. A number of services were taken on "because they were there." Volunteers to staff the TB X-Ray unit, contributions to the School-

to-School program in developing countries, provide a booth at the Home and Garden Show, or tend the league wildflower plot in Austin Gardens.

Invite newly naturalized women to become league members. Support a bond issue to cover the track elevation at Lake Street. Present *LITTLE OLD OAK PARK* to the public and parochial schools, from the May Estelle Cook Memorial Funds.

Sponsor a *KNOW YOUR TOWN* meeting "to remind citizens of the time, effort and long-range planning which goes into local government and an attempt to involve more citizens in the local government process."

Prepare a regular column in the local paper under the heading *EYES ON THE LAWMAKERS*. Make league expertise available through the Speakers Bureau.

Priscilla Higgins recalled that the highlight of her term of office was to work "for the defeat of a referendum to divide Oak Park into wards." As she put it so neatly, "Our reward was no wards."

And Memorial Day parades. In 1952, "the entire project is an effort to show how the early suffragettes having won their victory realized that to be an effective force in government they must know more and educate other women in their new duties as citizens--thus the LWV was born."

The 1969 league effort was more relaxed: "Will include two cars of mod and flapper vintage...carrying leaguers in appropriate dress and with catchy banners." Never at a loss for "catchy banners," league has used over the years: *YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY; OLD IN TIME - YOUNG IN MIND; YOU ROCK THE CRADLE, I'LL ROCK THE BOAT; NOW IS THE HOUR - FOR WOMANPOWER.*

Of all the activities for which league is best known nationally, it is for its long service to voters, a natural outgrowth of "the original suffrage movement for women and its early formative period devoted to educating women how to get information so they could vote intelligently."

*OAK LEAVES* was enthusiastic in its editorial of October 28, 1948: "With the long awaited election just around the bend, it is appropriate to focus the spotlight on an organization which has done everything short of back flips to inform the voters of the issues at stake and the importance of voting on November 2...when the primaries were approaching these women gave their time unselfishly to getting the vote out..now league has come forward to offer its services in explaining the functions and operation of the voting machines which face scores of Oak Park voters for the first time." In 1976 when these voting machines were retired to be replaced with the *VOTOMATICS* league again rose to the challenge of educating the public.

Mrs. Baldwin at the 40th anniversary recalled: "The league along with the Welcome Wagon organization, made thousands of calls on people and through their efforts hundreds of people registered to vote. For this tremendous Voters Service program, our league won an American Heritage Foundation Award....of the 15,000 submitted projects for one of the 386 awards given out by the Foundation, the LWV OP-RF should be justly proud. It received a major first award for its scrapbook on Voters Service."

From a 1952 press clip on improvements needed in election procedures, "A more serious conduct in the polling place. Better

trained judges and clerks who are familiar with the election laws. Too many boards..have worked together for so many years that the entire day is a sort of social gathering of laughing, talking and telling people how to vote. They allow precinct captains to remain in the polls throughout the day, advising voters on how to cast their ballots and passing out literature and other illegal procedures. When these things were pointed out to them by the league members who were serving as watchers, they thought it was all a joke...What difference does it make? Oak Park is 95% Republican anyway."

In 1962 "Adele Matthews, our Voters Service chairman, combed the polling lists and discovered 852 voters who had not yet registered. To these she and her committee sent cards telling them when and how to register. The success of the effort can be measured by the fact that 250 of these non-registered voters telephoned her home for further information."

As to campaign oratory we speculate on this sentence: "the candidates luncheon had been successful. Twelve candidates were present, eight of whom spoke briefly." Were the others, we wonder, long winded, or did they not speak at all?

The formal community-wide candidates meeting seems to have started in 1952. Mildred Follett "enthusiastically gave her plans to date..forty-seven candidates have agreed to come and speak. There will be a booth to answer questions about voting. Music will be played by Mr. Little's High School Band. Pupils from the history and government classes are to be invited to attend." "Long winded politicians," the press warned, "will be strictly out of order." "We have allowed each candidate a specified time to speak..if they exceed their time limit, they get the treatment."

The meeting was a great success. Out of 96 letters, there were 75 replies and 34 appeared in person, with over 600 in attendance.

It was a far cry from the scanty information we have on a meeting four years earlier. "One had refused the invitation, one not listed in the directory and one vacationing in Florida."

Voters service material became more sophisticated when the mimeograph machine run by each individual league was replaced by more comprehensive *VOTERS GUIDES* prepared at the county or state league levels.

A story about the First Votemobile on the street. "It was a Jeep station wagon which Doris Hoigard and Hazel Hanson had plastered with voter reminders. Neither Doris nor Hazel had much driving experience at the time but Doris had more nerve so she offered to drive the Jeep. When the appointed time came to tour the villages, Doris came down with the flu and poor Hazel had to go it alone."

National networks, competing for the earliest projections in presidential elections, found league useful for checking out key precincts. *WHEN SECONDS COUNT*, as one eager leaguer on her way to Berwyn, was reminded. What the networks did not know was that this particular precinct had no voting machines. It was a complex election and it took two hours just to unfold and sort all the paper ballots. There was no presidential tally until seven hours after the polls closed. The electronic age had arrived, but not at the precinct level!

No voter apathy for school board elections, apparently, for on one occasion we read, "ground rules had been made clear and a coin flip to determine their positions on the program, police

attendants will be present and all candidates have accepted." The community became so accustomed to these meetings that when the league thought there might not be sufficient interest one year, "League was accused of being partisan in its decision not to hold a candidates meeting."

With such a background of Voters Service, it was only natural that league could make a contribution in the reform of Election Laws. In 1950 one "leaguer was said to have used a Laundromat as a polling place" and there was a "lack of Blue ballots at some polling places". Or again, "It was suggested that at a future date, the league might check into the situation of anonymous distribution of election material in order that the citizens of Oak Park would always know who was sending out all such material." And in 1952, "a lack of printed rules for poll watching information."

Other talents were needed too. Helen Bayless and her committee had come to this conclusion: "A graciously aggressive manner is needed in distributing literature in public places."

In 1946 Mrs. Bryant returned from national convention. The League had a new name. No longer would there be a National League of Women Voters, rather the League of Women Voters of the United States.

Exactly thirty years later, Edith Slayton gave a report of her own experience at national convention. Men had been given full membership and the 1976 convention was to consider a change of name to: *LEAGUE OF VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES*. "Ruth Clusen," LWV US president, "expressed relief at the defeat of the proposal.



'I really wasn't prepared,' she said, 'to become president of LOV US.'

What's in a name? In 1945 one member suggested that "Women Voters connotes politics, causing prospective members to hesitate in joining."

A look at past conventions is illuminating. In 1955 a delegate returned from convention lamenting "that local leagues cannot be represented accurately unless they send much more information to the state convention." A few months later we read "our representative to the national convention in Chicago next May will be well informed on our local opinion."

And in an inflation-ridden 1976, we can only wonder what those two delegates to convention in 1945 could have done with the "extra \$5" allotted them by the local board.

And in 1967 the local league not only sent delegates to the state convention but served as doorkeepers, pages and tellers.

To members today the terms CR's and CA's may mean nothing. Take heart! One former president confessed, "I became national CR chairman before I even knew what the initials stood for. Caroline Goltermann carried in several boxes of files immediately and I was on my way...bewildered."

But a few league generations ago, these stood for *CONTINUING RESPONSIBILITIES* and for *CURRENT AGENDA*. CR's were holding items on which action could still be taken based on earlier studies. CA's were active study and action items. About 1963 there was a new concept in program, the *SINGLE LIST* we have today.

Back in 1952 "The National Agenda suffered perusal by those present, criticism of its excessive poundage, queries on its

preeminently international character and explanation by Mrs. Bain of the difficulties of winnowing suggestions..."

There were formalities at the local annual meetings and an occasional lapse: "Perhaps I shouldn't tell you this one. We were so careful to vote very correctly by ballot at our annual meeting. At one of them a woman came up to me afterwards and said, 'I think the nominating committee asked me to do something.' We had left her name off the ballot but she served the next year and no one except the two of us realized a mistake had been made."

At annual meetings the president was tireless in her praise of those in supporting roles: "Mary Pappas sold 677 publications and gave away 32," the annual report states. "Her strength of character reveals itself in the amazing number of publications she sold to an astonishing variety of people and organizations." And in 1970, "Louise Anderson is one of the tiniest girls in the league but she always arrives with the heaviest baggage."

A bouquet to the secretary: "Virginia Cassin will be going on, I hope, to provide her copious minutes which refresh our memories at each board meeting." In 1977 Virginia Cassin indeed went on to win her second election as Village Clerk.

Another secretary, D Clancy, ran in November 1976 as a serious Congressional candidate from the Sixth District. Rosemary Bailey who won reelection as member of the Park Board was also a former league secretary.

Carolyn Chapman, now with the LWV of Belleville, whose handwritten minutes in an old journal are a real treasure, was instrumental in bringing about the first suit under the Department of Litigation, an arm of the Education Fund of the LWV US. Details

appear in the November 1971 *ILLINOIS VOTER*. She is quoted:

"Numerous public officials have failed to enforce the election code as is their sworn duty. They have worked together to cheat the citizens of St. Clair County of their birthright--the power of the ballot."

The treasurer received attention too. Under the caption, *SHE BALANCES HER BABIES AS EASILY AS SHE BALANCES THE LEAGUE BOOKS*, Connie Gibbon appeared in the local paper with her 3 month and her 18 month old children, one on each arm.

Bulletin editors, too, came in for praise. "Through sleet, through hail, through elections came our bulletin." True, as a later editor was to recall when an impending deadline coincided with the Great Snow of 1967, and the league bulletin had to be wrapped and tied to a child's sled before the village streets were plowed.

Sometimes we were better off than we knew. One chairman returning from a state-wide meeting commented "on the inspiration of meeting dedicated leaguers and the comfort of finding that they had more difficult problems than we."

And paperwork. "How long," the treasurer appealed, "must records be kept?" Twenty-five dollars was authorized for envelopes and supplies to get the league records in some systematic order, with Mrs. Fyfe to work on the project. Thirteen years later the problem surfaced again with a committee to organize scrapbooks. All who "wished to come and dig in (and out) would be most welcome."

Chairmen were urged "that a record be kept of all their work with special attention given to weaknesses as this would be a means of promoting greater advancement."

In spite of Mrs. Fyfe's wish, "the post office did soon again raise the price of stamps" but service was not necessarily better. Ruth Friedrichs in sending out material on subscription service complained "of the time lapse for third class mail: seven days for nine miles."

Mrs. Fyfe's name was given to the Thursday morning unit at a time when we had four units. The Tuesday morning unit bore the name of Mrs. Bryant, Wednesday afternoon that of Miss Cook. There is no record of the Wednesday evening unit having a specific name. Carolyn Chapman recalls: "I felt that the evening unit was a breakthrough because it enabled working women and teachers to be active in the league. I believe I was responsible for organizing it and making it go."

We gave a helping hand to other leagues. In 1956 it was learned that "several women in Elmwood Park are interested in planning a study group." And one member offered to hold the meeting in her home.

*SO YOU THINK YOU'RE INVOLVED* the July 30, 1969, *OAK LEAVES* wrote, "Here's what's been keeping seventeen who have served as board members of the local League of Women Voters busy: Five work part time, one tutors in the inner city, one organizes Cook County Hospital volunteers, one is president of the Oak Park Recreation Board, one serves on the Community Relations Commission, two serve on the Beautification Commission, one serves on the Zoning Commission, one has eight children, one has six children, one is pregnant. The common denominator is that they and 150,000 other women care deeply about the quality of our society and want to do something about it."

"What a cooperative board I have had. We've all worked well together and I think it's also because we trust each other to do the right thing, making the right decision." one president said.

And Irville Baldwin, "All summer long three mornings a week three or four of us made house to house calls...introducing our booklet (*KNOW YOUR TOWN*), the merits of Manager Government and the role of the league in the community...I'll never understand how it all happened (100 new members...American Heritage Award...Village Manager) but everybody worked to the point of exhaustion and did it all with grace, good will, creativity, total devotion and the kind of loyalty that left me with eyes and heart aglow. It is quite impossible to express sufficient gratitude for that kind of experience."

Dorothy Tamminen, "To me it meant meeting and working with the finest women in our community. It meant sharing in some exciting and positive changes for our community. It also meant a personal growth that went along with these experiences."

Tradition has it that Mrs. Fyfe was the first league president to do her own work.

Caroline Goltermann: "The year as president...has brought me many exciting, frightening and hilarious experiences." The page ends with the penciled reminder: *TELL JOKE !*

"Has your role as league president been a satisfying one," and each of us remembering responsibilities thrust upon us can sympathize with the answer, "Yes, but I wish I was smarter."

Who can forget Hazel Hanson's words at the annual meeting of 1970: "I hope there are those among you who may some day respond, as I did, to a call from the nominating committee. However, here's

a word of caution in your deliberations - nurse no doubt as to your own competency. Rather carefully reappraise your husband's emotional endurance, his physical stamina and above all his complete and unquestioning loyalty to you. For without these qualifications a league presidency might well terminate a marriage contract. Do consider the hazards. Yet in everything we do there are risks involved. If we must measure the loss of a husband against service to the league, we would, of course, choose the league. And I suggest loss of mate would be amply compensated with a host of wonderful friendships."

We do not have all the names of local league members who served on the state board but we know of: Mrs. Bryant, Mrs. Fyfe, Louise Rome, Sherlynn Reid and going on the state board in 1977 our retiring president, Edith Slayton.

In September 1946 we read of the new *ILLINOIS VOTERS HANDBOOK*. "Much of the material in it was due to the work of Mrs. Bryant." And later we learn of Mrs. Fyfe's bequest to the state league "in partial payment for benefits received."

Somewhat ruefully a speaker in 1943 "suggested if league work was not found to be exciting enough that doubters might try to get some laws passed; or try to lobby at Springfield."

We read of an early "Christmas party at the 19th century club for state legislators in a discussion of issues which may come before the next session of the legislature." When the "next session" came, Mrs. Huggins was there. "She was given a seating arrangement of the House along with a calendar of bills to be

brought up. With these aids at hand she could easily follow and understand the activities of the Legislature."

A more ambitious *LEGISLATIVE SCHOOL* promised "a meeting at the Capitol, followed by a luncheon, committee hearings in the afternoon, a tour to points of interest and a dinner to which the delegates from Oak Park would invite their state representatives."

Lynn Lehman was enthusiastic: "Everybody should visit their government and government officials. To actually be in Springfield and see government at work is marvelous."

Federal funding of education and unit district plans which "might endanger the suburban school system", the school tax dollar and where the money goes, the appointment rather than the election of a state school superintendent...these were some of the issues of the day.

In 1953 league members were urged to protest to their legislators the adoption of the Seditious Activities investigations bill..the Broyles bill.

League looked at the Illinois revenue article, compared it with other states and drafted a model revenue article; studied home rule; pressed for nonpartisan selection of the judiciary; reviewed election laws.

Protection of the citizens' civil rights and liberties... through a fair employment practices act, equal opportunity for housing, privacy of records.

We read of the "need for constitutional revision to provide adequate revenue for public assistance programs.." a phrase we were to see and hear more and more often with the growing realization that the outdated 1870 Constitution stood in the way of a

solution to the problems league encountered in every field of study.

In the 1940's Mrs. George Bogart, LWV ILL chairman on Constitutional Revision, spoke at the Annual Citizenship and Public Affairs School on *THE STRAIGHT JACKET CONSTITUTION OF ILLINOIS*. She was one of the many dedicated speakers over the years. Some of the names are: Samuel W. Witwer and Noble Lee.

Mrs. Preston Farley in 1947 stirred her audience with these words: "...now we are unhappily forced to say, it looks as though the Senate resolution (for calling a constitutional convention) is slowly dying in committee. Two powerful lobbies are opposed to the resolution, and in spite of the efforts of the league and many other civic and professional groups, it seems that they have succeeded in killing it once again. This is definitely a challenge to the league..the fight will be carried to the next legislative session and the next until we finally succeed."

And the LWV ILL wrote, "After many years of activities on behalf of modernizing the Illinois constitution by means of a convention in Illinois, league changed its emphasis to support a liberalizing of the amendment article in 1950 (Gateway Amendment, which made possible the introduction of multiple amendments at any one election)....and the last ten years have been spent trying to use the amending process to gain the desired changes in our constitution. The results...have been meager so that our frustration erupted at the 1959 league convention."

Part of the frustration was the defeat of the Judicial Reform Amendment in 1958. The LWV OP-RF "made elaborate plans for passage...speakers, post card campaigns, tagging at the L stations."



Four years later the attack was renewed....."Mrs. Butler.. stressed that every member must be active and every league have a plan, that we must organize our speakers, that we must have a citizens committee from key organizations.., that we must plan now to make use of our public relations media." And plan they did. "Beatrice Huggins and the members of her Speakers Bureau reached some 1,400 listeners in their talks before twenty-eight local organizations..When the votes were counted 87% of those voting on the issue in our community approved this strengthening of our courts."

In 1960 "board members dined informally at Gabriel's with that grand lady leaguer, Mrs. Walter T. Fisher (former president of the LWV ILL), who afterward talked Constitutional Convention to us at the 19th century club. With twinkling eye and deft phrase, she quickened our interest and cheered us on to work toward a new Illinois State Constitution in 1970, to celebrate the centennial of our present anachronism."

Part of the plan was to build a ground swell for Con Con until we read that "due to a variety of factors, legislative opinion had caught up with that of the league," and the question of calling a constitutional convention passed the General Assembly in 1967 and would be placed before the electorate in 1968.

*CAMPAIGN 1968* meant mobilizing the community once again: a Blue Ballot Breakfast for community leaders; an advisory committee; and a horse, a real live horse and buggy in the Memorial Day Parade, to dramatize the 1870 Horse and Buggy Constitution; publicity; pamphlets; speaking engagements; Con Con coffees; all headed by chairman Ariel O'Hara.

CAMPAIGN 1968 was highly successful but there was no time to relax. There were the primaries, then the run-off elections. And, yes, there were league members among the delegates and our Lucy Reum was one of them.

The delegates met in Springfield to begin their work and the temptation for leaguers to observe the proceedings was irresistible. Lynn Lehman, voters service chairman, made the arrangements. It was March 1970. Not only would local league members observe, we would invite members from the Franklin Park provisional league and, in the best league tradition, five high school senior girls.

Students at the Oak Park-River Forest High School had actively collected signatures urging the vote for the 18-21 age group. It was an exciting moment when Lynn accompanied the girls to the Suffrage Committee so that they could present these petitions in person.

Eileen Subak recalls: "Lynn asked me to go with our high school girls to see the newly restored Old Capitol Building, soon to be the meeting place of the delegates. As all of us stood in the balcony looking down at this beautiful room where so much history had been written, and would be again, I thought of Irville Baldwin's words the night before. In her mother's time the town drunk could vote but Mrs. Baldwin's mother could not. And I thought how easily everything had come to me..without effort.. without thought. And now this younger generation so intensely interested in extending the right to vote to yet another group. The room below us reflecting as it did the best of the old paralleled our hopes that the best of the old would be preserved in the new Constitution."

Leaguers went home with renewed interest, yet the work to be done was almost anti-climactic. All the groundwork had been laid over the past decades, yet nothing was left to chance. "We sought the deep involvement of the high school government classes in work for our new Constitution..door to door canvasses, flyers, copies of the new constitution and league material, controversial amendments were available, there was a village proclamation of December 10 as Constitution Day.." There was a "public meeting ...our four Con Con delegates were on the platform to answer questions." And when the votes were counted "our communities turned in one of the largest proportionate YES votes in the state."

But before all this, league had had to do one last thing: review the new Constitution to see if it met league criteria for support.

*"IT WAS SIMPLY WONDERFUL,"* as chairman Peggy Saecker summed it up, *"THE LEAGUE FEELS WE GOT EVERYTHING WE HOPED FOR."*

EPILOGUE

So there it is.

Eileen Markens said, "I do not take the credit. Caroline Goltermann was to have had a baby during her term but will have it during my term and I certainly do not take the credit."

So, like the other Eileen, I do not take the credit..you wrote it..these are your words..and you will go on writing..

As Hannah Beye Fyfe wrote:

Bless you, my children,  
Go on, keep going,  
And have fun  
While you are in the doing.