

# History of the Santa Fe County League of Women Voters

## The 1920s

By Jennie Crystle

The League of Women Voters of Santa Fe was established in August 1920, at the time American women won the right to vote. Carrie Chapman Catt, suffragette and first President of the new national LWV, appointed Ina Sizer Cassidy to lead the new state League in New Mexico. Cassidy lived in Santa Fe and started the local branch of the League the same year to support the state and national organizations.

Cassidy had the right to vote in Colorado but lost it when she followed her husband, the painter Gerald Cassidy, to New Mexico, where women did not have that right. That experience motivated Cassidy to political activism. She became very active in Santa Fe even before national suffrage. Along with such well-known Santa Feans as Mary Austin and Witter Bynner, Cassidy marched in New York City in one of the largest women's suffrage marches.

The Santa Fe League was one of the first important local leagues to emerge in the 1920s. According to Cassidy, it took four years for the League to become an active and viable organization due to the pressure of partisan politics. She also organized local Leagues throughout the state, consolidating the support of women who had fought to win the right to vote. The initial goal of the new organization was to educate women about government and voting and politics, to register women to vote and to get out the vote. The League conducted discussions and lectures concerning politics and public speaking to help women become familiar with their newfound citizenship. Augustine Stoll, Estelle Twitchell, Mrs. John T. Murphy and Mrs. Tom White were among those listed as early members.

At the beginning of the 1920s women were not allowed to

run for public office in New Mexico: that took a constitutional amendment. Adelina (Nina) Otero-Warren was among the first women in the state to run for office, running in 1922. Even if they did not run themselves, many other women who had fought for suffrage asserted their new rights and political power by becoming active in party politics and in supporting candidates.

In her interview with League member Beatrice Chauvenet, Cassidy noted that most women in New Mexico at the time were more interested in partisan politics, in working for their party candidate, than in organizing women to vote or in working on general women's issues in a nonpartisan way. Maud Wood Park, national League president, explained the League's position in the Feb. 13, 1922, *Santa Fe New Mexican*:

*... the new League is not affiliated with any party and "being all-partisan, it affords an opportunity for women of all parties to come together in an organization devoted solely to the interests of women as voters, and there take counsel together for the accomplishment of their aims." Further, she stated: "The League's purpose is to develop women citizens into intelligent and self-directing voters and to turn their votes toward constructive social ends, to instill education in citizenship; to promote forums and public discussions of civic reforms and to support needed legislation."*

Ruth Barton of Las Vegas, N.M., became president of the New Mexico League after Ina Sizer Cassidy moved on to focus on local issues in Santa Fe County.

The Santa Fe League took on several very controversial issues from the beginning, including the highlights below.

### **League accomplishments in the 1920s:**

- Supported the League of Nations
- Studied and discussed International Relations
- Taught women about voting and how to be citizens
- Promoted the Social Hygiene Committee
- Studied funding of the Child Welfare department and home for "mental defectives." [the term used in the 1920s]
- Examined divorce laws and their enforcement
- 1923, Mrs. Estelle Twitchell and Mrs. John T. Murphy represented the League in Rome, Italy, at the International Congress of the League of Women Voters
- Urged the state Legislature to improve laws to suppress prostitution

**LWVSFC founder Ina Sizer Cassidy had the right to vote in Colorado but lost it when she followed her husband, painter Gerald Cassidy, to New Mexico. That experience motivated Cassidy to political activism.**

- Sought to eradicate venereal disease

In the Spring of 1921, Anne Webster, former resident of Cimarron, N.M., was sent back to Santa Fe from New York city as the representative of the LWVUS Social Hygiene Committee. (She was also an attorney and served as chief counsel to LWVUS.) Through her work, the Legislature passed a model vice-repressing measure.

Before this law, the only measure referring in any way to prostitution was that prohibiting the maintenance of houses of "ill fame" within seven feet of a school yard. The legislature also passed an injunction-abatement bill so citizens could declare a house of "ill fame" a nuisance and

**The Legislature passed a bill allowing citizens to declare a house of "ill fame" a nuisance and proceed against its continuance by law instead of waiting for police to act.**

proceed against its continuance by law instead of waiting for the police to act. Anne Webster later settled permanently in Santa Fe and lived on Garcia Street, close to Ina Sizer Cassidy and Margretta Dietrich, other community activists and leaders of the League.

Many of the early members were not able to limit their League work to an impartial, all-partisan position on issues and politics, so the group eventually dissolved around 1928. There were LWVSFC meetings held from 1921 to 1928 in Santa Fe, according to *The Santa Fe New Mexican's* Society Page announcements.

The articles in *The New Mexican* ceased around this time, and we do not yet know all the details of what happened; please help us if you have any possible leads.

# The 1950s

By Jennie Crystle

As far as we know, the LWVSFC was dormant until 1951, when a group of Santa Fe women who had been involved with the League in other states organized to revive the League under new, nonpartisan rules of incorporation. They were joined by several of the women who had been active in the Santa Fe League during the 1920s. The newly reorganized League had 25 charter members and a \$300 budget. The membership grew to about 150 members by 1954. The purpose of the League at the time was “promoting the participation of citizens in government,” and members worked to end abuses of the election process. One League member, Anne Reed Cassidy, recalled “voters were openly given bottles of wine at the polls after casting their votes.”

Over time, the focus of the League evolved to one of promoting positions on policy issues, good government and voter education. League leaders believed that a fully informed electorate would help to promote good government. “Politics is everybody’s business” was a League slogan at the time.

Initial leaders included: Ina Sizer Cassidy, Margretta Dietrich (owner of El Zagan on Canyon Road), Beatrice Chauvenet, Augustine Stoll, Gertrude Landman, Lorraine Lavender and Dr. Bertha Dutton. These women had either been involved in League work in the past, came from other states that had an active League or were persuaded by friends to become involved. At the time, local politics were quite corrupt and many elections were actually decided behind closed doors.

Violet K Kochendoerfer commented on the purpose of the early candidate forums in her book about 1950s Santa Fe:

*The LWVSFC initiated the idea of candidate meetings. At*

*first, Spanish candidates boycotted the meetings because it had never been done before, then they started attending when they saw that it was to their favor to do so. They started asking, "Who are these ladies?" In the '50s, candidates would buy votes with 10-dollar bills in envelopes and would send limos to drive people to the polls. (The League opposed this practice.)*

More than 500 people attended the first candidate forum. It was considered to be a great success at the time because it got candidates to address specific issues so voters could make an informed choice. The League also addressed the need for a merit system in state government. Workers were often hired because of whom they knew rather than because of their qualifications.

In the early 1950s, the League studied problems in state government with the intention of recommending legislation. The focus was on an improved personnel system based on merit, improved budgetary procedures and better election laws. The League also completed many voter-services tasks, including writing notices (in Spanish and English) that urged citizens to vote; distributing notices before City Council elections; writing brochures containing candidate biographies and information; and constructing voter-registration booths at local businesses.

The League held its meetings and events at La Posada and at the Art Museum Women's Board Room. It promoted discussions and unit meetings about national and international affairs. These focused on national political issues, including: a liberal trade policy; the Bricker amendment (a proposed constitutional amendment to limit treaty powers of the president); and conservation of natural resources. The League met with U.S. Sen. Clinton P. Anderson, U.S. Rep. John J. Dempsey and U.S. Rep. A.M. Fernandez to discuss these issues with the membership and public in a nonpartisan way.

*The Santa Fe New Mexican* called the group "watchdogs in high heels" during the controversial fight to get fluoride in the water, as well as "little old ladies in tennis shoes."

### **League accomplishments in the 1950s:**

- Researching and writing a "Know Your Town" survey of Santa Fe (by Dr. Bertha Dutton)
- Initiating City Manager Ordinance and lobbying for its passage

- Studying the role of City Government in health care
- Conducting a study of local education
- Studying and promoting fluoridation of water
- Studying Police Ordinance and personnel requirements
- Registering citizens to vote and getting out the vote
- Studying election procedures and functions of city government
- Conducting well-attended candidate forums
- Hosting meetings on international relations

## The 1960s

By Jane Kadlubek

**When voting machines were introduced in 1964, LWVSFC arranged for one to be displayed in the courthouse lobby so voters could understand it before elections.**

The League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County bought its office chairs with S&H Green Stamps and often worked out of a makeshift office in the League president's home while looking for affordable space. In spite of this, throughout the 1960s the League was a powerful, respected voice for honest and effective government.

The League's firm advocacy for voter rights and effective government prompted editors and politicians to refer to the League as

"the vigilantes in high heels," "New Mexico's third party," "the watch dogs," "the plague of women voters" and "one of New Mexico's real live-wire organizations." One *New Mexican* editorial stated: "There's a bunch of gals in Santa Fe who go around sticking their noses into everybody's business.... And we say, more power to you, ladies."

A primary issue throughout the '60s was election reform. The involvement by the League of Women Voters in the voting process caused discomfort for local political machines. Maurice Trimmer, in *The Albuquerque Journal*, observed "politicians from both parties feel the LWV is a bunch of 'nice Nellies' trying to interfere with 'the game' as it is played in New Mexico."

### **Curtailling Voting Shenanigans**

"The game," at that time, included openly buying votes and voter "instruction" by poll workers in the voting booth. In 1960, League poll watchers reported visits to polling

places by liquor trucks and the use of hand signals by poll workers wishing to instruct the voter without tipping off the poll watchers. League poll watchers reported some "skulduggery" in 1966. They also noted that both political parties had failed to ensure that the polls were properly staffed.

The League presented the County Clerk with a list of recommendations, including training for all election workers, stricter controls over providing voters with assistance in the voting booth, instructions for how to cast a write-in vote, enforcing a strict closing time and smaller precincts. It also reported illegal voter registration at the Post Office and stated that the election code "desperately" needed revision. Members' involvement as poll watchers was recognized by the writers of the 1962 Fiesta Melodrama with the inclusion of a character named Mabel Pollwatcher. Mabel was the president of the League of Women Goat-Getters and was played by Julia Seton.

In the 1960s the League also supported legislation to revise absentee-ballot rules, maintain up-to-date voter-registration lists and ensure positive voter identification. In 1961 the League put out a call for members to help pass out election materials, stating "Vacation, Fiesta and kids will all be gone, so put a load of washing in that gem of an automatic washer and get out and work to help distribute material." When voting machines were introduced in 1964, the League arranged for one to be displayed in the lobby of the courthouse so voters could study and understand it before the elections. In 1967 and 1968 the League agenda included a study of local voting procedures. The state League chose revision of the election code as a study and, by the end of the decade, the code had been revised and primary elections had been moved from August to early May.

In 1961, the Voter Education Committee arranged for Santa Fe County Legislative candidates to appear on KOB-TV to discuss their platforms, and in 1964 it produced a weeklong radio program on KTRC Radio's *Open Line* that aired every morning. The live program featured interviews by League members with Santa Fe candidates for state and county offices. In September 1964 the League sponsored Women Voters Week to encourage women to vote. Slogans for the week were "Your vote makes a difference" and "Each one reach one." Each member was to encourage and convince one person to vote in the upcoming election. In 1968,

members made trips to San Juan Pueblo to educate pueblo residents about voting procedures and registration.

### **LWVSFC Creates City Master Plan**

In 1960 the League adopted a study of responsibilities and powers of the City Planning Commission and City Council in regard to city planning. This would prove to be a task that spanned the decade. In 1961 the city was experiencing a growth spurt that included new government buildings, new

**1967 brought urban renewal to Santa Fe and the need to make sure the new plans complied with the City Master Plan.**

housing developments, low-cost housing and a college. The League studied the need and purpose for having a comprehensive Master Plan. Consensus was reached in favor of a plan to be “implemented by City Ordinances with emphasis on orderly development under a strong planning department.” The plan was written and accepted by the City Council and mayor, but there was no commitment to implement it. Exceptions to the plan were regularly made by the

City Council without consulting with the City Planning Commission or City Planner. The approval of Rocky’s Market on West Alameda was one example.

The League supported and monitored the City Council’s adherence to the Master Plan. It opposed Tito Griego’s request for rezoning the corner of Manhattan and Garcia Streets to commercial. Griego’s request was denied after the League sent a letter to the City Council reminding them that spot rezoning requests were in complete violation of the Master Plan and inconsistent with orderly city planning. The Master Plan was updated in 1966, and League members were urged to keep an eye on happenings because a group of county property owners within the five-mile zone had petitioned the city to set up zoning regulations governing the area.

1967 brought urban renewal to Santa Fe and the need to make sure the new plans complied with the City Master Plan. Issues with the City Master Plan came up again in 1969 with the Central Business District Plan, which would increase the height maximum from three stories to six in specific locations and would establish double- or triple-deck parking lots in several downtown areas. The League board sent letters

to the City Planning Commission, Planning Office and City Council in defense of keeping the current ordinance.

### **City-County Planning**

In 1964 the relationship between the city and county was chosen as a study, and that drew the county into the planning discussion. LWVSFC made the following recommendations to Santa Fe County Commissioners: to adopt applicable portions of the City Master Plan so that the county and city could coordinate efforts to plan for the area immediately adjacent to the city; to check with the District Attorney as to exactly what authority this action might give them; to appoint three people to the County Planning (or zoning) Commission on advice of the District Attorney; and to confer with the City Planning Department and City Council as soon as possible.

Other concerns included entrance highways becoming like Cerrillos Road and the need to keep natural terrain for recreational uses—not merely camping, picnicking, and fishing, but for general use. The League stressed the need for coordination of orderly long-range planning as essential efforts between the city and county.

The County Commission voted to study LWVSFC's recommendations. Later it informed the League that it would not have the funds to take on a study until the new fiscal year. It went on to table the matter of zoning and planning.

In 1965 a consensus was reached on the results of the League's study of the relationship between the city and county. The League agreed that the most important problem was a lack of adequate income for the county to function properly. A reassessment of all property in Santa Fe County was seen as the best solution to the County's financial problems. The following year the League agenda included a study of the techniques of property appraisal and assessment. League observers attending City Council and County Commission meetings discovered the need for the clarification of the entire local tax structure. They also observed that the Assessor's office was handicapped by antiquated methods and equipment and needed to update billing methods.

City and county planning appeared on the League agenda again in 1968, with the advent of urban renewal, the Model Cities Program and the resolution of what to do with the downtown Mid High property. As part of the Human Resources National Study, the local League took a three-hour bus

tour of the Model Cities area, which extended from Agua Fría Street to Rosario Street on both sides of St. Francis Drive. The League presented a run-down of the sequence of events in urban-renewal planning, reported on public housing in Santa Fe, came to consensus on fair housing and introduced a Model Cities program study.

### **Medically Indigent Fund**

Another important county issue taken on by LWVSFC was the County Medically Indigent Fund. Throughout the 1960s the League was the only organization interested in the governmental aspect of this fund and was the prime force behind improvements made in administration.

The League position was that "monies used for the fund are public funds and should be administered as such and that as many medically indigent citizens as possible should be helped with the money."

Prior to LWV involvement, a lump sum was turned over to St. Vincent Hospital. City and county officials saw that as a subsidy for the hospital and disagreements over its intended use and administration were ongoing. League work resulted in an agreement that the County was responsible for administering the fund and checking qualifications of all patients. There was also acknowledgement that patients in nursing homes qualified for use of the funds, as did prescription medications. Payments were only to be made after they were approved by the administering agency and payments for nursing-home stays and medications were to be paid at the same rate as those paid by the state Welfare Fund. The League continued to work on improvements to the Indigent Fund budgeting and on City and County welfare coordination of contracts and budget.

Investigation of a City Charter for Santa Fe became part of the League program when a study of the "forms and procedures of city government with emphasis on municipal charters" was conducted and continued as part of the program in 1963. Consensus was reached on the City Charter Study in 1964. The League position stated: "The membership is not actually opposed to a charter for Santa Fe but decided it is not feasible at this time due to the State Constitution which does not permit Home Rule, state law which does not permit division of powers in a council-mayor-manager form of government to provide for policy making by the council-mayor and administration by the manager. Also a provision



A 1960 tea celebrating 40 years of LWVSFC with period dress: Mrs. Kelly Carnahan, Mrs. George March, Mrs. Wheeler Glen, Mrs. Howard Rosenthal, Mrs. D.D. Lord Sr., Mrs. Jack Woodard.

for Initiative and Referendum and Recall of a charter might be too cumbersome.”

LWVSFC was also active in studying and advocating for numerous social and natural-resource issues. It supported the building and funding of a juvenile detention center in Santa Fe, supported professional hiring practices and wages for the police department, and, despite an ongoing firestorm of protest by state politicians, supported the State Personnel Act. It evaluated Economic Opportunity Authority programs, studied poverty and land titles in Northern New Mexico and met with the city engineer to discuss flood-control plans. In 1969 the League studied methods for prevention of air and water pollution in Santa Fe County. It looked in depth at the Four Corners Power Plant and its effect on air quality. It also studied the effect on the Rio Grande of a proposed pulp mill in Southern Colorado.

### **State Constitutional Convention**

The 1960s ended with the State Constitutional Convention that LWVNM was instrumental in bringing about. The League was active in planning, educating and keeping the public informed, as well as monitoring the sessions and getting out the vote for ratification of the final draft. In 1964, LWVSFC began a study of the state constitution in order to be prepared when the Governor’s Commission on Constitutional Revision made its presentation to the Legislature the following year. The state League published 100,000 copies of a booklet entitled *What Have We Here? A Brief Look at New Mexico’s Constitution*, which was designed to prepare the public for a

vote on the Call to Convention. The Santa Fe League helped to distribute the booklet to the public via schools, public offices, political parties, television and radio stations, Pueblo leaders, religious leaders, Community Action offices and labor unions. One delegate candidate liked the booklet so well that he added his name and picture and distributed it as his work. In 1968, the Call to Convention was on the general election ballot and was actively supported by the League. The measure passed and, in 1969, the State League made recommendations regarding the format, election of delegates, location, time frame and pay for delegates.

The LWVSFC and the Santa Fe Jaycees sponsored a forum, attended by over 200 people, for the 12 Santa Fe County candidates for delegate seats to the Constitutional Convention. During the Convention, League members observed delegates, staffed an information center, and published and distributed a Convention newsletter. Once the new constitution was drafted, LWVSFC worked hard for its ratification.

LWVSFC also held teas and luncheons with local and state politicians as speakers in the 1960s. In 1962, Santa Fe Mayor Pat Hollis declared September 24 "League Day in Santa Fe." Local artist Tommy Macaione offered to donate the proceeds from the sale of his next painting to the League if they would help him sell it.

The League set up displays in the window of the First National Bank building supporting the United Nations and dramatizing a League study of the judicial system.

In a decade in which the United States witnessed major social change, LWVSFC played an important role in bringing honesty and reason to local politics. Local opinion about the League was well summed up in an editorial in *The New Mexican*: "While some politicians admittedly still look with suspicion (or perhaps fear) at the women, we believe the League is a good thing. The gals have continually displayed their independence at the polls. And the fact that they are not captives of any group is certainly a healthy influence on the political scene."

### **Highlights of 1960-1970 League Activities**

- Supported absentee-ballot rule revision
- Educated the public on the use of voting machines
- Conducted radio interviews with candidates for office

- Sponsored TV coverage for explaining candidate views
- Was instrumental in adoption of a City Master Plan
- Called for reappraisal of all county property
- Studied Urban Renewal and Model Cities
- Helped improve administration of Medically Indigent Fund
- Supported development of a juvenile detention center
- Advocated for fluoridation of the city's water supply
- Educated the public about New Mexico's Constitution and the need for a Constitutional Convention
- Published and distributed the convention newsletter
- Supported ratification of a new constitution
- Participated the first League Day at the Legislature
- Played host to eight female leaders of African countries

**In 1970, the League challenged the mayor's firing of the police chief, city attorney and other top officials without consulting the city manager.**

## The 1970s

By Adair Waldenberg and Jody Larson

In the early 1970s, the League engaged with relevant issues of the day, including support for the Equal Rights Amendment and of the early environmental movement. The League also promoted a bigger voice for improved, more transparent local government.

In 1970, the League completed a comprehensive study supporting a master planning process and endorsing a Green Belt around the city, increased vigilance to preserve the distinctive and historical character of Santa Fe, cooperation with neighborhood groups, scattered-site public housing and the Model Cities program. The League took a position against rezoning the southeast corner of St Michael's Drive for an extension of St Francis Drive.

The League continued advocating for a merit-based personnel system for the city. In March 1970 it challenged the mayor's firing of the police chief, city attorney and other top officials without consulting the city manager. The League asserted that Mayor Gonzales violated the Municipal Code. Also in 1970, on a national issue, it supported the national drive for congressional representation for the District of Colum-

bia. It also produced a fact sheet for the local school bond election. An editorial in *The New Mexican* on Feb. 12, 1970, saluted the League of Women Voters on its 50th birthday, and especially recognized the League's leadership in keeping citizens informed about voting and about how to participate in government.

In 1971 the League produced a fact sheet on a city bond issue for support of the airport and sewer system. The League conducted several important studies, including: education; pollution; city and county planning; city and county administration; and support for the medically indigent. A May 10 editorial in *The New Mexican* listed and applauded this study and action agenda. The League produced a detailed report that took a position against mobile homes in the historic district and supported mobile-home regulations for the city and the county. The report also urged Santa Fe to seek better alternative housing for those of low and moderate income. The City Council used many but not all of the League's recommendations.

In 1972 the League undertook a study of merging city and county government. Also that year, LWVSFC was one of 300 local Leagues receiving a Ford Foundation grant to study election systems. In 1973 the League supported continuing the quarter-cent levy for the County Medically Indigent Fund. Following a consensus meeting in November, the League announced its support of the city acquisition of the municipal water system because the city would be "more responsive" than a private company.

### **Election Reform and Open Meetings**

In 1974 the local and state Leagues lobbied a great deal for legislation on election reform and open meetings. This led to Senator Dunn (D-Otero), chair of the State Finance Committee, to refer to it as the "Plague of Women Voters" and a "bunch of old biddies." Dora Battle was quoted in the *Albuquerque Journal* as saying they "lobbied him as hard as we knew how." She said that she "resented elected officials who believe citizens have no right to stick their noses into government." The February 14, 1974, editorial in the *Santa Fe News* included the following:

*We don't always agree with the League. As a matter of record we don't agree with them fifty percent of the time, but we respect them one hundred percent.*

*You can't help but look with admiration at the way they "poke their noses" into government. It's just unfortunate for all of us there isn't more like them.*

Unfortunately, the bills for election reform and open meetings were defeated.

Rapid growth in Santa Fe became a real concern for the public, and the League joined other groups in a federation opposing unrestrained growth. Other activities included a study of the County Master Plan, producing a citizens handbook entitled *This is Santa Fe* and in April 1975 issuing a report of the Public Protection Study Committee.

The League was instrumental in establishing the Santa Fe Farmers Market, which opened on July 20, 1971. According to a story in the July 18 *New Mexican*, "The project was initiated last October by the Human Resources Committee of the League of Women Voters of Santa Fe." During the 1970s a Farmers Market Director served on the League board, and a League member served on the Farmers Market board.

Local League members lobbied Congress to propose the federal Equal Rights Amendment, and LWVSFC promoted passage of the Equal Rights Amendment to the New Mexico constitution. At about the same time, LWVSFC bylaws were changed to acknowledge a change that had occurred at the League of Women Voters of the United States 1974 convention to admit men as regular members. The first man admitted as a full member locally was Dr. Jacob Trapp, husband of longtime member Helen Trapp.

The LWVSFC took part in many studies at the local, state, and national level during the 1970s. A partial list of the local program includes the amount and impact of federal funds in Santa Fe (for example, Revenue Sharing and Housing and Urban Development funds); a two-year study of education and alternative school in Santa Fe public schools; updates to the local position on health care for the medically indigent and to the City-County Planning position; consensus on the City Master Plan and historical character; and a study on local water franchise negotiations, which resulted in a position and monitoring of the meetings of the Water Franchise

**LWVSFC changed its bylaws to admit men as regular members in the '70s. The first man admitted as a full member locally was Dr. Jacob Trapp.**

Negotiating Committee.

The League studied public education in Santa Fe, including alternative education, and presented a report to the Santa Fe Board of Education in February 1976 outlining six goals for an alternative high school.

The League also conducted an in-depth study of Santa Fe County government, including its budget, problems and trends, and its proposed General Plan. Some of the LWVSFC questions to the County Commissioners on the General Plan will be asked in later decades: Why aren't there more public hearings? Which hydrologist do you believe? Are there adequate provisions for inspection and enforcement? And, finally, what happens after 1990? These same concerns would arise as the LWVSFC followed the development of the Santa Fe County Sustainable Growth Management Plan in 2009 and 2010.

In addition to its studies, the Santa Fe League held several public events to educate local residents on important issues and to provide for public input. These included a Public Protection seminar in April 1975; a public meeting on Problems of Energy in October 1976; and a seminar for community leaders, "Exploring America's Futures," in 1977. In addition, the League produced a four-part television series on troubled children funded by a grant from the New Mexico Humanities Council. On the fun side, the League regularly entered floats in the Fiesta parade, even winning prizes several times.

Throughout the 1970s, the League conducted voter-registration drives and produced voters' guides and candidate forums. The League also helped the County Bureau of Elections in October 1975 to figure out who lived in two new precincts on the southwest side of town, where two precincts had been split into three. In 1979 the LWVSFC undertook a project to acquaint sixth-graders with voter-registration processes in accordance with State Department of Education requirements.

Although not a League accomplishment, it should be noted that the first woman elected to the City Council was a League member, Dora Battle. In reporting this event, the April-May 1976 *Voter* notes that League members Bea Chauvenet and Norma Teutsch had also been candidates for City Council in the past. In 1976, the League held a 25th anniversary celebration at the Inn at Loretto attended by



Joan Konopak, Janet Repa, Vicki Erhart  
in the 1976 Follies

80 members and friends.

### **Highlights of 1970-1980**

- Founded the Santa Fe Farmers Market
- Reviewed and participated in the Model Cities Program
- Published updated "This Is Santa Fe" in 1974

and 1979, marketing it to local residents and businesses

- Produced television series on troubled children funded by a grant from New Mexico Humanities Council
- Designed and implemented a public education project on energy conservation, "Dress Up Dial Down," for residences and small businesses, which presented ideas on how to save energy
  - Helped to establish and staff a Volunteer Information Service, which opened in October 1977 to match potential volunteers with government agencies
  - Supported city acquisition of the water system
  - Worked for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment
  - Earned recognition from Santa Fe Mayor Art Trujillo, who proclaimed the week of September 3-9, 1978, "League of Women Voters of Santa Fe Week"
    - Familiarizes sixth-graders with voter registration
    - Lobbied for legislation on election reform and open meetings
  - Studied merging city and county government
  - Conducted studies concerning education, pollution, and city and county planning and administration
    - Presented a report to the Santa Fe Board of Education on public education, including alternative education
    - Completed a comprehensive study supporting Master Planning
      - Advocated for a merit-based city personnel system
      - Conducted an in-depth study of county government
      - Created the LWVSFC Follies spoofing local politicians

## **The 1970s Follies: A short History by Marianne Hale**

The initial inspiration for the Follies came in the 1950s in a small League of Women Voters unit on the south side of Chicago. We had no budget of our own for supplies or publicity, and a small group of us decided to hold a potluck with some kind of entertainment as a fundraiser. Another woman and I dreamed up a short political skit to follow the dinner, and it was a great time.

On moving to Santa Fe in 1971, I immediately joined LWVSFC. I came to think we were a little deficient in the lobbying game and suggested doing some similar entertainment here to soften the differences between our members and the politicians. And, as they say, the rest is history. The first show, the Follies of 1976, evolved into a three-act play, with songs, during the Jerry Apodaca governorship. Governor Apodaca and his wife attended, and there was a full house. The next year we graduated to the Hilton ballroom for the dinner and show, and in 1978 we were in the Eldorado ballroom.

Lots of the politicians came and laughed at themselves. What casts we had! They included: Glo & Bill Sawtell, the Konopaks, Gail and Pat Casey, Sally and Ed Evans, Jody Larson and many others. The last show of the 1970s was the one where we concentrated on the City when Sam Pick was mayor and on the incomparable Dora Battle, a League member and city councilor, and Jim Miller, the Superintendent of Schools. The city, county and school board were trading some property and we made that and other swaps part of the plot. The setting was the City Council Chinese laundry with the mayor wielding a big box of soap powder to "clean up the city."

Then there was a hiatus because I became a real-estate broker and was working ALL the time. In 1991, however, a group of former stars pleaded "Just one more," so there was a Follies of 1991. The setting was a boat on the Santa Fe River, and most of the songs dealt with water. We lampooned the current City Councilors and Debbie Jaramillo, who sat in the front row, loving every minute.

## The 1980s

By Marian Graves



**Becky Frenkel has been active with LWVSFC for decades.**

**T**hrough the 1980s, League deputy registrars raised their tables in heavily trafficked areas, at stores, churches, schools, retirement homes, fairs, banks, Realtors meetings, colleges, naturalization ceremonies, and even in the Bureau of Elections office. On the Fourth of July 1982, Uncle Sam (June Jameson), in striped trousers

and white beard, led the walking float proclaiming "If you don't vote, don't complain." Candidate forums were held, and voter guides were published by *The Santa Fe New Mexican* and distributed about the city. Monday and Tuesday of election week, members provided polling place information to callers by telephone—in 1984, answering 330 calls in two days. Following all local elections, the League printed and distributed directories of public officials.

In addition to candidate forums, the League sponsored other forums on local issues, such as the City's purchase of the water company in 1985. The League also gave lobbying workshops before Legislative sessions; they were very impressive and attracted League members and other lobbyists.

In 1980, the League formed a committee that met with many other organizations to learn their concerns and used this information to draft a Code of Ethics for the City. Many League members joined the Fiesta walking float that was

constructed to reflect support for the Code of Ethics. At the September 1981 unit meetings, the Code draft was explained and discussed. The Board of the League presented a formal statement of its support to the Urban Policy Board in October. The Code of Ethics was passed unanimously by the City Council on February 10, 1982. Since then the League has participated in advocacy for many changes to the Code.

League committees were a source of study and information. Very popular was the Committee on International Relations. It supported the national positions of the League of Women Voters, studied the issues and arranged meetings on topics of national interest. National Security was the topic of the general meeting in April 1985; a video on Third World challenge to U.S. policy was shown in units in October; a general meeting in March 1987 covered U.S. relations with Central America in a panel discussion; Arab/Israeli study was an item in 1988, as was arms control. The 40th Anniversary of the United Nations celebration at St. John's College was cosponsored by the League and the New Mexico Peace Education Fund.

The Natural Resources Committee worked to encourage and strengthen recycling and supported the Business Industry Recycling Program. In 1980's Historical/Hysterical parade, the League's float featured newspaper pompons and tin cans promoting recycling. Water quality, contamination, and handling of hazardous waste and toxic substances were all matters of interest. The Land Use Committee was also concerned with the environment, as well as city-county planning and the Northwest Quadrant. Agriculture and public transportation came under discussion also. Bus tours through the extraterritorial zone with Mary Helen Follings-tad of the County Land Use Department in 1987 and to the Albuquerque petroglyphs two years later were special go-see trips.

The position of Membership Chair has always been important, and Fran Neigh believed in bringing fun to the job. She planned a "Night Under the Stars" at Ghost Ranch, an overnight event attended by 52 members and friends, for telescope viewing of Halley's Comet; the additional "glorious view of Saturn" was unforgettable. Fran started Friendship Luncheons after morning meetings, planned a "Men's Night Out" and led a Friendship Weekend to Bosque del Apache. Such activities may account for the 1982 League member-

20

ship reaching 215; of these, 50 were employed full-time, 24 part-time, and 9 were men.

In 1985, largely through League efforts at researching, writing and lobbying, the New Mexico Legislature passed the Continuing Care Act, which provides for Continuing Care Communities and the State Agency on Aging to make available essential information to residents, prospective residents and others upon request. That same year League member Nancy Rodriguez became the first woman to hold the position of Santa Fe County Manager.

Mayor Sam Pick, in 1986, asked the League to review the City Campaign Finance Code. In another act of recognition of League members' capabilities, he appointed Bernie Beenhouwer to the City Council. And in 1988 Linda Grill was elected to the Board of County Commissioners.

The Voter Education Project for sixth-graders, much admired and copied, continued through 1982. The Child Care Committee in 1987 completed the Day Care Booklet, describing the various facilities available in Santa Fe. Other active interests ranged from health-care costs to juvenile concerns to affordable housing.

The corps of public meeting monitors was an often unrecognized group of members who spent countless hours monitoring and writing about official meetings. Two County Commission monitors were vocal in their disappointment at being denied the packets used by the commissioners. This was eventually remedied, but a sense of unease at the true basis for Commission actions remained. The LWVSFC supported the proposed change in the Board from three members to five, which passed. In the next decade Betty Platts, the dedicated monitor who, alone in the Commission Chambers, watched, often until the wee hours, was elected County Commissioner. Never underestimate the power of a woman monitor!

### **Highlights of Achievements 1980-1990**

- City Code of Ethics drafted by the League
- Voter-education project for sixth-graders continued
- Supported the county Indigent Fund
- Encouraged and publicized recycling
- Sponsored forum on the City's purchase of the water company in 1985
- Produced Day Care Booklet, a catalog of services for pre-

school children, 1987

- Published directories of public officials
- Supported change in County Commission from three members to five
- Provided lobbying workshops before Legislative sessions
- Worked on City Campaign Finance Code at request of mayor

## **The 1990s**

By Julia Nathanson

Since 1951, the LWVSFC has grown, shrunk and grown again. Whichever the decade, however, the League continued its dedication to the goals of voter education and public education. All League achievements were the result of the volunteers who sat for countless hours monitoring public meetings, wrote countless pages of reports; attended League meetings, valued objectivity, strove for the truth and always showed both sides of an issue. Despite the seriousness of their commitment, League members of the 1990s always had time for the occasional holiday parade and holiday party where they brought gifts for the women and children at Esperanza Women's Shelter.

In the 1990s, the League, in its nonpartisan way, continued its dedication to policy advocacy and to collecting and presenting information to its members and the public. It took a position only after study and member consensus. Wherever members saw government lacking or public needs not being met, they initiated a formal study or monitored meetings and advocated based on League positions.

Social and governance problems became particular concerns of League members in the 1990s. For example, a League member elected to the Santa Fe County Commission led a study of land management amid community concern about growth, water and zoning policies. A study of sexual-assault trial penalties helped bring about important changes in the law, protecting more children. After a member found discrepancies in both city and county budgets, it became clear that monitoring budgets and government documents is as important as monitoring meetings.

The Santa Fe League was very lucky to have many excellent leaders and volunteers. One of the greatest legacies

of the League has been producing community leaders and elected officials who go on to work in many organizations and in government positions. To be a success, every leader needs followers and an audience.

### **Story of the Santa Fe Home Rule Charter**

One of the League's greatest accomplishments of the 1990s was its study of and strong advocacy for a Home Rule Charter, which was ultimately approved by the electorate. Santa Fe had been the only city of any size in New Mexico not to have its own charter. A Charter Commission was established in 1994-1995 to draft a Charter, but it was not successful. Then, under pressure from the voters, who had especially become interested in recall, a new Commission was called for in 1997. After the first failure, passage came about in 1997 after two years of study, publicity and effort by the Santa Fe League of Women Voters.

State statute governs who could serve on a Charter Commission. Councilors and the mayor are each allowed one designee to the Commission. There could be no more than one extra person from any registered political party. Mayor Debbie Jaramillo appointed Toney Anaya, past state attorney general and former governor. Councilor Cris Moore appointed League member Julia Nathanson. Other appointed members were Tony Duran, Rudy Maestas, Karl Sommer, Bob Chernock, Steve Farber, Kathy Montoya, and Mary Ann Flores.

The Commission had an excellent attorney from Rio Rancho who had worked with other cities in their development of a charter. The commission reviewed other city charters for content and further checked to see how the elements were working out in practice. The League had a presence at every meeting, primarily represented by Marianna Rivens and Becky Frenkel. Commissioner Julia Nathanson held a public meeting on each subject so the League could make known its position clearly and cogently.

The new home-rule charter addressed many important issues, some of which were cutting-edge. For example, a non-discrimination clause for sexual orientation was included in the section on human and civil rights, perhaps the first in New Mexico. An environmental-protection section stated that the "governing body shall protect, preserve and enhance the city's natural endowments" such as the Escarpment Ordinance. A code of ethics and campaign finance and campaign

practices was included, though it has produced only partial measures from the governing body.

The League considered forms of government other than the "weak mayor" type, which had been the standard here. Members of the Commission felt a "strong mayor" form was more suitable where a majority of councilors could NOT fire any department head as is done in our "weak mayor" forms. This latter practice meant that each senior staffer has nine bosses, a disruptive scenario at best.

Two strong sentiments were at play during the 180 days of the Commission. One was "let's keep things the way they are: and the other was/is the "patron" system that much of Northern New Mexico still embraces. So the "weak mayor" form prevailed. Some did not like the possibility of citizen rights such as initiative, referendum and recall.

To complete the Charter, commission members had to agree to extremely high thresholds for Initiative, Referendum and Recall. But the state called for review and revisions within 10 years, and the majority of us felt that, rather than dither about that, the important thing was to bring the charter to the voters. The charter was put to a vote on Dec. 9, 1997. The community overwhelmingly approved it, and it became effective the following March. Bill Waters, editor of the editorial page at *The New Mexican*, produced a positive editorial regularly and kept the subject in front of the voters.

### **Highlights of League Accomplishments 1990-2000**

- Studied county land use, health care, education, Motor Voter, campaign finance reform, affordable housing, public transportation, families and children, water rights and moving of water from agricultural to urban areas.
- League members served on 13 boards or commissions and as advisor to Government Ethics Task Force
- Published a 96-page Land Use Booklet
- Recommended a pilot Health Insurance Purchasing Cooperative; health care for rural areas; health information system to collect, manage, and evaluate such data; and that all MDs be required to report treatment and outcomes to it.
- Wrote *This Is Santa Fe* handbook.
- League members served as court monitors of certain sexual violence trials; proposed Court Monitors Task Force.
- Home Rule Charter Commission approved League recommendations in Campaign Finance sections of Charter.



**Meredith Machen, Donna Reynolds, Marcy Litzenberg and Adair Waldenberg at a board orientation in 2011.**

- Supported strengthening Extra Territorial Zone Authority
- Sponsored workshop for women interested in running for public office
- Concluded a study of full-time kindergarten, resulting in a position supporting a full day;
  - Studied the assignment of certified early-childhood teachers to primary grades in the Santa Fe school district
  - Completed an education study and advocated for vocational training programs in Santa Fe Public Schools.

## **2000-Present**

By Jennie Crystle

**I**n addition to an evolving reputation, the League experienced quite a bit of change from 2000 to 2010 in response to changes in technology, membership interests and issues affecting Santa Fe County. In contrast to earlier decades, women are likely to be working now, and it is difficult to find time to volunteer. However, a cadre of dedicated and tenacious volunteers allowed the League to remain a relevant advocate for the citizen's right to know and participate, and a thorn in the sides of some.

Voter Services remained an important and successful component of League work with well-attended candidate forums, voter-registration events and voter guides among many other useful publications produced by the League.

In 2008, LWVSFC responded to Santa Fe County's request for transparency audits by partnering with the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government and the Northern New Mexico branch of the ACLU. The team reviewed the county website, formally audited the county's compliance with state transparency statutes and reviewed other aspects of its openness and ease of use. After presenting findings and recommendations in June 2009, LWVSFC moved on to a general study of transparency in local governments and finalized its position in March 2010. The position was presented to the governing bodies of the county, the city, the public schools and the community college, and the League continues to monitor the transparency of all of these local governments. This resulted in an expansion of information available on both the city and county websites. In May 2011, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico adopted a modified form of the transparency position through a concurrence process.

The League education committee focused on improving educational opportunities for Santa Fe County students by studying equity in education and the need for vocational training. School funding and the need for increased funding for schools was also supported. Members of the committee served on advisory boards and monitored Santa Fe Public Schools Board meetings in supporting public education.

The League has been studying the problems of access and payment for care for the medically indigent since 1954, when it supported local government funding of health care for the medically indigent in Santa Fe County and advocated the enactment of the first indigent-care program. Funds are used to support hospital care as well as community-based care for those who either cannot pay their bills or would have to sell their home or become poor in order to do so. This support was reaffirmed through studies in 1972, 1995 and 2000. In 2000 the League analyzed why so few payments were being made to providers and determined that the system for payment approvals was very cumbersome. The League's position was strengthened in 2000 through a study and position advocating priorities for use of the Indigent Care funds and reviewing payments.

As the federal government proposed a large-scale reform of the American health-care system and incentives, the League held a well-attended community forum to discuss aspects of the proposal. The League participated in activities

sponsored by other community organizations in presenting information about health-care reform proposals.

League members monitored land-use policies with a goal of promoting more affordable housing and advocated for increased funding for affordable housing. In more recent years, the League participated in the Santa Fe Association of Realtors' Affordable Housing Project, which included efforts to identify additional funding sources and strategies to increase the availability of affordable homes.

Land use became a League priority as county land-use plans were being developed. The League followed the development of the Santa Fe County Sustainable Growth Management Plan and the accompanying code, testifying before the county Commission in support of strong growth controls and linking land use to water supply. The League advocated for tying all new city development to a proven and adequate water supply.

A study of the management and conservation of water resulted in a position that has been used for advocacy and work with local governments on planning activities. Alternative energy and energy-saving techniques for the home were also the topic of League meetings as members looked at ways citizens could reduce the use of fossil fuels and "go green."

The League adopted a new alternative-energy position in 2008 based on a study that focused on energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in local government buildings. The position, among other things, proposed requiring local green building codes to tie energy conservation to building size. The study also includes cautions on the use of biofuels.

### **2000-2010 League Highlights**

- Completed a study of local government transparency and adopted a position allowing it to advocate to local government.
  - Monitored and provided testimony on the Santa Fe County Sustainable Growth Management Plan and participated in meetings with county officials and others.
  - Studied Santa Fe Community College bond issues and proposed bond-funding schedules, purposes and transparency. The review of finances uncovered errors in property-tax calculations, which were corrected as a result.
  - Studied water and alternative energy and developed

League positions.

- Conducted a climate-change forum in collaboration with Oxfam America.
- Held forum on health-care reform and co-sponsored other health care reform forums.
- Held an open-government forum and general meetings on other timely issues.
- Participated with the media and other nonprofits annually in reviewing sunshine issues.
- Helped Habitat for Humanity build a home for a Santa Fe widow and her family.
- League members served on: SFPS Budget Committee and Citizens' Review Committee; Jemez y Sangre Water Planning Council, advisory Committee to joint City/County Regional Landfill, and the County Health Policy and Planning Commission, the City Ethics Campaign Review Board, the County Development Review Committee, and the Campaign Reform Commission that tightened up rules for contributions and disclosure, and other committees.
- Completed an LWVSFC History project that resulted in the League video *In League, a History of the LWVSFC in Santa Fe, New Mexico*, and this written history.