FROM VICTORY TO VALIDATION:

THE VICTORY STUDY CLUB AND WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN SAN ANGELO, TEXAS, 1942 TO 1975

by

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This dissertation explores the opportunities and limits that white, middle-class housewives experienced in post-World-War-II America. It was a world that my grandmothers, Anna Mae McConnell DeHart and Nell Ruth Smith Edmondson, inhabited.

Passing away at the end of the twentieth century, my grandmothers could hardly have envisioned the possibilities open to their granddaughter in the twenty-first century. It is to them—with all the love in the world—that I dedicate this dissertation, which I hope makes them proud.

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AN "ASSEMBLY OF ORGANIZED WOMANHOOD"

> This is no time for mediocrity in leadership with the constant battle for minds, ballots, and bullets. This is a time for great decisions, and we as mothers, wives, and responsible citizens should go into battle with the armor of intelligence, courage, righteousness, and determination.
>
> -Carolyn Lawrence Pearce, General Federation of Women's Clubs President
> District Six Convention
> Lubbock, Texas, 1966[1]

On Friday, April 2, 1948, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported on a large "assembly of organized womanhood" in West Texas. More than two hundred women gathered at the Hotel Cactus in San Angelo for the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs (TFWC) Annual District Six Heart O' Texas Convention. Most of the women assembled were white, middle-class housewives who belonged to various women's clubs throughout West Texas. Hoping to win a coveted place in the following month's TFWC art competition in Austin, some brought their original photographs and paintings. By the end of the day, thirty-two received recognition for their artistic talents. Yet more than aesthetics were on display at this "assembly of organized womanhood." Several clubs, including San Angelo's own Victory Study Club, reported on their various activities and volunteer work within their communities over the previous year and revealed that clubwomen had been very busy during 1947-48. The local paper acknowledged their hard work. Under the headline "No Pink Tea Side to Women's Clubs," the *San Angelo Evening Standard* informed readers, "Clubwomen do more than attend pink teas. They are expanding their interests and activities beyond their homes and communities. . . . This was indicated in club reports before the District 6, TFWC

[1]Carolyn Lawrence Peace as quoted in "Challenges Ahead: Women Are Urged to Look Forward," *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, May 12, 1966 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1966-67," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

convention today."[2]

Nearly seventy years later, the *Huffington Post* published an article by journalist Gabrielle Moss, whose editor asked her to live a 1950s housewife lifestyle for a week and then write about her experiences. It appears that Moss—as a white, middle-class woman—established the parameters of the experiment based on her own preconceptions of the 1950s woman's daily tasks: she would become a "well-dressed wife," devote herself to "1950s cleaning schedules," prepare "1950s recipes," and practice "she-manners" etiquette that included complimenting her mate on "his physical prowess, his mental acumen, his good looks, his virility." Moss found the experiment distressing. She reflected, "Women were just supposed to kiss everyone's ass" and stay at home.[3] As Moss's assessment indicates, the stereotype of the unhappy, unfulfilled postwar American housewife is alive and well in the twenty-first century. But what if Moss read about that "assembly of organized womanhood" in San Angelo, Texas, in 1948? Perhaps if Moss knew about the activities and activism of postwar housewives, she could have changed the parameters of her experiment and come to a different conclusion about the postwar American housewife's experience.

Historians in recent decades have spilled considerable ink challenging the perception of the cloistered, politically inactive, and unhappy housewife. Popularized by advertisements, magazines, television shows, and Hollywood films, the quintessential stereotypical characterization of the postwar white, middle-class American housewife was that of the

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[2] "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "No Pink Tea Side to Women's Clubs," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 2, 1948 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[3] Gabrielle Moss, "I Spent A Week As A '50s Housewife, And Here's What My Pretty Little Head Learned," *The Huffington Post*, December 21, 2014 (accessed June 10, 2020), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bustle/i-spent-a-week-as-a-50s-housewife-and-heres-what-my-pretty-little-head-learned_b_6220604.html.

devoted, quiescent, and dolled-up suburban woman who methodically cleaned the home, carefully prepared nutritious meals, and unselfishly fulfilled the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of her husband and children at her own expense. Recent scholarship, however, explores the increasing numbers of postwar housewives who worked outside of the home, engaged in union activism, and devoted themselves to various progressive causes.[4]

After World War II, some housewives chose a different avenue to challenge postwar domesticity and expand their local, state, and national influence: they joined a federated women's club. The national General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) and the TFWC began in the Progressive era but experienced a resurgence in club membership during the postwar period. In 1948, three million women belonged to the GFWC, but by 1954, more than eleven million women—mainly white, married, and middle-class housewives—were members of local, state, national, and international chapters of the GFWC.[5] Evident by the numbers of women affiliated with clubs, the women's club movement became a mass movement of housewives in the mid-twentieth century. Curiously, though, very little

[4] For example, see: Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Daniel Horowitz, "Betty Friedan and the Origins of Feminism in Cold War America," *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 9th ed., ed. by Linda K. Kerber, Jane Sherron De Hart, Cornelia Hughes Dayton, Karissa Haugeberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 448-59; Michelle M. Nickerson, "Politically Desperate Housewives," *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 9th ed., ed. by Linda K. Kerber, Jane Sherron De Hart, Cornelia Hughes Dayton, Karissa Haugeberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 460-71.

[5] "Women's Clubs Back Ration Plans for Meat," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 5, 1948; "Women Hold Key to Peace, Federation Spokesmen Say," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, November 9, 1954 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas. Not counted in the GFWC number were African American clubwomen, who belonged to the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and its local and state chapters. Though there was no official policy of segregation in the GFWC, the organization remained largely segregated well into the mid-to-late twentieth century. An estimated number of women belonging to the NACWC in the postwar period is not known as this point in the research, but at least three hundred Texas delegates attended the national convention in 1937. See: Ruthe Winegarten, "Texas Association of Women's Clubs," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 15, 2010 (accessed March 30, 2020), https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vet01; Angela Boswell, *Women in Texas History* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2018), 141.

scholarly attention has been paid to this large postwar "assembly of organized womanhood."

Why did millions of white, middle-class housewives join federated women's clubs? Certainly, club involvement provided opportunities for fellowship, but as the San Angelo District Six Convention in 1948 indicated, there was more to club work than "pink teas" and socialization. Federated women's clubs encouraged housewives to engage in the public sphere, cultivate their education, and improve their communities and nation. The millions of women who participated found these projects and programs rewarding. Though some clubwomen took the opportunity to improve their artistic and literary talents, many more dedicated time to civic pursuits by applying the Progressive clubwomen's historical precedent to argue *again*—this time in the 1950s and 1960s—that women should play a more active role in local, state, national, and international affairs.

This dissertation explores one federated women's club that thrived in San Angelo, Texas from 1942 to 1975: the Victory Study Club. Formed during World War II, the Victory Study Club operated in San Angelo for more than fifty years, with membership fluctuating between thirty to forty-five active members. Unlike other women's clubs in San Angelo, the Victory Study Club was apolitical and secular; the club did not restrict membership to women with certain political or religious convictions. Still, members had much in common: All members were white, middle-class, married women with children. Though most had some level of higher education prior to marriage, they largely abandoned their professions and identified first and foremost as housewives. This identification, however, did not limit their activism in the postwar period. Instead, Victory Study Clubwomen embraced their roles as wives and mothers as a means to advocate for their involvement in the world outside their home. Perhaps with even more vigor than Progressive-era clubwomen, postwar San Angelo

clubwomen drew on "municipal housekeeping" and "maternalist politics" as justifications for their grassroots, state, national, and international activism, and they launched themselves into some of the most challenging issues of the postwar era. The Victory Study Club not only devoted time and money to these issues, but its members also dedicated their minds to study some of the most pressing problems affecting their community and nation. During an era that emphasized maintaining traditional gender roles, belonging to and working in the Victory Study Club provided members with an added benefit: it allowed them to escape postwar domestic confinement.

The history of the US clubwomen's movement begins in the Progressive era, and the Victory Study Club drew many lessons from its forebearers. Karen J. Blairs's *The Clubwoman As Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1886-1914*, published in 1980, was one of the first works to explore the significance of women's clubs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Often depicted as "safely and happily ensconced in a cotton-wool world described as 'the Domestic Sphere," the "Victorian ladies" who formed women's clubs during the Progressive era received little attention prior to Blair's work. She writes, "Clubs have been ignored, dismissed as trivial or frivolous," but she argues that women's clubs were a powerful force for change. Clubwomen not only actively supported progressive polices, such as the Pure Food and Drug Law, the Children's Bureau, the Shephard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Health Act, and the Women's Trade Union League, but many also endorsed women's suffrage as a means to increase women's influence in the public sphere.[6]

In addition to underscoring clubwomen's civic activism during the Progressive era, Blair made a radical claim in her work: that Progressive clubwomen were feminists. Since

[6] Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman As Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, INC., 1980), 1-2, 4.

Progressive-era clubwomen embraced the ideology of separate spheres and did not outwardly attack patriarchal arrangements, this was a new assessment of clubwomen's activism. Blair explains that very few white, middle-class women in the Progressive era "were strong enough to ignore the teachings, sermons, popular magazines, novels, beauty guides, health manuals, fashions, and even phrenology which instructed them to stay home and practice meekness, passivity and subservience," but regardless, women recognized their restrictions. Blair argues, "In both the political world of the militant suffragist and the domestic world of the homemaker, women responded with anger to the limitations placed upon them." What was different, however, was how each group responded to its anger. Militant suffragists took to the streets and publicly denounced the ideology of separate spheres while homemakers often joined women's clubs.[7]

This was a coy strategy to escape "the Domestic Sphere," Blair contends. Women's clubs provided "ways to evade society's restrictions" and "to leave the confines of the home without abandoning domestic values."[8] On the surface, it appeared that clubwomen buttressed the ideology of separate spheres, but they took this ideology and applied it to their work in the public sphere. Clubwomen argued that women had a special and sacred duty to protect and care for not only their own family but also to extend that protection and care into the community and nation. Evoking "municipal housekeeping," clubwomen moved into their communities to "clean up politics, cities, and see after the health and wellbeing of their neighbors."[9] They also embraced "maternalist politics" by "donning the mantle of

[7] Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist,* 3.

[8] Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist,* 3-4.

[9] Paige Meltzer, "The Pulse and Conscience of America: The General Federation and Women's Citizenship, 1945-1960," *Frontiers* 30, no. 3 (2009): 53.

motherhood" to "lobby, create and secure a place for themselves" in politics.[10] Blair argues that these tactics were examples of "nineteenth-century feminism": "those Victorian ladies . . . were [really] feminists under the skin." She speculates that this might have been a more powerful strategy than those who outwardly rejected the ideology of separate spheres. Blair concludes, "If feminism, like heat, could be measured in some analog . . . the total to be found in women's clubs would have been much larger than that in suffrage organizations, because so many more women were engaged in the former."[11]

Since Blair's work, little doubt exists regarding the significance of the Progressive-era women's club movement. Describing the work of the TFWC in the late-nineteenth and the early-twentieth centuries, Angela Boswell writes, "The most remarkable phenomenon to sweep Texas and transform women's lives and expectations was the seemingly innocuous women's club movement."[12] Middle- and-upper-class white women joined women's clubs by the thousands in Texas, and they pushed the state legislature to pass progressive reforms such as child labor laws, additional funding for public schools, and pure food and milk ordinances. Perhaps one of the most significant legislative victories for Texas clubwomen was a 1913 married women's property law, which "gave women control over their separate property." Extending their activism to the community, women's clubs also established 85 percent of the public libraries in Texas. [13]

Just like Progressive-era clubwomen, the Victory Study Club housewives linked their

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[10] Meltzer, "The Pulse and Conscience of America," 53.

[11] Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist*, 1-2.

[12] Angela Boswell, *Women in Texas History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2018), 134.

[13] Boswell, *Women in Texas History*, 138-9.

civic activism to the "Domestic Sphere." Evoking "municipal housekeeping" and "maternalist politics," members believed that caring for their own homes and families also required them to extend activism outside of its walls.[14] This was also true for other federated women's clubs in postwar era, though very little scholarly work is devoted to the postwar women's club movement. One article by Page Meltzer studied the larger GFWC in the postwar period. She found that the organization "imagined all women were first and foremost wives and mothers and therefore homemakers." At the same time, the GFWC stressed that "community work and housework were one and the same," and women's clubs "provided a link between the two."[15] Using tactics similar to Progressive-era clubwomen's resistance to the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres, Victory Study Clubwomen developed programs and projects that resisted postwar domestic confinement without threatening traditional marital arrangements during an era that emphasized maintaining traditional gender roles.

On a broad level, the history of the Victory Study Club in San Angelo contributes to the historiography of Texas, Texas women, and women's activism in the twentieth century. A focus on San Angelo addresses a regional imbalance in the state's history. While much scholarship has been devoted to the study of Texas history east of the ninety-eighth meridian,

[14] These terms are widely used by scholars to describe the activism of the women's club movement during the Progressive era. Jane Addams first describe women's work in the public sphere as "domestic housekeeping," but since then, "municipal housekeeping" has been widely used. Likewise, "maternalist politics" also came into use during the progressive era, particularly in the settlement house movement. For examples, see Jane Addams, "Women and Public Housekeeping" (New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing Co., Inc., 1910); E. V. Burt, "Women Journalists and the Municipal Housekeeping Movement, 1868-1914," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (2002): 519: 520; Pamela C. Swallow, *The Remarkable Life and Career of Ellen Swallow Richards: Pioneer in Science and Technology* (New York: Wiley, 2014); Robyn Muncy, *Creating A Female Dominion in Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[15] Meltzer, "The Pulse and Conscience of America," 50.

comparatively little attention has been devoted to the lands lying to its west. One probable explanation for this omission stems from Texas historiography's nineteenth-century bias that stresses "the founding period of Texas" and "the frontier experience of Anglo culture."[16] It was not until the late nineteenth century that Anglo migrants established permeant settlements in West Texas. The few studies published on San Angelo tend to focus predominantly on its late-nineteenth-century "frontier and pioneer heritage" of early settlers, Fort Concho, buffalo soldiers, cattlemen, and Texas Rangers.[17] Given the slow and late population growth of the region, Paul H. Carlson and Bruce A. Glasrud describe West Texas as "the big empty," which provided a justification for scholars to "largely ignore [West Texas] . . . as a distinct and cultural geographical space."[18]

This nineteenth-century bias in West Texas historiography is also evident in Texas historiography in general, but leading Texas historians are working diligently to amend the chronological imbalance. While nineteenth-century topics still tend to dominate the collective memory of Texans, recent works "provide a comprehensive, unflinching analysis of twentieth-century" and urge scholars to embrace "a modernization framework" that stresses "the importance of more contemporary times and free[s] historians from

[16] John W. Storey and Mary K. Kelly, "Introduction" in *Twentieth-Century Texas: A Social and Cultural History*, eds., John W. Storey and Mary K. Kelly (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2008), 11.

[17] For example: Dee Brown, *Grierson's Raid* (New York: Curtis Books, 1954); Lewis Atherton, *The Cattle Kings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971); J. Evetts Haley, *Fort Concho and the Texas Frontier* (San Angelo: *San Angelo Standard-Times*, 1952); Ken Peery, *The Spirit of San Angelo: The Queen City of West Texas* (Self Published, 2013); Virginia Noelke, *Images of San Angelo: Early San Angelo* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011). An important exception is Arnoldo De León, *San Angeleños: Mexican Americans in San Angelo, Texas* (San Angelo: Fort Concho Museum Press, 1985).

[18] Paul H. Carlson and Bruce A. Glasrud, *West Texas: A History of the Giant Side of the State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), back cover.

overemphasizing the worth of the frontier era." [19] Twenty-first-century historians explore the effects of "agriculture, industrialization, urbanization, economic disparity, migration patterns, and demographic change" in twentieth-century Texas, and there is a concerted effort to give "due attention to the lives of ordinary Texans, instead centering on the traditional 'great man' approach" that is prevalent in so many nineteenth-century topics.[20] Another trend in recent Texas historiography is to expand focus outside of the fields of political and economic history and to emphasize the social and cultural changes that Texans experienced. [21] This twentieth-century focus on Texas history points to a bright future for the field as current scholars broaden traditional narratives and create an inclusive and diverse history of the Lone Star State.

While many Texas historians heed these calls, such trends have been slow to infiltrate West Texas historiography. Few scholarly works on West Texas's twentieth-century history exist. By concentrating on San Angelo after World War II, this dissertation addresses some of the transformations that San Angelo experienced in the postwar period and underscores the importance of West Texas's twentieth-century history on both the state and national levels. Its focus on women's roles in West Texas's development is another significant intervention. In most historical accounts on West Texas, only a few, scattered women make it into the narrative. The women who overwhelmingly do are Anglo Americans, and most

[19] Robert A. Calvert, Arnoldo De León, and Gregg Cantrell, "Preface and Acknowledgments," in *History of Texas*, 5th ed., eds. Robert A. Calvert, Arnoldo De León, and Gregg Cantrell (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley Blackwell, 2014), viii; Walter L. Buenger and Arnoldo De León, "Introduction," in *Beyond Texas Through Time: Breaking Away from Past Interpretations,* ed. Walter L. Buenger and Arnoldo De León (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011), xiii.

[20] Calvert, De León, and Cantrell, *History of Texas,* xvi.

[21] Storey and Kelly, "Introduction" in *Twentieth-Century Texas*, 2, 3, 8.

depictions of them evoke familiar stereotypes of white women's influence in the frontier's development as either gentle tamers, sunbonneted helpmates, or "bad" women, though the work of Arnoldo De León is an important exception.[22] Focusing on West Texas women in the twentieth century, this dissertation addresses both oversights. It illuminates how a small West Texas town became a regionally important urban center in the mid-twentieth century, and it places women as conscientious observers and actors at the center of these transformations.

With its focus on West Texas women, this project also contributes to the growing field of Texas women's history. Texas women's history scarcely existed in the 1970s, and it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that the field started to gain traction. What explained the slow inclusion of women into Texas history? Writing in 1991, historian Fane Downs rationalizes, "The historiography of Texas women suffers from a double burden: it concerns Texas and it concerns women. This absurdly obvious comment is nevertheless serious."[23] Women, Downs argues, did not seem to fit into the collective memory of the state's history. "The Texas public (and the rest of the world, for that matter) drinks deeply of the image of the masculine, self-reliant, individualistic, larger-than-life hero in cowboy boots making a million dollars . . . and Texas historians have been affected by the myth."[24] Despite Texas women's historians' efforts, the myth endures. Writing in 2018, Angela Boswell

[22] Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (May 1980): 173. An important exception is Arnoldo De León, *Tejano West Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2015).

[23] Fane Downs, "Texas Women: History at the Edges," in *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations*, eds., Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 81.

[24] Fane Downs, "Texas Women: History at the Edges," 81.

explains, "The mythical narrative of Texas history has long emphasized the iconic cowboy taming the frontier, men fighting valiantly against foes to win glory for themselves and the state, and politicians engaged in debates in which personal and ideological differences played out, shaping the idiosyncrasies of state laws and economics. Such myth not only omits the women from those activities, it conceals the reality of women's lived experiences—their history."[25] Texas women's historians have made considerable progress in their determination to dismantle this myth, but as Boswell writes, "the fact that the historical narrative still obscures women" makes further work necessary.[26]

While the number of Texas women's history books has grown substantially in the last two decades, certain women's experiences are given more preference than others. White, Texas women continue to receive a sizable portion of scholarly attention, though historians are devoting more attention to the diversity of Texas women's experiences along regional, race, ethnic, class, and gender lines.[27] Texas women's historians also devote much of their scholarship to individual women. This approach, identified as compensatory or contributory history, usually focuses on one remarkable woman and places her within the traditional

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[25] Angela Boswell, *Women in Texas History*, xi.

[26] Boswell, *Women in Texas History*, xi; Rebecca Sharpless, "Texas Women," in *Discovering Texas History*, eds., Bruce A. Glasrud, Light Townsend Cummins, and Cary D. Wintz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 76.

[27] This is not an extensive list, but see: Arnoldo De León, *Tejano West Texas;* Boswell, *Women in Texas History*; Bruce A. Glasrud and Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten, *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Donald T. Critchlo, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservativism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Bruce A. Glasrud and Merline Pitre, eds, *Black Women in Texas History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008); Debra A. Reid, *Reaping A Greater Harvest: African Americans, the Extension Service, and Rural Reform in Jim Crow Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2007); Rebecca Sharples, *Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices: Women on Texas Cotton Farms, 1900-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Donald Willet and Stephen Curley, eds., *Invisible Texas: Women and Minorities in Texas History* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005).

historical narrative. There are benefits to this approach, particularly in its effort to highlight "forgotten or behind-the-scenes actors," but some feminist scholars warn of the dangers.[28] Often, the traditional historical narrative is dictated by parameters set by men's experiences, which can obscure women's unique experiences and deemphasize women's historical contributions since traditional narratives often center around the masculine spheres of war and politics.

Angela Boswell's *Women in Texas History* is a notable exception to the compensatory approach, and historians Nancy Baker Jones and Cynthia J. Beeman describe her work as a "milestone in the historiography of Texas."[29] Boswell analyzes the commonalities and differences of Native American, Spanish, Mexican, Tejana, Anglo American, African American, and Asian women over more than four centuries, and she produced the "first narrative synthesis of Texas history from precontact to the late twentieth century written from the perspective of women's experiences." [30] Boswell incorporates an intersectional analysis by exploring the various factors that shape women's experiences, such as race, ethnicity, class, political ideology, and sexuality, and analyzes them side-by-side in her work. The result is a comprehensive picture of Texas women's experiences, and this was a deliberate choice for Boswell. She writes, "contributory and compensatory histories . . . tended to celebrate the remarkable woman without leading to a historical understanding of most women's lives." As scholars began looking "at history through women's eyes, concentrating on the spaces in which women spent their lives—such as family and

[28] Boswell, *Women in Texas History,* xii; Elizabeth Hayes Turner, Stephanie Cole, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds., *Texas Women: Their Histories, Their Lives* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

[29] Nancy Baker Jones and Cynthia J. Beeman, "Foreword" in Boswell, *Women in Texas History*, vii.

[30] Nancy Baker Jones and Cynthia J. Beeman, "Foreword" in Boswell, *Women in Texas History*, vii.

reproduction, work, community building, and social reform—a fuller understanding of the history of women emerged," which revealed "how gender constructions change" and how "what it means to be a woman changed over time."[31] Rather than focusing on individual women, *Women in Texas History* focused on the collective experiences of Texas women within the spaces they created.

This dissertation also focuses on the collective rather than individual experiences of Victory Study Clubwomen during the postwar period. Some prominent clubwomen's lives are featured throughout the chapters, but the purpose is not to single out individual women's contributions or legacies. Instead, this dissertation aims to provide a snapshot of what many housewives experienced in postwar San Angelo. The shared experiences of Victory Study Clubwomen, all white, middle-class housewives, provided the foundation for clubwomen's activism and determined how and where they volunteered their time, money, and talent. Examining the Victory Study Club programs and projects thus offers an opportunity to learn what local, national, and international issues mattered most to this "assembly of organized womanhood" and, perhaps, to postwar clubwomen through the nation.

The physical spaces that the Victory Study Club occupied also reveal the extent of postwar women's engagement in San Angelo. Often, members hosted meetings in one another's homes, which became sites of housewives' activism. While historian Elaine Tyler May argues that the postwar suburban home "constrained and contained" housewives as a means of "domestic containment" within the Cold War, Michelle M. Nickerson writes that "these domestic settings [also] provided a warm and nonintimidating atmosphere" where

[31] Boswell, *Women in Texas History*, xii.

women could not only socialize but organize.[32] Another space where clubwomen organized was the Massie Clubhouse, a building funded and run by San Angelo's City Federation of Women's Clubs. This shared public space provided an opportunity for Victory Study Club members to interact with over eight hundred other San Angelo clubwomen who belonged to the city's federation.[33] Often Victory Study Club members attended the meetings of other clubs in the city's federation where they shared comradeship and informed one another about the work each was doing in the community. These interactions strengthened San Angelo's "assembly of organized womanhood," who drew solidarity from one another in their postwar activism.

Clubwomen did not simply stay at home or in the clubhouse; they moved freely and with purpose in their projects designed to improve San Angelo. Outside of meetings, the Victory Study Club organized volunteer projects all over San Angelo—in parks, schools, the Tom Green County Courthouse, the McKnight Sanitarium, Shannon Hospital, the Tom Green County Commissioner's Court, the Planned Parenthood Clinic of San Angelo, and many other locations. By working within these public places, clubwomen commanded space and to be part of the postwar development of the "Queen City of the Concho."

To tell the history of the Victory Study Club from 1942 to 1975, this dissertation employs a thematic organization by dividing its activism into four chapters. The first chapter explores the emergence of the club during the tumultuous years of World War II. When the

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[32] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Michelle M. Nickerson, "Politically Desperate Housewives," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 9 ed., ed. by Linda K. Kerber, Jane Sherron De Hart, Cornelia Hughes Dayton, and Karissa Haugeberg (New York: Oxford University Press 2020), 464.

[33] "Federation Will Build a Modern Clubhouse," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 3, 1952 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

United States entered the war, the city of San Angelo transformed as federal dollars and military servicemen flooded into the region. San Angeloans' reactions to these transformations varied, but just like in the rest of the nation, most citizens committed themselves whole heartedly to the war effort. This chapter describes how ordinary San Angeloans experienced the war and addresses the question of why a group of young, middle-class, housewives assembled on a chilly day in 1942 to organize a club committed to the nation's victory. Much of their wartime activism resembled that of other American women throughout the nation, who were dedicated to securing the home front. What was different was that the Victory Study Club dedicated itself to studying wartime events on the national and international stage. As their official club motto indicated, "The Path to Victory is Knowledge," clubwomen believed that through nurturing their minds, they had another ideological weapon that could be used to defeat the Axis powers.[34]

The second chapter investigates Victory Study Clubwomen's experiences in the immediate postwar period and addresses their international activism within the context of the Cold War. After World War II, powerful postwar prescriptions attempted to push women back into traditional gender roles. Since clubwomen already considered themselves fulltime mothers and housewives, this renewed emphasis on domesticity did not have much of an effect on Victory Study Club members. What did startle them was the new precarious international order that was developing immediately after World War II. After the detonation of the first atomic bomb and the mushrooming nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union, Victory Study Clubwomen feared for the safety of their homes, communities, nation, and world. Their desire to ensure peace and prosperity inspired the Victory Study Club to engage

[34] "Victory Study Club Organized," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 10, 1942.

in international activism on a variety of levels. Not only did members educate themselves on international issues, but they also supported new international bodies and commissions dedicated to ensuring world harmony. They donated time and money to international relief efforts, particularly for international women in need. On the national level, the Victory Study Club wrote letters to their congressmen and senators, urging officials to advocate for mutual understanding rather than mutual destruction in the atomic age. If nuclear destruction did occur, however, the housewives of the Victory Study Club were ready. They studied Civil Defense preparedness since as guardians of the home, they knew it was their job to ensure their families' survival.

In this sense, the Victory Study Club extended the Progressive-era concepts of "municipal housekeeping" and "maternalistic politics" to the international level, a key difference between the postwar women's club movement and its Progressive-era forebearer. Rather than simply confining women to the home, the immediate postwar era increased housewives' activism. As Catherine E. Rymph explains, "World War II and the early Cold War actually created opportunities for white, middle-class women to assert their importance to national security through their contributions to home front preparedness, civil defense programs, and . . . nation building."[35]

Chapter Three addresses the transformations that San Angelo experienced in the postwar period and how the Victory Study Club engaged in grassroots activism to improve standards of living within the booming West Texas city. Most of clubwomen's local activism centered on causes long-considered as fundamental women's concerns: nurturing a healthy

[35] Catherine E. Rymph, "Exporting Civic Womanhood: Gender and Nation Building," in *Breaking the Waves: Women, Their Originations, and Feminism, 1945-1985*, eds. Kathleen A. Laughlin and Jacqueline L. Castledine (New York: Routledge, 2011), 66.

citizenry, improving local schools, increasing access to education, and curbing the growing concerns of rising postwar juvenile delinquency rates. To address these concerns, members held educational programs, donated time and money, and lobbied leading San Angelo city officials to act on these causes. As evident by their local volunteer work within the community, Victory Study Club housewives did not simply confine themselves within their homes; they spread out into San Angelo and commanded a presence in its public spaces.

While the club helped many San Angeloans at the grassroots level in the postwar period, they did not extend their activism evenly across all communities. The major limitation of the Victory Study Club was its inability to form interracial coalitions and work with San Angelo's African American or Latinx populations. Chapter Four also addresses the living conditions and segregated schooling systems in San Angelo for these populations. While the Victory Study Club did offer programs for "Latin American" youths in San Angelo, it extended almost no support to San Angelo's African Americans. Though San Angelo was the fourth school district to integrate in Texas in 1955, the Victory Study Club largely remained silent on issues of civil rights. Another limit of the Victory Study Club is that no evidence has been uncovered of its work with African American or Latinx women. No woman of color belonged to the Victory Study Club. In San Angelo's postwar women's club movement, racial solidarity rather than gender solidarity prevailed.

African American women in San Angelo had their own women's club—the Rosary Reading and Art Club—that is still active in San Angelo. As longtime member Ella Mae Johnson describes, "This was all black. The black people organized the club so that they would have some togetherness with one another because all black folks did back then is work

and [go to] church."[36] Much like the Victory Study Club, the Rosary club provided African American women with an avenue in which to engage in friendship, local activism, and learning, but it also had a larger goal: tackling racism in postwar America. With all their "courage and stamina," Rosary clubwomen—in the words of Narcissa Stokes—believed they could "build a better world. One in which all mankind can finally live as brothers."[37]

While the Rosary Reading and Art Club provided a place for African American women to organize, no evidence has currently been found of a similar secular, Latinx women's club. One reason this might be the case is that Latinx women most likely organized within religious institutions, such as the Sacred Heart Catholic Church or the Latin American Baptist Church. Also concerned with expanding civil rights, Latinx women did form their own auxiliary branch of the local chapter of League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in San Angelo. Investigating the similarities and differences between Latinx, African American, and white women's clubs in postwar San Angelo is a future project that the author attends to pursue.

The last chapter of this dissertation explores the legacy of the Victory Study Club on an intimate level and assesses the personal benefits that belonging to the club provided to individual members. While clubwomen found fulfillment in their wartime, international, and local activism, they also enjoyed fellowship with a group of like-minded housewives who provided emotional support to one another. Victory Study Club members developed close friendships as they worked, played, and studied with one another, and in many cases, these

[36] Ella Mae Johnson, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 13, 2017.

[37] Narcisse W. Stokes, "Greetings From Host Club," in "33rd Annual Session: Stokes-Parker District: Federation of Girls Club, April 1983," Folder: Mtg. Programs, Box 6: District Files, Texas Association of Women's Clubs Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

relationships lasted decades, even after the club disbanded. Club programs provided an opportunity for women to study collectively intimate concerns as members entered various life stages. When organized, most clubwomen were in their late twenties and early thirties; by the early 1970s, most members were in their fifties and sixties. Club programs addressed such issues as menopause, "living in your latter years," and "the empty nest syndrome."

Victory Study Clubwomen also explored changing definitions of womanhood, especially as the women's rights movement swirled around them. On the surface, it seems that the Victory Study Club supported the women's rights movement since it goals mirrored much of their own. From the 1940s to the 1970s, the Victory Study Club supported expanding women's education, professional opportunities, political participation, and reproductive rights. Clubwomen were less supportive, however, of the women's liberation movement, which seemed to attack housewives and traditional marriage relationships. To understand both movements and the changes they might usher in for American women, Victory Study Club members did what they had always done when confronted with new challenges—they studied.

Telling the story of the Victory Study Club from the 1940s to the 1970s is only possible due to the efforts of the members themselves; club members cautiously crafted a history that reflected the club's activities positively. Of all the women's clubs active in postwar San Angelo, the Victory Study Club kept the most records, housed in the West Texas Collection at Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas. The bulk of evidence of the programs, projects, and yearbooks are found in carefully constructed scrapbooks. No information is provided about who assembled these scrapbooks or who donated the collection, but it seems reasonable that if a story, article, or program appeared in the

scrapbook, a Victory Study Club member thought it was important. The scrapbooks do not tell the club's entire story. Gaps exist in the scrapbooks, and program notes often obscure specific details about what occurred in meetings and what was said in certain programs. Another important source of information is published articles from the *San Angelo Evening Standard* and *San Angelo Standard Times*. Members frequently put meeting announcements or program descriptions in the local paper. Reconstructing the story of the Victory Study Club also involved reconstructing the lives of the individual members who belonged to the club. While most of this was compiled through internet databases, three Victory Study Club members lived in San Angelo at the time of when the author was conducting research, which allowed her to collect their oral histories. All in their nineties, the women had lost some specific memories, but all remembered and discussed fondly their years in the club.

Exploring the history of the Victory Study Club in San Angelo, Texas from 1942 to 1975 expands perceptions of the typical postwar, middle-class, white housewife and shifts focus to an all-too-often neglected region of the state. In the chapters that follow, readers learn how Victory Study Club members' wartime activism on the home front helped the nation achieve *victory* in World War II. With the war over, clubwomen's contributions did not end; they remained *vigilant* citizens as they sought to secure international peace and cooperation amid the threat of unprecedent global annihilation and an escalating Cold War. When it came to their own communities, the Victory Study Club actively *volunteered* for various causes that contributed to the development of the modern "Queen City of the Concho." As the years went by and clubwomen faced "the later years," their involvement in the club provided outlets in which to adjust to changing life circumstances by *validating* their concerns. A history of the Victory Study Club illuminates how this "assembly of organized

womanhood"—filled with educated and determined housewives—worked to improve their communities, nation, and world, and perhaps just as significantly, themselves.

CHAPTER ONE

V IS FOR VICTORY:
THE VICTORY STUDY CLUB EMERGES IN WORLD-WORLD-II SAN ANGELO, TEXAS

We have the greatest country in the world, and we have to be willing to fight for it.
-Leona Bruce, Texas Federation of Women's Clubs District Six President
Hotel Cactus, San Angelo, Texas, 1943[1]

Tuesday, 10 February 1942: The United States had entered the Second World War only two months prior, and anxiety and fear permeated the air. This conflict was the largest Americans had ever seen, and even within the sparsely populated landscapes of West Texas, citizens understood the urgency of this new global conflict. West Texans routinely read headlines from the warfront that filled the newspapers. On the front page of the *San Angelo Evening Standard* that day, reporters described February as "the critical month" as the Allies faced dire situations in both the European and Pacific theaters. Germany had already conquered France and occupied considerable swaths of Eastern Europe. The Nazis now set their sights on Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, and the Suez Canal. Only the "thawing snows, mud and rain," which made "those sectors difficult for major operations," blocked the their path. The quickly approaching spring would change everything, causing the Allies to worry. "In March," military officials warned, "the [Nazi] offensive is expected to break in full blast."[2]

The Pacific theater's prognosis was no better. The British had lost Singapore as "overwhelming masses of Japanese troops swarmed" and forced "defenders to execute a new withdrawal in what appeared to be the dying hours of the struggle."[3] Residents in the region,

[1] "War Service Main Project for Clubs, Says Speaker at First Annual Junior Conclave," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942-1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[2] "Nazis Strive to Stabilize Russian Front," *San Angelo Evening Times*, February 10, 1942.

[3] "Japs Believed in Singapore; Fall Threatened," *San Angelo Evening Times*, February 10, 1942.

writing home, recounted their terror as they heard "the whine of machine gun bullets" from Japanese planes and saw "the pre-dawn skies red with the glow of burning oil tanks."[4] The Japanese already occupied "The Mouth of the River"—Burma—and twenty-nine American sailors lost their lives in an air raid outside of the Philippines.[5] From these distressing stories, San Angeloans could recognize one thing: the war America just entered was not going well.

Under light flurries of snow amid the dreadful news that San Angeloans read that day, a group of young women came together in San Angelo, Texas, to form the Victory Study Club.[6] The women assembled had much in common: they were in their twenties and early thirties, had some level of higher education, and were recently married and white. Most of these young women were also newcomers to West Texas and felt the need to get to know their new community and to contribute to the war effort. They met at 2210 Dallas Street at the home of Mary Brown, a doctor's wife and member of the Literary Review Club, on that chilly day and formed an association of housewives dedicated to meet the new wartime emergency. The name and the official club colors—red, white, and blue—"were chosen in keeping with the times," the local paper reported, and the official club motto—"The Path to Victory is Learning"—revealed the club's emphasis on the cultivation of members' education. On top of lace tablecloths, red and white carnations with blue flowers formed "V-shape centerpieces," and after the business session, a "tea hour" followed where newly elected club president Evelyn Beck served cake and cookies "decorated with red V's" along

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[4] "Japs Believed in Singapore; Fall Threatened," *San Angelo Evening Times*, February 10, 1942.

[5] "Tokyo Claims Burma Success," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 10, 1942; "Army Revels Transport Is Sunk; 29 Lost," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 10, 1942.

[6] "Mercury Dips to 36 This Morning," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 10, 1942; "Victory Study Club Organized," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 10, 1942.

with mints and coffee. Clubwomen wore red carnation corsages and V's to symbolize their "deep love and affection" for fellow members and for servicemen overseas and paused for a photograph that appeared in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* a week later.[7]

The women who formed the Victory Study Club—just like other San Angeolans—committed themselves wholeheartedly to the war effort. Most of their activism replicated what the United States government and conventional gendered prescriptions suggested that women do during this wartime emergency. They rationed food and wartime supplies and donated their time and money to various wartime service organizations. They also committed themselves to civil defense planning and found ways to boost wartime morale among soldiers and citizens alike. What was different, however, was that Victory Study Club members engaged collectively rather than individually in their activism. In meeting together regularly, Victory Study Clubwomen formed a common bond with likeminded housewives that together supported the war effort as well as one another by forming an "assembly of organized womanhood" that dedicated itself to the study of national and international wartime news. This wartime engagement laid a path for Victory Study Clubwomen's activism in the postwar period—one that was based on enhancing women's political education and volunteerism.[8]

This chapter explores the emergence of the Victory Study Club in San Angelo during

[7] "Mrs. Louis Beck Head New Victory Club" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Speaker Says Clubwoman Typical in US," *San Angelo Standard Times*, November 9, 1962 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1963 to 1964," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[8] "Knock Out Barricades to Progress, Delegates Told," *The Colorado City Record*, March 17, 1960 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1960 to 1961," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

World War II. It charts how these young women experienced the vast transformations World War II unleashed in San Angelo, how clubwomen aided the war effort on the ground level, and how the experience of belonging to this woman's club set the stage for postwar women's activism in West Texas. The Victory Study Club's emergence in World War II San Angelo provides a case study of how white, middle-class housewives experienced World War II and collectively organized to create a "united front" for a nation at war. While scholars have documented the activism of women's clubs in the early twentieth century, there has been little attention to their activities during the Second World War. But, as evident in San Angelo during the war years, the club movement was strong with at least nine different white, secular, middle-class clubs operating, including the Victory Study Club. While much attention has been paid to the "Rosie the Riveters" and "Wendy the Welders," little attention has been paid to the organized activism of middle-class housewives who actively contributed to the war effort through their participation in women's clubs.[9]

World War II transformed San Angelo. During the 1930s, the city's population and prosperity had declined, just like much of the rest of the nation suffering through the Great Depression. Oil production stagnated, leaving some one-third of oil field workers without work. As an extensive drought hurt ranchers' and farmers' profits, agricultural jobs declined in the region. Yet the bad luck that oilmen, ranchers, and farmers experienced changed in 1940 as the nation increased its wartime preparedness. A vast population and investment boom brought prosperity to San Angelo, so much so that the population would nearly double

[9] "Women's Forum Yearbook, 2004-2005," Women's Forum Folder, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Women's Club Collection, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

to over fifty thousand by the close of the 1940s.[10]

The United States government was preparing for war, even before the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The United States Army Air Corps established two training schools outside of San Angelo since the region's big and wide-open spaces provided perfect skies for young pilots and bombardiers, who needed to hone their skills and rack up flying hours. After the City of San Angelo made "the sweetest" offer compared to other West Texas cities, the War Department bought 1,235 acres from a local San Angeloan rancher, cleared "cacti and mesquite trees," and built sixty-two buildings and three control towers. Named after a local hero, John J. Goodfellow, who was killed in aerial combat in France during World War I, the Goodfellow Air Field opened in August 1940. According to Air Force historian John Garrett, Goodfellow served as one of the "earliest expressions of modern American air power" and continues to house pilot instruction today.[11] Women as well as men flew at Goodfellow. In 1943, Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) flew AT-6, BT-13, and PT-19 airplanes and were responsible for test-flying repaired aircraft before male pilots flew the repaired planes in combat or training missions.[12]

A year later, another airfield opened eighteen miles outside of San Angelo to train

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[10] Arnoldo DeLeón, *San Angeleños: Mexican Americans in San Angelo, TX* (San Angelo: Fort Concho Museum Press, 1985,) 46; James T. Matthews, "The Edwards Plateau and Permian Basin" in *West Texas: A History of the Giant Side of the State*, eds. Paul H. Carlson and Bruce A. Glasrud (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 20), 70.

[11] John Garrett, "A History of Goodfellow," *GoodfellowAirForceBase.af.mil* (accessed May 3, 2020), https://www.goodfellow.af.mil/Newsroom/Article-Display/Article/373711/a-history-of-goodfellow/; Sangeeta Singg and William A. Allen, "Goodfellow Air Force Base," *Handbook of Texas Online* June 15, 2010 (accessed 8/26/2019), https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qbg01; "The Year 1941 Was an Eventful One for West Texas," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 1, 1942.

[12] "Today Is Fifth Anniversary of Goodfellow," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 15, 1942; "The Year 1941 Was An Eventful One for West Texas," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 1, 1942; "Goodfellow Air Force Base History," *Goodfellow Air Force Base* (accessed April 20, 2020), https://www.goodfellow.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/372978/goodfellow-air-force-base-history/.

young servicemen how to drop aerial bombs. At the Carr Field, hundreds of "bomb aimers," or bombardiers, trained in San Angelo during World War II. In 1943, officials renamed Carr Field in order to honor another San Angelo airman, Jack Mathis, who trained at Goodfellow and was killed in action over Germany during the war. Mathis posthumously received the Medal of Honor, which commemorated his bravery. The honor partially read, "Realizing that the success of the mission depended on him, by sheer determination and willpower, though mortally wounded, dragged himself back to his sights, released his bombs, then died at his post of duty."[13] Mathis Field still serves residents of San Angelo as the municipal airport.[14]

Federal dollars flowed into San Angelo after the establishment of the airbases, bringing an economic boom to the city. Less than a month after the US declared war on Japan and Germany, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* explained that "the [Goodfellow] field is now a $300,000 project and much more is to be spent with little cost to San Angelo taxpayers." Working closely with the US War Department, the City of San Angelo supported the growing air force base by providing generous land lease agreements, sewage and electrical services, and telephone hookups. Leaders believed that "the airport will be one of the finest in the Southwest."[15] As soon as both bases opened, servicemen began arriving in San Angelo in significant numbers throughout the summer and fall of 1941. Training more than ten thousand fliers during World War II, Goodfellow "barracks were so crowded, bunks

[13] "Jack W. Mathis: World War II, Medal of Honor Recipients," *Center of Military History: United States Army* (accessed 9/10/2019), https://history.army.mil/html/moh/wwII-m-s.html.

[14] Ross McSwain, "A Rich History: San Angelo Regional Airport—Mathis Field," *CityofSanAngelo.com* (accessed April 20, 2020), https://www.cosatx.us/departments-services/airport/airport-history.

[15] "The Year 1941 Was An Eventful One for West Texas," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 1, 1942.

were tiered in double-decks." New officers and soldiers needed housing, restaurants, recreational facilities, and stores, which San Angelo businessmen and women eagerly provided.

The establishment of Goodfellow dramatically increased the region's civilian population. Many of those who came in the early 1940s established businesses to meet the demands of the new military bases. In 1941, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported that "the community of San Angelo is almost exactly 25 percent larger this fall than it was two years ago and has advanced considerably over its population status of a year ago."[16] While other factors influenced migration to the city, most historians agree that "the huge increase [in population] in the 1940s came with the establishment of Goodfellow Air Field," so much so that the number of residents nearly doubled. In 1930, San Angelo's population was 25,208, but after the establishment of the airbase, it jumped to 39,302.[17]

Not all San Angeloans appreciated the rapid economic and cultural changes occurring in their city after the establishment Goodfellow Air Field and Mathis Field. The presence of numerous young male soldiers during World War II troubled some of San Angelo's more conservative citizens. One *San Angelo Evening Standard* headline read "San Angelo Turns Into Little Reno During 1943," and residents attested that something "shady" was occurring on Concho Avenue in downtown San Angelo. Numerous saloons and houses of prostitution thrived during the war years, thanks largely to the presence of young men at the base, and the

[16] "Population Rise of Fourth Seen in Two Years: Utilities meters Advance Average of One Thousand," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* October 1, 1942.

[17] Escal F. Duke, "San Angelo, Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online,* June 15, 2010 (accessed June 24, 2019), http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hds01; Leon Trusedell, "Population Volume II: Characteristics of the Population. Part 1: United States Summary," United Sates Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 1943), 852.

rumors of these businesses' popularity drew the attention of Goodfellow officials. As Susan Campbell of the West Texas Collection at Angelo State University explains, "We had a lot of ladies of the evening. . . . San Angelo was basically told [by Goodfellow officials] that we needed to clean up downtown" during World War II, and "the Texas Rangers helped do that" in "1945 or 1952—depending on who you ask."[18]

While Goodfellow officers and some San Angeloans condemned the illicit downtown district, Nita Archer, longtime San Angelo resident and Victory Study Club member, remembered that most local officials tended to turn a blind eye to the events transpiring on West Concho Avenue. Archer explained that some citizens reasoned that "if you didn't have a red-light district, your young people won't be protected," particularly young daughters.[19] One local newspaper account told of the snares naive women might encounter when soldiers left the base. In 1943, the paper reported that a "disgraced" young San Angelo woman received a divorce from a man to whom she had been married to for only a matter of minutes. Her recent ex-husband was a pilot at Goodfellow, and, allegedly, he "bet his buddies one Saturday afternoon that he could go to town that night and marry. The bets were placed, the soldier bayed at the moon, and began the hunt." Unfortunately for this young woman, he convinced her to marry him that very evening, and a matter of moments after the ceremony took place, "The soldier informed his happy bride that he had married her on a bet, gave her

[18] Krista Johnson, "Everything You Know About Miss Hattie's is Wrong," *GoSanAngelo.com,* April 27, 2018 (accessed April 20, 2020), https://www.gosanangelo.com/story/news/local/2018/04/27/everything-you-know-miss-hatties-bordello-wrong/470331002/; Krista Johnson, "You've Seen Their names: These are the Women Immortalized Across San Angelo's Landscape," *GoSanAngelo.com*, March 17, 2017 (accessed May 3, 2020), https://www.gosanangelo.com/story/news/local/2018/03/17/youve-seen-their-names-these-women-immortalized-across-san-angelos-landscape/431891002/.

[19] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

$25 for a divorce and told her to beat it."[20] Some residents took this story as evidence that, without a red-light district to keep young soldiers occupied, young and naive San Angelo daughters might become victims of servicemen's advances and jokes.

The "disgraced" young woman's experience troubled some San Angeloans during World War II, but another trend also appeared that worried some residents. The *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported that Tom Green County was "right up front in the nation, topping Los Angeles, with Chicago and New York" in the percentages of divorces. In 1943, "one out of every 100 persons filed for divorce" in San Angelo. Observers suggested that "cruelty, adultery, [and] abandonment seem to be the principle charges for divorces," which were primarily brought by San Angelo women, who were more likely to receive a divorce. Perhaps county Texas judges were more likely to believe women's complaints than men's. Reporters remarked that "Texas laws are easier than most states. . . . It was easier for a woman to get a divorce" since unlike in Chicago, no "eye witness testimony [was] needed." Moreover, some men "had to file three times to no avail" while women apparently received the court's attention much quicker. While some saw this escalation of divorces in Tom Green County as troubling, other San Angeloans welcomed the rising divorce rates as it lined their pocketbooks. "The boom is profitable for some San Angelo attorneys [who collected] fees ranging from $25 to $20,000," the local paper reported.[21]

If the presence of soldiers in San Angelo seemed dangerous to some San Angeloans during World War II, others welcomed their arrival as newcomers offered excitement, amusement, and opportunities that had not existed earlier in West Texas. This was certainly

[20] "San Angelo Turns Into Little Reno During 1943," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* April 14, 1944.

[21] "San Angelo Turns Into Little Reno During 1943," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* April 14, 1944.

true for Nita Allen, who became an active and longtime member of the Victory Study Club after World War II. Allen was born in 1927 in Silver, Texas, in Coke County. She was the eleventh of twelve children and grew up on the family farm just down the river from Mathis Field. She remembers performing various chores on the farm, such as collecting cow chips to burn in the fireplace and picking cotton, but her parents mostly encouraged her schooling, at which she excelled. Allen graduated from Silver High School at just sixteen. She recalls, "I made two grades in one year in grammar school. I loved school, so they thought I was kind of smart, you know?" Right after graduating high school, Allen received the Robert Massey Scholarship that paid for her tuition to San Angelo Junior College. In 1943, she moved to San Angelo, lived with her aunt and uncle, and enrolled in the local college. She graduated a business major with the highest grade point average of all of her college classmates in 1945.[22]

During World War II, Allen remembers fondly how exciting it was for local women to have so many handsome servicemen in the region. Allen and her sister routinely went to "tea dances" on Sunday afternoons on the rooftop of the St. Angelus Hotel with a "real orchestra" where they mingled with soldiers from Goodfellow. Older community members—mostly married women—planned these dances in order to provide a wholesome environment for airmen and respectable young San Angelo women. She recalled, "You had to have an impeccable reputation to get to go to those dances. The hostess [a married woman] would come pick us up . . . and bring us home." At the dance, Allen remembered that "you would just sit there and wait for them [servicemen] to come across and ask you to dance." While she recollects that "we were chaperoned and it was very up-and-up," there was the exciting

[22] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

possibility that if sparks flew between a couple, "then maybe you could go out to dinner with them Sunday." If not, "He took you back to your seat and you waited for someone else."[23]

Though hostesses tried their best to create a clean and upright setting for servicemen and local women to meet, young people—as they will often do—found ways to circumvent the watchful eyes of their elders. Allen went on several dates with servicemen in San Angelo that she met outside of "tea dances," and it was on one of these dates that she met the love of her life. She recounts, "My dear friend was dating a person from Mathis Field—Pete Peterson." Peterson decided to help his newly arrived friend, William "Bill" Archer, acclimate to West Texas by setting him up a series of blind dates. A first lieutenant pilot for the bombardiers originally from East Texas, Bill Archer flew B-17 planes in the European Theater and successfully completed twenty-six bombing missions until he was wounded in a combat mission in 1945. He was transferred to Mathis Field for the remainder of the war and served as a pilot for the practicing bombardiers.[24] Peterson picked Allen, an obvious choice since she was a close friend of his girlfriend, to be the second date scheduled for Bill in just one day. Nita remembers it fondly: "We went to Ben Ficklin, which is this place out on the river. . . . We danced by the nickelodeon, had a sandwich, and then I came home because I was attending junior college and I couldn't stay out late. Then, he had another blind date afterward, but I was the only one he called back. That was April 30, 1945."[25]

After this first date, their courtship intensified for the next few months. When Nita

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[23] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[24] William "Bill" Archer, interview by author, San Angelo Texas, July 29, 2019; Breonna Veal, "WWII B-17 Co-Pilot Shares Experiences," *Good Fellow Airforce Base* (accessed May 3, 2020), https://www.goodfellow.af.mil/Newsroom/Article-Display/Article/584254/wwii-b-17-co-pilot-shares-experiences/.

[25] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

returned home for a week from school, Bill flew over her house every day that she was there since the family farm was close to Mathis Field. She laughed, "The ladies in the community would go out and wave their cup towels to him. . . . We were on a telephone party line of seventeen and that was kind of entertainment for people to pick up the phone and listen to conservations. So everybody knew what was happening when they heard his plane. Of course, he'd be court-martialed now if he did something like that!"[26] A year later, the couple married on August 23, 1946, and they celebrated seventy-three years together before Nita Archer died on March 4, 2020.[27] The story of Nita and Bill Archer's courtship provides further evidence that World War II not only altered the economic, social, and physical landscape of San Angelo, but it also transformed San Angeloans' lives in personal and intimate ways.

While hundreds of new servicemen poured into the region, local San Angeloans also reported for duty during World War II. Many joined the service as soon as they learned of the war's outbreak. Chanting "Remember Pearl Harbor," more than 250 "West Texas youths . . . crowded Army and Navy recruiting offices" by January 1, 1942.[28] At first, the local draft board only accepted single men, but as the year came to a close, the number of eligible San Angeloan men was dangerously low. "Only ten single men left uncalled," leading officials reported to the *San Angelo Evening Standard*. "The Draft Board No. 1 will exhaust its supply of single men," which prompted "the calling of married men without children [to] begin

[26] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[27] "Nita Allen Archer Obituary," *Johnson Funeral Home* (accessed May 4, 2020), https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/san-angelo-tx/nita-archer-9073892.

[28] "The Year 1941 Was an Eventful One for West Texas," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 1, 1942.

about mid-October." After 1942, the local draft board accepted men who married after Pearl Harbor since it was assumed that they had "no serious dependency" or a large family to support.[29]

While the specific racial demographics of the San Angeloan men who signed up for the draft during World War II is unclear, San Angeleños also enlisted.[30] As early as August 1940, San Angelo's League of United Latin American Citizens' (LULAC) Chapter 27 joined others in advocating for the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, which supported the implementation of the military draft. Once war was declared, several men of Mexican heritage served in combat roles during the duration of the war. Many paid the ultimate price for their country: their lives. Five San Angeleños lost their lives in the European theater, and it was many years after the war's end that their bodies were returned to San Angelo for burial.[31] Outside of sending husbands, sons, brothers, and friends to the war, local San Angeleños also rallied support during World War II by holding fundraisers and parties. Two to three thousand people gathered at one 1942 fiesta in San Angelo, and collectively, they purchased over one thousand dollars in war bonds and stamps.[32]

While local San Angeleños played an important part in the war effort, white San Angeloans also recognized the vital assistance that Latin American international relations could provide to the cause. In 1942, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* called for "Pan-

[29] "Married Males on October Call: Big Reserve here Without Children," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 11, 1942.

[30] Arnoldo De León coins the term "San Angeleños . . . as a name for Mexican Americans of San Angelo" in *San Angeleños*, 10; this study embraces his terminology while also using ethno-Mexican or Latinx to describe San Angeleños experiences.

[31] De León, *San Angeleños*, 58.

[32] De León, *San Angeleños*, 57.

American" solidarity since "our southern neighbors are one vast storehouse of supplies for the arsenal of democracy." Not only did these nations have a population of more than two million men who could bear arms, but they also provided the United States with crucial wartime materials, such as tungsten, manganese, copper, mercury, and platinum. The paper explained, "Latin America either does produce or could produce all . . . the strategic materials listed by the U.S. as essential to warfare."[33] Wartime goods, however, were not the only ones that San Angeloans appreciated receiving from Latin American countries. The paper surmised, "We couldn't chew gum or play phonograph records without them."[34] Even before the establishment of the Good Neighbor Commission, white San Angeloans recognized the essentiality of Latin American resources and sought to strengthen friendly ties with Mexico and other Latin American nations as a means to win the global conflict.

San Angelo African Americans also enlisted and served in World War II. In 1942, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported on a special sendoff for drafted "Negro selectees" at the Tom Green County Courthouse with students from the African American Blackshear School band playing and prominent Reverend K. C. Phillips of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church leading the invocation.[35] Ella Mae Johnson, who moved to San Angelo with her mother and siblings in 1940, explained that her mother married a San Angelo man shortly after arriving to the region. Her stepfather enlisted "since he had to take care of every kid she had," and the military provided substantial financial benefits for the family. Johnson

[33] "Here is What Latin America Means to Uncle Scam," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 4, 1942.

[34] "Here is What Latin America Means to Uncle Scam," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 4, 1942.

[35] "Victory Sendoff For Negroes Here Friday Morning," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 15, 1942.

does not remember much about her stepfather since the couple separated during his military service, but they never divorced. She remembered that the military "was very good" to her stepfather, even after he came back from the war. Her mother continued to receive military pensions until his death in 1978.[36]

Even as San Angelo African American men served in World War II, some leading officials claimed that black San Angeloans were not doing enough to support the war effort. The *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported a gathering at the local Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AEM) under the headline "Negro Soldiers Need Backing of Folk Back Here." The Colored Auxiliary of the Women's Motor Corps sponsored the event, and one of the speakers featured a social science professor at San Angelo College. Professor Jack Spratt explained, "Negro soldiers are fighting today on the world battlefronts and some are giving their lives while many of their race are not contributing even small but important financial support to those fighting men."[37] He urged those gathered to donate as little as a dime to prove their dedication. Reverend K. C. Phillips of the AEM Church also spoke to those gathered and expressed sympathy with the region's African Americans who felt that they faced educational, social, and economic discrimination but he urged black San Angeloans to envision a bigger picture. He recognized that "many negroes complain they may have not been given a square deal." He explained, "They [African Americans] must realize that even though this is in some instances, it is true . . . . We are all Americans and

[36] Ella Mae Johnson, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 17, 2017.

[37] "Negro Soldiers Need Backing of Folk Back Home," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 29, 1943; "Science Academy Meeting Starts Today: Over 30 Lectures To be Given," *The Ram Page: Official Publication of San Angelo College*, April 19, 1940 (accessed May 13, 2020), https://asu-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/2346.1/31138/Rampage_5April1940.pdf?sequence=1.

there is one goal now, for Americans—a just and victorious peace."[38] While acknowledging that African Americans in West Texas suffered from discrimination, Reverend Phillips encouraged African Americans to join in the nation's united front to win this war.

Outside of the commitment of the Latinx and African American community to the war effort, another group of San Angeloans organized as part of World War II's united home front: white, married clubwomen. As evident from the "Society Pages" of the *Evening Standard,* the club movement was prevalent in San Angelo during World War II. At least nine different white women's clubs existed in San Angelo during the war years, including the Alpha Delphia Club, the Junior Quid Prope Club, San Angelo Junior Women's Club, Las Hermanas, the Literary Review Club, Delphian Club, '32 Club, the Women's Club of San Angelo, the Woman's Forum, the Women's Study Club, and of course, the Victory Study Club. The membership of each of these secular women's clubs ranged between thirty to forty-five clubwomen, leaving one to make a safe estimate that over three hundred white, married clubwomen participated in this movement during the war years. These clubs duplicated similar projects, and they often worked in coordinated projects with one another during World War II.[39]

Why did San Angelo women organize into so many separate clubs during the war years? One reason was size limitations. An overwhelming number of white San Angeloan women wanted to join a club, and individual clubs could not accommodate the growing number of women who wished to join. In early 1940, the Women's Club of San Angelo held

[38] "Negro Soldiers Need Backing of Folk Back Home," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* October 29, 1943.

[39] "Society Pages," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* January 13, 1949. List compiled by author from the Texas Federation of Women's Club Collection, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

a meeting at the Hotel Cactus, and it invited other clubwomen and visitors to the meeting. Writing in 1962, Flora Smith, who was a charter member of the Women's Forum, remembered this event. "We held a special meeting" where over seventy clubwomen assembled as well as "thirty-seven guests. . . . Since our membership was limited to 45 and each member was very anxious that her candidate be accepted, we wondered how we were going to solve the problem." The solution that emerged was to create another club: Las Hermanas.[40] The Junior Quid Prope Club also organized in 1940 after this meeting, and a year later, the Alpha Delphia Club organized. New clubs began to branch off from older clubs to meet the demand of white women who were interested in joining the flourishing women's club movement during the war.

The Victory Study Club was also a spin-off club sponsored by two other prominent women's clubs in the region: the Women's Club of San Angelo and the Literary Review Club.[41] The Literary Review Club's membership rolls were overflowing, and meeting in one another's homes precluded a larger number of women from joining the club. The first meeting of the Victory Study Club occurred on February 10, 1942 in one of the Literary Review member's home, and while not all members assembled for the organization of the Victory Study Club were former members of the Literary Review Club, many of them were

[40] "The Women's Forum Club of San Angelo, Texas is Celebrating Its Sliver Anniversary This Year," Women's Forum Folder, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Women's Club Collection, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Las Hermanas as a name is deceiving. It appears no Mexican American women belonged to this club. Instead, Anglo San Angelo women appropriated the name, meaning "sisters" in Spanish, and selected "red, white and green as the club colors to carry out the Spanish theme." "History of Las Hermanas Club, San Angelo, TX, 1982, Box 6.146, Las Hermanas Folder, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Women's Club Collection, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

[41] "Application for membership to TFWC—Victory Study Club," Victory Study Club Folder 3, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Women's Club Collection, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

or wanted to be. Recently married and younger than most of the Literary Review Club members, Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock, a charter member and active club member of the Victory Study Club well into the 1990s, remembered that a few younger women got together and proposed a solution. She recalled, "We thought, well, maybe it's time of helping organize a club ourselves [sic]." Fifteen other married white women agreed and joined her in establishing the Victory Study Club.[42]


SAN ANGELO EVENING STANDARD, WEDNESDAY, FEB. 18, 1942

VICTORY CLUB OFFICERS are Mrs. Louis Beck, president, seated; Mrs. Carl Carr, sponsor; Mrs. Kent J. Richens and Mrs. John A. Phelan, Jr., first and second vice-presidents; Mrs. D. W. Cook and Mrs. Dan Kingman, recording and corresponding secretaries; and Mrs. J. W. Partin, treasurer.

Figure 1: "Victory Study Club Officers," in "The Victory Study Club Is Organized," *San Angelo Standard Times*, February 18, 1942.

[42] "Victory Reviews History," *San Angelo Standard Times*, January 28, 1966 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1965 to 1965," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

ALSO MEMBERS of the new club, organized Monday under the auspices of the Literary Review Club, are Mrs. Herman Walker, Mrs. W. R. Probst, Jr., in front of Mrs. B. T. Brown, co-sponsor; Mrs. Weldon Walker and Mrs. Clifton Pustejovsky, standing; and Mrs. Bedford E. Russell, Mrs. Leon R. Vance, and Mrs. Willie Hillyer.

Figure 2: "Also Members," in "The Victory Study Club Is Organized," *San Angelo Standard Times*, February 18, 1942.

Who were the women that formed the Victory Study Club? Verlie Opal Youngblood was a young and previously professional woman. She was not originally a West Texan; instead, she was from East Texas where she was born on February 15, 1911 on a small farm near the town of Gilmer in Upshur County. Youngblood evidently excelled in school, and in 1932, at the age of twenty-one, she graduated from East Texas State Teachers College. Shortly thereafter, she became a home demonstration agent in Victoria County. The dispersal of home demonstration agents into rural counties in Texas was the result of concerns in the early decades of the twentieth century about declining living and farming conditions in rural America. Noting the increasingly harsh conditions that befell many rural families, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 allocated federal funds to state land-grant colleges and afforded the means to extend education to America's rural population through "the teaching of practical and innovative agricultural and homemaking techniques" to farmers and their wives. The United States Department of Agriculture managed the allocation of these funds and created a separate agency, the Cooperative Extension Service, to oversee the dissemination of these educational programs through its trained agents. Youngblood's work as a home

demonstration agent in Victoria County not only included her visiting rural women at home but also sponsoring and organizing home demonstration clubs. Home demonstration clubs were extremely popular among rural women in the 1930s and 1940s. They provided women with a social network which served to alleviate the isolation brought on by rural life, and they encouraged rural women to engage in a variety of civic and community-improvement campaigns. During her work with home demonstration clubs, Youngblood was keenly aware of the benefits of club work for women even before she helped organize the Victory Study Club.[43]

In 1939, while she served the rural population of Victoria County, Youngblood met and married Edwin A. Schonrock from Nebraska, a man ten years her senior. At the age of twenty-eight, Verlie was older than most brides of the era, and shortly after marrying, she gave up her work as a home demonstration agent. In 1940, the couple moved west to San Angelo where Edwin owned and operated the Schonrock Manufacturing Company, and Verlie was eager to get to know other women and her new community. It seemed that joining a club and becoming involved in projects would be the best avenue in which to meet both objectives.[44]

Other charter members of the Victory Study Club thought likewise and shared similar

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[43] Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock, grave marker, Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s.v. "Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock," FindAGrave.com (accessed May 3, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/173777478; Wayne D. Rasmussen, *Taking the University to the People: Seventy-Five Years of Cooperative Extension* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989), 43-50; Bernice Carter, "Brief Summary of Home Demonstration Work in Texas," April 1, 1922, File 36, Box 2, TAMU Texas Agricultural Extension Service Historical Files, 1-2; Kate Adele Hill, "The Place of Home Demonstration Agents, Councils, and Clubs," 1949, File 10, Box 1, Hill Papers, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, 1-3; Kendra K. DeHart, "Making the Best Better: Home Demonstration on the Llano Estacado, 1914 to 1950," (master's thesis, Texas State University, 2013).

[44] Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock, grave marker, Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s.v. "Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock," FindAGrave.com (accessed May 3, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/173777478

experiences as Schonrock. Elise Marie Pendleton Partin had also recently moved to San Angelo as a young bride. Born in Munday, Texas, near the Panhandle, Pendleton was from a small farming community, and after graduating Wilson High School, she enrolled at Texas Tech University where she earned a home economics degree in 1941. During her time at Texas Tech, she met James "Jimmy" Partin, Jr., who earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in history and education from Texas Tech University. The two married in 1936 and moved to San Angelo in 1941 where Jimmy coached and became a principal of schools in and around the city. Shortly after moving to San Angelo at the age of twenty-six, Elise joined Verlie and served as the first treasurer of the Victory Study Club.[45]

Two of the youngest charter members were Kathleen Estes and Evelyn Beck. Born in Longview, Texas, Estes was just twenty-two when she joined the Victory Study Club and had completed three years of college. Her husband, Walter Dabney Estes, moved to San Angelo from Abilene, Texas, in 1940 to work as a furniture salesman.[46] The first president of the Victory Study Club was Evelyn Beck. Evelyn was also twenty-two and had one year of college under her belt. It is unclear where and when she met her husband, Louis Beck. Seven years older than Evelyn, Louis had a high-school education, and he worked as a bookkeeper for a local San Angelo bank.[47] As the sample of charter members indicates, these young

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[45] Elise Marie Pendleton Partin, grave marker, Elmwood Memorial Park, Abilene, Taylor, County, Texas, digital image s.v. "Elise Marie Pendleton Partin," FindAGrave.com (accessed June 19, 2019), https:// https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7144396/elsie-marie-partin; James W. "Jimmy" Partin, Jr., grave marker, Elmwood Memorial Park, Abilene, Taylor, County, Texas, digital image s.v. "James W. 'Jimmy' Partin, Jr.," Findagrave.com (accessed Jun 18, 2019), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/38617102/james-w_-partin

[46] 1940 United States Census, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s.v. "Walter Dabney Estes," Ancestry.com.

[47] 1940 United States Census, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s.v. "Louis Beck," Ancestry.com.

women had much in common. All the original members were in their twenties and early thirties at the time of the club's founding; they were white, recently married, had some level of higher education or professional experience, and were not originally from San Angelo.

Despite their past educational or professional endeavors, all charter members of the Victory Study Club considered themselves primarily homemakers. In order to join the club in the early years, they had to be. The club met twice a month on weekday afternoons when most working women could not attend. They also instigated a strict policy regarding absences, and members who missed too many club meetings could be fined. If an active member did not attend a meeting without notifying the president beforehand, the club fined her fifty cents for her absence. A fine of ten cents was also rendered should the member be tardy to a meeting.[48] Moreover, the bylaws explicitly warned additional punishments for excessive absences: "Any member absent three consecutive meetings loses her membership. Legal excuses are: illness of herself or family and absence from town." [49] No excused absence was given for employment. In fact, club president Norma Probst resigned in 1943 after she became employed at Goodfellow Air Force Base because she felt she could not "do both jobs effectively." Considering the club's bylaws, if she did not resign, the club probably would have dropped her membership. It most likely would be far better to resign and save face than incur that humiliation.[50]

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[48] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1948-1949," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[49] "By Laws and Constitution Yearbook: 1947-1948," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas, 16.

[50] "Parliamentary Law Studied by Victory Club," *San Angelo Standard Times*, November 1943 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Victory Study Club charter members were clearly middle-to-upper class whose families' economic stability depended solely on their husbands' income. Club members' husbands had white-collar occupations in the city during World War II. They worked as bankers, Works Progress Administrators, schoolteachers and principals, and managers of telephone and construction companies. None were considered blue-collar workers, and despite the region's reliance on farming and livestock, only one husband listed his occupation as a "stock farmer," Janet Walker's husband Herman.[51] The financial stability provided by their husbands offered the opportunity and time for Victory Study Clubwomen to engage in civic programs and projects when other working-class women could not.

The shared association of professional homemakers provided other tangible benefits to Victory Study Clubwomen as they sought to expand their influence outside of their home during World War II. An association of housewives provided an avenue for women to challenge domesticity without threatening traditional marital and gender arrangements. Historian Helen Laville agrees. Joining a women's club, she contends, "offered the benefits of a 'pseudo-career' without causing a difficult connotation with women's popularly ascribed role as a 'homemaker'"; the activities of its members—particularly as they related to service projects—could be couched as "concerned and supportive citizens, not as political ambitious housewives."[52] The Victory Study Club certainly recognized and built on the tradition of housewives' "municipal housekeeping" as a means to engage in the public sphere.

Though women might belong to individual clubs in San Angelo, there was a

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[51] 1940 United States Census, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s.v. "Herman Walker," Ancestry.com.

[52] Helen Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organisations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 14.

coordinated effort to ensure collaboration among all the women's clubs in the region. San Angelo established its City Federation of Women's Clubs, as part of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs (TFWC) and the national General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), on May 23, 1937. The city federation's motto was "United in Action," and its objective was "to unite women's groups whose aims are education, culture and the welfare of San Angelo." Within a year of the club's founding, the Victory Study Club formally joined the City and Texas Federation of Women's Clubs on November 11, 1943 and remained dedicated to TFWC until the club disbanded fifty years later.[53]

After charter members established the Victory Study Club, the question became how and whom to recruit as new members. At first, the club limited its membership to thirty members, and gaining membership was no easy task. To become a member, a new applicant had to produce a written endorsement by two current members who were personally acquainted with the applicant and could vouch for her character and commitment. Even if the new applicant achieved this endorsement, she could be easily denied entrance when her name came up for a vote within a meeting. Two negative votes from other club members could void her endorsement. Compatibility, in other words, was the key to admission, and members often chose prospective members with whom they were already well acquainted and knew could get along. How well or poorly each member got along, however, is carefully omitted from the scrapbooks, yearbooks, minutes, and reports. [54]

The Victory Study Club had various classifications of membership. To be considered

[53] "Certificate from the Texas Federation of Women's Club," November 11, 1943 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[54] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1947" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

active members, clubwomen were required to attend regular meetings, serve on committees or as officers, prepare programs, and participate in club projects. To obtain active member status, in other words, a woman had to be exceedingly dedicated. Associate was another classification of membership offered to women who could not devote as much time to club activities. Associate members could serve as hostesses for meetings or serve on committees, but they were not required to give programs and could not hold office. Women living outside of San Angelo could also be members of the Victory Study Club. Known as Non-Resident members, they were exempt from the attendance rule but of course could not hold office, and very few women held Non-Resident member status. All active members paid an annual due of three dollars while associate members paid four dollars, indicating that the harder members worked, the less they had to financially contribute to the club's bank account.[55]

Active members of the Victory Study Club did their best to divide the responsibilities of running the club equally among members. There were several officer positions women could hold within the club—president, first vice president, second vice president, treasurer, auditor, historian, recording secretary, corresponding Secretary, parliamentarian, and federation counselor. The president presided over all meetings while the first and second vice presidents assumed the duties of the president in her absence and served as the chairs of the social and membership committees. The recording secretary kept a record of all meetings, books, and papers while the corresponding secretary was responsible for notifying new members of their election to the club, distributing the annual Yearbook, and chairing the Press Committee. The treasurer collected club dues, gave receipts, and submitted the club's

[55]"Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1947" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

monthly bank statement. The auditor double-checked the treasurer and balanced the books. The parliamentarian served as an advisor to the president and ensured that the club obeyed the proper parliamentary procedures as outlined in *Robert's Rule of Order*. The federation counselor kept the club informed of pertinent and interesting facts on the city, state, and national federation organizations while the historian kept the record of the clubs' programs and newspaper clippings. Club members rotated these positions regularly each year. A woman could nominate either herself or another for an officer position, and the entire club voted on that woman's candidacy. Club members excelled at ensuring that no woman became too overburdened with her tasks. Victory Study Club members prohibited any one woman for holding an office too long. For example, clubwomen who held the office of president normally did not do so for more than two years, and since positions revolved, officers were discouraged from taking too much praise for any particular project or program in a given year. [56]

With their officer positions in place and their membership rolls growing, the Victory Study Clubwomen laid out their objectives. The Yearbook, an annual book produced by club members that contained the club's rosters, programs, projects, and budgets for the upcoming year, stated: "The object of this association shall be to inspire, to enlighten, to promote culture and education, to know the government, to hold high the torch of the spirit of America, and to co-operate in any work which may advance the welfare of the community."[57] While using the word *club* in their official name, it is noteworthy that the

[56] "Victory Study Club Yearbook" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[57] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1946" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Victory Study Club identified itself as an *association*. At first glance, Merriam Webster offers very little differences between the two words. A *club* is "an association of persons for some common object, usually jointly supported and meeting periodically" while an *association* is "an organization of persons having a common interest."[58] One of the most obvious discrepancies in the two terms is the inclusion of "meeting," but perhaps something more significant occurs within these separate definitions. Did *association* convey more prestige than *club*? The San Angelo Senisa Club, a women's gardening club founded prior to World War II, makes no claim to be "an organization" or "an association."[59] Perhaps Victory Study clubwomen sought to increase their credibility, stature, and reputation by distancing themselves from other women's clubs dedicated to gardening, bridge, or other amusements. While socialization was an important reason to join the club, Victory club members also outlined larger aspirations than other women's clubs dedicated exclusively to entertainment or hobbies.

So how did the Victory Study Club engage in the war effort in their early years? For the most part, they followed the advice of the columns in the *San Angelo Evening Standard*. To win the war, ensuring domestic harmony was crucial, and the local paper featured daily advice on how best housewives could achieve this goal. Editorials also urged American women to alter their buying and consumption patterns and donate their time and money at the local and state level. Looking at the local columns that San Angeloan clubwomen read provides an opportunity to not only observe what the government, cultural perceptions, and

[58] *Meriam Webster, s.v.* "Club," (accessed June 18, 2017), https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/club; *Meriam Webster, s.v.* "Association," (accessed June 18, 2017), https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/association.

[59] "The San Angelo Sensia Gardening Club Yearbook 1961-62," Box 1, 1998-14 LaVera Wood Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

women themselves expected of and from one another in their wartime activism but also how the Victory Study Club structured its World War II response.

Like the rest of the nation, the Victory Study Club contributed financially to the war effort by buying war bonds. One 1942 article in the *Evening Standard* asked, "Has Our Town Gone Mad?" Under a cartoon image of men and women with distressed faces and holding guns, the answer was "You bet it has . . . Fighting Mad!!," and the article stressed the necessity of purchasing war bonds.[60] Issued by the United States government, war bonds provided financial assistance for military operations. Ranging from ten to one-thousand dollars, the public bought bonds at 50 to 75 percent of their face value that matured over time. The local paper explained that if an individual purchased just $18.75 in war bonds, it provided "enough fuel oil for a destroyer to cruise 37 miles" to search out Nazi submarines; a $75 bond would "buy 40 rounds of anti-aircraft fire—enough to bring down the biggest Jap bomber that ever threatened American warships." Bonds were not merely a charitable donation to the war effort, the article explained. "For America is not asking San Angelo and West Texans to give this money," even though the government was making "sure that our way of life is not blotted out by Fascism." Instead, it explained that "you are *lending* this money to your country. You are being paid generous interest."[61] Almost all businesses in San Angelo bought war bonds—everything from appliance stores, bakeries, beer distributors, drapery and dressmaking shops, beauticians, hospitals, and dry cleaners. The Victory Study Club also purchased war bonds. Early in 1942, the club voted to pool their individual war

[60] "Has Our Town Gone Mad?" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 10, 1942.

[61] "Has Our Town Gone Mad?" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 10, 1942, italics original.

bonds and collectively convert them into a war bond for the club. [62] During World War II, Victory Study Clubwomen thus joined "more than 80 million Americans [who] purchased war bonds and brought in over $180 billion in revenue" to help fund the nation's war.[63]

Clubwomen also raised money and donated their time to aid the region's servicemen. During World War II, the club sponsored several rummage sales, located at a vacant building next to the Abbot Brothers store on South Chadbourne Street, and donated the money to the recently founded nonprofit United Service Organization (USO). The USO mostly provided recreational activities for soldiers, and one of the most popular activities sponsored by the USO was community dances. Members of the Victory Study Club often served as hostesses of these dances, and Victory Study clubwoman Kathleen Estes acted as the club's USO chairman.[64] Nita Archer fondly remembered these dances, and perhaps it was at one of these dances that she first became familiar with the work of the Victory Study Club.[65] Other than dances, the

Figure 3: USO Meritorious Service Award, Sept. 1944 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[62] "Ethics Studied by Victory Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 6, 1942.

[63] James Chen, "War Bond," Investopedia.com, April 15, 2020 (accessed May 13, 2020), https://www.investopedia.com/terms/w/warbonds.asp.

[64] "Mrs. McCarroll Reviews Year's Work for Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas

[65] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

club also frequently sponsored bingo parties for the USO. [66] The USO thanked and appreciated the Victory Study Club for its work. In 1944, the club received "an award for Meritorious Service in USO war work" from the organization's president and local USO council chairman.[67]

Victory Study Clubwomen also offered financial assistance to servicemen and their families in San Angelo. In one meeting in October 1942, the general field representative of the Midwest Red Cross region, Estelle Penry, spoke to the club and encouraged women to loan money to families at Goodfellow Air Force Base. She explained, "New soldiers arriving here do not receive their service records sometimes under 30 to 60 days and their families must have some financial relief during this interim." It is unclear how much money clubwomen loaned to the newly arrived soldiers, but it seems safe to assume that after hearing this program, the club made at least a small donation.[68]

Members of the Victory Study Club, like women all over the nation, enthusiastically supported the Red Cross by either donating funds or volunteering. Nine kinds of volunteer work were available to women through the Red Cross during World War II: "canteen work, sew, nurse, type, do administrative tasks, recreational and social work, help the blind or enter the Motor Corps." While most San Angelo women chose stereotypically feminine Red Cross work centered around first aid, home hygiene, and sewing, some took advantage of machine

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[66] "Mrs. McCarroll Reviews Year's Work for Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas

[67] "USO Recognition of Meritorious Service in USO War Work Certificate to the Victory Study Club," September 1944 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Victory Study Club Organized in War Time," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, November 7, 1955.

[68] "Red Cross Help For Families in Service," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 1, 1942.

training. One local woman described her involvement in the Red Cross Motor Corps. Women in the Red Cross Motor Corps took auto maintenance classes in order to keep their own vehicles running and to transport supplies and people to and from military bases. In January 1942, more than seven hundred women registered for the Red Cross Motor Corps. To join the Motor Corps in San Angelo, local women had to complete a "30-hour motor mechanic's course, a 20-hour first aid course, and after that, you have to put in 200 hours driving." Lucrece Hudgins explained after taking the courses, she knew "more about a car than [my] brother ever knew about a go-cart." She learned "how to clean dirt out of a gas line, how to straighten out a locked starter, [and] how to change a tire without screaming for masculine aid."[69]

It does not appear that any Victory Study Club members joined the Red Cross Motor Corps, but they did engage in other Red Cross volunteer activities when local officials issued the call. In her meeting with the VSC in 1942, Estelle Penry of the Red Cross delivered a strident message expressing her disappointment. "San Angelo women are not responding as they should to the call for volunteers to aid this program so vital to the soldiers on the fighting front," Penry exclaimed. "More women are needed to do Red Cross work in both the sewing and the surgical dressing unit." It was "embarrassing to San Angelo," she contended, that smaller towns in West Texas had provided more assistance than San Angelo's larger population. San Angelo women responded to her appeal. Within a few weeks, they had produced fifty-four turtleneck sweaters, thirty helmets, and nineteen pairs of gloves for the

[69] "Women Study For Civilian Defense Aid," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 26, 1942; Patricia G. Harrison, "Riveters, Volunteers and WACS: Women in Mobile During World War II," in *History of Women in the United States: Historical Articles on Women's Lives and Activities*, ed. by Nancy E. Cott (London: K. G. Saur, 1993), 422-23.

Navy and eight sleeveless sweaters, forty mufflers, and forty pairs of gloves for the Army.[70] The Victory Study Club, Las Hermanas, and the Women's Club of San Angelo regularly held all-day sewing meetings in members' homes in order to help reach the quota and made surgical dressings for soldiers in need.[71] In one all-day meeting, Victory Study Clubwomen sewed thirteen dress slips in the home of Sue Smith Ulmer.[72]

Rationing also became an important aspect of housewives' wartime activism during World War II. All San Angeloans participated in the rationing of basic materials like food, shoes, metal, and paper, but the most discussed item rationed in the local paper was rubber. As early as January 1942, San Angelo residents experienced severe rubber rationing that affected not only citizens but also commercial industries. The *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported that a special "Tire Rationing Board" was created, including an "oil man, a farmer and ranchman, and a real estate dealer," who were tasked with reducing the number of new tires and tubes available in the county. "The task is big," they reported, with Tom Green's quota for one month at "83 passenger tires, 69 tubes, 179 truck tires, and 150 tubes." Of course, the demand was much higher. "In the county, citizens during 1941 registered 10,834 passenger cars, 1,904 commercial vehicles and 698 farm vehicles." To qualify for a new tire or tube, an individual had to submit an initial form to the Tire Rationing Board, which met twice a week, and if approved, an individual had to take the form to a county-certified tire repairman to validate whether repairs were warranted. Apparently, very few citizens

[70] "Red Cross for Goodness Sake," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October, 1, 1942.

[71] "Club Sews For Red Cross at All-Day Meet in Barton Home," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 21, 1942.

[72] "Victory Club Sews at All-Day Meeting," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

qualified since the board could only divide "262 tires among the 13,100 motor vehicle owners" of the county in January 1942.[73]

Tire rationing affected businesses as well. The major three creameries in San Angelo in 1942 changed their delivery of milk, cream, and butter to reduce vehicle use. Originally the creameries delivered twice a day, but they decreased their deliveries to once a day and eliminated Sunday deliveries entirely. This had an added benefit, creamery head-ups reported, since "route men [now had] a chance to go to church with their families." San Angeloans accepting this new daily schedule learned to accommodate, the paper reported. "Getting up with the milkman will have a different connotation in San Angelo. . . . The new delivery schedule means that Angeloans who have looked to the early morning milkman for their breakfast coffee cream or milk must order a day in advance." It was for a good cause, most agreed, since this "move will effect a 40 per cent saving in vital rubber, gasoline, and lubricating oil."[74]

Rubber rationing also required personal sacrifices from women, who did without goods that might be less familiar to the public. For instance, San Angelo merchants rationed girdles since they were made with rubber and latex. The front page of the *San Angelo Evening Standard* warned women that limited numbers of these "foundation garments" could be found in local stores. They would have to make do or do without these goods. Local male merchants, however, reasoned that this would not cause significant problems for San Angeloan women in the long run. San Angeloan Al Harris, manager of the local J. C. Penney

[73] "Tom Green's Tire Rationing Board to Meet Twice a Week," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 5, 1942.

[74] "Creameries to Eliminate Early Morning Deliveries," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 8, 1942.

store, explained, “There is a possibility that the tire shortage will make many women walk more, and eventually this may so reduce them [women] that they will need fewer foundations.” In other words, he hoped that “the rubber shortage may help to adjust itself” as women exercised and slimmed down.[75]

Other articles in the *Evening Standard* also encouraged San Angelons to shed excess pounds as part of the war effort. An article featured Miss Pauline Murrah, a former San Angelo resident, who received national fame for her “Defense Diet” which appeared in the January 1942 edition of *Look* magazine. Murrah served as a nutrition consultant for the New York City Health Department during the war, and she devised a “new painless” diet “to take off two to three pounds in eight days.” She also encouraged “heavy citizens into fit war works programs” and believed that rationing, dieting, and exercising would help citizens remain healthy during the war and strengthen civilian home front preparedness.[76]

Like the rest of the nation, Victory Study club members also safeguarded food during World War II. Encouraged by the United States Department of Agriculture, Americans grew fruits, vegetables, and herbs in their backyards or window boxes to curb wartime food shortages, and clubwomen studied the art of planting Victory Gardens around their homes. These Victory Gardens had multiple benefits: they allowed more commercial agricultural produce to be sent overseas, supplemented rations at home, improved civilian nutrition, and boosted patriotism and morale. In 1942, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* wrote that Victory Gardens were “a vital part of our well-planned program to defeat the Axis,” and this was

[75] “For Women Only: Girdles Hit Hard by War Time Shortages,” *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 1, 1942.

[76] “Former Angeloan Plans Defense Diet,” *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 15, 1942.

"definitely . . . as vital as any other type of war work" since "50 percent of commercially canned vegetables and 70 percent of commercially canned fruits are already reserved for war work."[77] By the end of 1942, over sixteen million Americans grew Victory Gardens, and in 1943, "three-fifths of the population produced more than 8 million tons of food, some 40 percent of the fresh produce consumed that year."[78] Victory Study Club members contributed to these numbers. In an April 1944 meeting, clubwomen discussed the "vital war gardens" they had cultivated that were part of the 1.4 million Victory Gardens reported in Texas that year.[79] An estimated 91 percent of American civilians believed that Victory Gardens were a wartime necessity, and at least 60 percent of Americans said they had planted Victory Gardens during war's duration. Even First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt planted a Victory Garden in the White House lawn, which served as "a statement to the nation that it was the patriotic duty of every person" to help cultivate the nation's food.[80]

In addition to growing their own fruits, vegetables, and herbs, Victory Study Clubwomen also participated in meat rationing during World War II. Articles in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* routinely reminded housewives to use meat wisely. One warned, "If only an ounce of meat is wasted daily in the 30 million kitchens in this country, right there is enough meat to feed 1,875,000 soldiers for an entire day. . . . A wasted mouthful of

[77] "Food is Ammunition: Advertisement for Safeway," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 16, 1942.

[78] Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 117-18.

[79] "War Gardens Are Vital Part in Victory Program," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 13, 1944.

[80] Bentley, *Eating for Victory*, 139; Cecilia Gowdy-Wygant, *Cultivating Victory: The Women's Land Army and the Victory Garden Movement* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg, 2013), 137.

meat is sabotage to the home front."[81] Housewives learned the importance of buying the "thriftiest of cuts," using bones to make soup and stock, and cooking with fish, which even in West Texas became more widely available during the war as meat was rationed. The paper contended, "Two and a half pounds of meat per person a week is not a great hardship, particularly when meat-extender recipes are frequently used." San Angeloan housewives were also encouraged to include "Meatless Days" in their weekly meal plan where they used alternative sources of protein like legumes, soybeans, eggs, and cheese. For these reasons, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* determined, "Meat rationing will be no bugaboo to the alert housewife" whose patriotism inspired her to do whatever she could in the kitchen to secure an Allied victory.[82]

The local paper also encouraged women to tattle on other housewives who might not be adhering to strict wartime food rationing. In January 1942, the *Evening Standard* revealed that "it was learned today that some housewives . . . made the rounds and bought up 10 to 25 pound sacks of sugar at the various stores after immense sugar rationing was announced." It was a ruse that "didn't go over well," the paper reported. Supposedly, women entered the store and announced, "By the way, I forgot to get my 25 pound sack of sugar last Saturday," even if they had already picked up a sack the day before. The paper encouraged housewives to out these "sugar hoarders" and for local merchants to keep more diligent notes of permits, which "Uncle Sam" could use "when the government cracks down."[83] Evidently, one of San

[81] "Alert Housewives Find Ways to Overcome Meat Rationing Problems," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 16, 1942.

[82] "Alert Housewives Find Ways to Overcome Meat Rationing Problems," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 16, 1942.

[83] "Sugar Threat Didn't Curb—It Increased—Sugar Hoarding," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 29, 1942.

Angeloan women's responsibilities during wartime was making sure that other housewives adhered to rationing campaigns. Any violation of local rationing efforts meant not only ridicule but also an affront to national patriotism. At one meeting, club member Elise Partin presented on the subject, "How the Housewife Can Help Win the War," and after the meeting, she distributed a list of sugar substitutes. All members present signed the US Government Consumer's Pledge for Total Defense.[84]

Victory Study Club women participated in various government programs related to rationing materials in addition to food. One club program in 1942 encouraged members to bring empty tin cans, which would be donated to the government, as their rollcall to a meeting. It was not known when the military might need these cans, but the program urged housewives to be proactive if—and most likely when—the cans might prove necessary for the warfront. Bringing these cans to the meeting was not as simple as piling them into sacks or boxes. The War Production Board explained the proper way to store and save tin cans. "Homemakers," it advised, "save tin cans for future salvage" by removing the ends and labels, washing and drying them thoroughly, putting the ends inside the cans, and compressing the cans by either stepping on them or using a hammer.[85] One might find it amusing to imagine a San Angeloan clubwoman raising her foot or a hammer above a tin can. In smashing the cans, she perhaps achieved two goals at once: she helped to alleviate wartime tin shortages while also releasing some stifled anger against foreign aggressors, domestic dissonance, or wartime food shortages.

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[84] "Victory Club Has Consumer Program," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[85] "Save Tin Cans," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* October 30, 1942.

Advice abounded on how housewives could win the war by avoiding unnecessary waste. The San Angelo '32 club launched a rationing campaign of women's cosmetics, but it is unclear whether or not the Victory Study Club participated in this campaign.[86] A recurring column entitled "To Help Win the War Women Can…" in 1942 recommended that women "Save and Save" by conserving resources. "Not only must the housewife guard against wasting food, she must see that there is no waste in anything," the paper explained. It warned, "Don't throw away scrap material. Don't use the telephone unnecessarily. Don't use lights that aren't needed. Don't throw away old papers. Don't save junk." Victory Clubwomen Kathleen Estes agreed with these sentiments. In a program to the Victory Study Club entitled "Defense and the Consumer," she urged club members "to plan carefully, stretch every dollar, and conserve resources."[87]

The same column also urged San Angeloan housewives to "Skip the Jitters" by keeping as ordinary and daily schedule as possible in order to boost morale. It advised, "Make an extra batch of hot cakes for breakfast. Go to market. Scrub the kitchen cabinets. Sit down and read your favorite paper. Get a shampoo. Fix a super-duper dinner and take your husband to an early show." This would "sweep the jitters out of your home, ladies," which was a vital "personal contribution to the defense of America" that San Angelo housewives could perform.[88] Housewives should also avoid gossiping, the editorial reasoned. "Don't

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[86] "32 Club Yearbook, 1941-1942," '32 Club Folder, Box 6.147, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Women's Club Collection, Texas Women University Women's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

[87] "Victory Club Has Consumer Program," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[88] "To Help Win the War Women Can—Skip the Jitters," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 13, 1942.

squander energy listening to and spreading unfounded rumors from the warfront" as this was unpatriotic and hurtful to the domestic war effort.[89] By keeping as ordinary a schedule as possible to ease the jitters while also "saving and saving," the paper's editors assured San Angelo housewives that they were helping the nation win the war.

Jitters were certainly real in San Angelo, and local newspapers offered clubwomen advice about what to do if foreign enemies attacked San Angelo. With the establishment of Goodfellow Air Force Base and Mathis Field, officials warned that this West Texas city could become a prime strike target. To prepare housewives for this possibility, a January 1942 photograph in the local paper showed the latest in wartime women's fashion: a scarf produced by the Air Raid Alert Department (ARA) that women could wear to remind them what to do in case of an air attack. The red, white, and blue message printed on the scarf read: "Keep cool, stay home, turn off gas, leave buses, autos, cars, know your air raid alarm, avoid top and bottom floors, cover all windows in black cloth, keep flashlights and candles handy, spray incendiary bombs, never splash them, wait until air warden gives all clear signal, keep pails of water handy for the fire department, turn out all lights, pull down all shades, ignore all rumors and gossip, stay away from windows, lie down when bombs fall, keep your radio going, keep your head, avoid panic, walk don't run, keep cool."[90] The possibility of an air attack was clearly on the minds of San Angeloans and the advice offered was outright frightening, but by encouraging women to wear this ARA scarf, officials hoped to increase awareness and prepare West Texan homemakers for the worst case scenario.

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[89] "To Help Win the War Women Can—Save and Save," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 15, 1942.

[90] "Take Good Advice With You," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 15, 1942.

Beyond buying war bonds and rationing, San Angeloan homemakers presumably bore responsibility for fortifying and preparing their residences in the case of a direct attack. In January 1942 San Angeloan clubwomen read about a local family who took civil defense planning to the next level by installing a bomb shelter in their urban backyard. The article featured Mr. and Mrs. Emette Westbrook's home at 1902 Guadalupe Street. Mrs. Westbrook asked expert storm-shelter constructor W. M. Stockton to build a bomb-proof, eight-by-twelve-foot shelter. The article encouraged other San Angeloan women to do the same since the "air-raid shelter . . . will stand anything but a direct hit." Even if San Angelo did not receive an air attack, Mrs. Westbrook touted the practicality of the shelter. She surmised, "When we settle down after the war, the shelter is still there, the ideal storehouse for fruits, vegetables, jellies, and jerked meat."[91]

While housewives learned civil defense practices to safeguard their homes, other San Angelo housewives entered the workforce to help win the war. One newspaper article in 1942 presented photos of more than a dozen women enrolled in free, government-sponsored machine shop classes at San Angelo High School. Three of the four women highlighted in the story were married and "whose delicate fingers heretofore threaded the needle, squeezed the accordion, and lifted eggs from the hen nest out on the farm" were now producing "guns and other implements of war" and doing it "even better than men in many cases," instructor Harry Kollmyer explained. A mother and daughter enrolled in these classes. Another married woman registered so that she might join her husband working at a Navy yard in California. A widowed woman—who could not manage her farm after her hired hand was drafted—sought this education to support her children with the hope of full-time employment in an

[91] "Bomb Shelter Is Completed," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 9, 1942.

automobile shop after the war's end.[92] While it appears that no Victory Study Clubwomen took part in these government classes, it is significant to note that several white, San Angeloan housewives seized on the professional training offered by the government and contributed to the warfront outside of their traditional homemaker roles.

Even though Victory Study Club's wartime contributions centered around the home, its members nevertheless realized the new opportunities for San Angelo's single and married women that the war had provided. One 1942 article in the local paper featured the story of young Anna Louise Spears, who became the first woman licensed to drive cars, trucks, and tractors on the Goodfellow Air Force Base. Her family had recently relocated to San Angelo after the war's start, and they lived in the post's Rio Vista housing unit. They were a military family, and her grandmother, aunt, and uncle miraculously escaped death at Pearl Harbor after a bomb dropped in their backyard. "Luckily, it [the bomb] was a dud," she explained. Shortly after arriving at Goodfellow, Spears got a job where she "walked miles and miles daily, running down aircraft parts and office supplies and carrying the heavy artillery to the points where they were needed." Then, they gave her a fifteen-minute driving instruction. After the lesson, she climbed in and "drove off to a heavy-duty task." She had not "stopped to ask questions since."[93] Stories like Anna Spears caught the attention of Victory Study Clubwomen, who noticed more women working outside of the home. Though it is not known exactly what was said in an April 1944 meeting, clubwoman Ilene Olive led a discussion on

[92] "Women Enroll In Government Machine Shop School to Prepare for War Jobs," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 16, 1942.

[93] "Versatile Anna Louise Spears Is First Woman Licensed to Drive Vehicles at Goodfellow Field," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 9, 1942.

"Will Women Be Satisfied in the Home After the War?"[94] As the postwar experiences of Victory Study Club will indicate, individual clubwomen's opinions varied.

Aside from San Angelo women moving into new roles during World War II, Victory Study Club members shared concerns with other wives regarding the possibility of their husbands entering the war. Anxiety mounted in October 1942 when the local Draft Board No. 2 announced that young married men could be drafted. Several Victory Study clubwomen's husbands received World War II draft cards, such as Leona Merele Cook's husband, Dwaine Wilson "Mike" Cook; Bobbie Jo Mann Hillyer's husband, Wilie Hillyer; and Mildred Huston Phelan's husband, John Alton Phelan.[95] Muriel Mae Whittaker Richen's husband served as a lieutenant at the Goodfellow Air Force Base. [96] During the war years, club historian Norma Probst's husband, Walter Rudolph Probst, Jr., was away serving in the Army Air Force, and Evelyn N. Walker's husband, Weldon W. Walker, served in the Pacific Theater in the US Navy.[97] Luckily for Victory Study Clubwomen, it does not appear that any members lost their husbands in the war, but the possibility that it might happen undoubtedly created an atmosphere of anxiety among club members.[98]

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[94] "Program Given For Victory Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 3, 1944. Minutes from Victory Study Club Meetings are not available until 1959. A note from the 1959-1966 Victory Study Club Minutes Book explains, "During the Summer of 1959 while Mrs. Bryan [Mary Nell] Mahon, Recording Secretary, was still in possession of Club Minutes, they were inadvertently destroyed. All minutes preceding May 14, 1959 are now unavailable" in "Minutes of the Victory Study Club, San Angelo, Texas," Box 6, 1994-8.25 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[95] U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947, digital image s.v. "Dwaine Wilson Mike Cook," "Willie Hillyer," "John Alton Phelan," "Walter Rudolph Probst, Jr.," and "Weldon Walker," Ancestry.com.

[96] "Army Directory: Reserve and National Guard Officers on Active Duty, July 31, 1941*," The War Department* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 992.

[97] "Weldon W. Walker," *FindAGrave.com* (accessed May 3, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/174280087.

[98] "Married Males on October Call: Big Reserve Here Without Children," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 11, 1942; "Married Men on Way to War from Tom Green," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 30, 1942.

Like other San Angelo women, clubwomen read articles that offered advice to women whose husbands or beaus might end up on the fighting front and underscored women's unique role in boosting servicemen's morale. Women, however, had to be careful how they presented themselves to their soldier boys as only a reputable and virtuous image of American womanhood would do. For example, one early January 1942 article warned women to pay extra care to what photograph they decided to send to soldiers overseas. It explained, "Your picture is going where you can't go, to remind him morning, noon and night of you. Let it make him always think of you . . . never a toothpaste ad, a prizewinning hairstyle, or even a page from *Photoplay* or *Vogue*." How could women remind soldiers in photographs of the wholesome woman waiting for him back home? The article counseled, "Avoid the theatrical pose. No matter how marvelous Hedy Lamarr looks lying on her back gazing through her tangled eyelashes with parted lips—don't try it." Instead, "Your face should be the center of interest. Don't wear anything that looks like a towel, a bathing suit, or a wisp of harem veiling. The boys can clip those out of *Esquire*."[99] As part of their wartime contributions, San Angelo women should remind soldiers boys of the wholesome, American values in which they were tasked to defend, the paper advised. As the early photograph of the Victory Study Club indicates, clubwomen—wearing full dresses and hats and gloves—indicate that members agreed with these sentiments and presented themselves in a conservative and conventional manner.

Ensuring domestic harmony was also important in winning the war, and a slightly humorous January 1942 *Evening Standard* article offered advice to San Angelo women

[99] "How Does Soldier's Girl (Via Picture) Look to Tent-Mates?" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 13, 1942.

whose husbands might possess a wandering eye. Suppose a wife were at a party, the article explained, and she discovered that her husband was devoting a little too much attention to a younger woman. How could the wife politely stifle this awkward situation while in a crowd? The editorial offered the following suggestions. "Drag one of his old college chums up and say brightly, 'Joe was telling me what fun you all had in college. That was 15 years ago, wasn't it?'" Or, "go up to the girl and tell her that you would love to have her visit you sometime . . . to see the children." One might also "say sweetly to the girl, 'George always falls for blondes.'" If none of these worked, unassuming humiliation would do. Tell your husband, "George I think you're drinking too much" or "remind him how hard he's been trying to lose weight." "Any of those methods," the article concluded, "are effective—*and cruel*."[100] Cruelty and humor aside, the article highlights how San Angelo housewives assumed a variety of roles to help the nation win the war and secure the home front. Though the article does not specifically mention World War II, clubwomen read that they also needed to assure domestic harmony within their marriages on top of rationing, raising funds, volunteering, preparing for civil defense, and boosting morale.

Victory Study Clubwomen's husbands were also involved in community wartime work within separate men's organizations. For instance, James Partin, husband of Victory Study Club member Elise Marie Pendleton Partin, and Dewaine Wilson "Mike" Cook, husband of Victory Study Club member Leona Merele Cook, joined the Lions Club during the war. Verlie Oral Youngblood Schonrock's husband, Edwin Schonrock, belonged to the Jaycees. Edith Mae Garrison Calkin's husband, Loren Malcolm Calkin, served in the West

[100] "Try These to Heckle Hubby Romeo Act," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 23, 1942, italics original.

Angelo Kiwanis Club and volunteered regularly for the American Red Cross.[101] The *San Angelo Evening Standard* highlighted these men's service clubs in January 1942, writing that clubmen "felt it fall upon their shoulders the mantle of greater responsibility—that of a nation and world-wide emergency which makes itself felt where men gather together and see, as such clubs do, to better the lot of their community and their fellowman." Their wartime contributes consisted of "non-governmental but often semi-official tasks of community responsibilities," such as contributing to the United Charities, improving officer housing, and the Red Cross War Relief Fund.[102] The opposite of women's clubs, whose wartime activism extended into the community as well as into the home, men's clubs did not extend their activism into the private sphere, mostly likely a reflection that the home was presumably not the primary sphere of men's influence.

While sharing the same urgency to help the nation win the war at home as the Victory Study Club, men's "service clubs" differed in that they primarily focused on making financial contributions to the war effort, and they diverged from women's clubs in where they met and how they raised money. While women's clubs frequently met in members' homes during the war years, men's clubs met in civic spaces and encouraged what one might call "masculine" pursuits. They certainly were not going to sew for the Red Cross, so they

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[101] James W. "Jimmy" Partin, Jr., grave marker, Elmwood Memorial Park, Abilene, Taylor, County, Texas, digital image s.v. "James W. 'Jimmy' Partin, Jr.," Findagrave.com (accessed June 18, 2019), https://www.finda
grave.com/memorial/38617102/james-w_-partin; Dewaine Wilson "Mike" Cook, grave marker, Belvedere Memorial Park, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital s.v. "Dewaine Wilson 'Mike' Cook,' Findagrave.com (accessed May 20, 2020) https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/51769103; "Loren Malcom Calkin Obituary," Rosewood Funeral Home, Victoria, Texas, February 28, 2011 (accessed June 10, 2020) https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/victoria-tx/loren-calkin-4579095.

[102] "Service Clubs: Men's Organizations Serve Man in Varied Fields," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 1, 1942.

provided other means for men to assist the war effort. For example, one fundraiser organized by the Jaycees in January 1942 for the Navy Relief Society, an organization that helped the families of sailors at sea or those killed in combat, invited men to the local lodge hall to listen to a radio broadcast fight between famed boxers Joe Louis and Buddy Baer. The men who attended paid "a small amount for their radio ringside seat" as Louis risked "his title in the fight with every cent he makes going to Navy relief." Louis won that fight, but it is unclear how much money the event raised.[103] While their tactics and relief efforts differed due to gendered conventions, men and women clubs' goals were similar—they were raising money at home for the war effort.

In rationing food and wartime supplies, growing their own gardens, donating time and money to various war relief efforts, and boosting morale at home, the Victory Study Club's wartime activism mirrored that of thousands of American housewives around the nation, but they also studied as a means to boost home front preparedness. Believing it was their duty to use their minds as much as they possibly could, Victory Study Clubwomen held various programs designed to more critically understand what was happening on the national and international warfront. For example, one 1942 program had various members discuss the "war personalities" of various military leaders and their various leadership styles. One member spoke on "Roosevelt, the Commander in Chief" while another gave a speech on "General MacArthur." Norma Probst discussed "King of the Fleet—Admiral Ernest J. King," and Evelyn Walker gave a report on the "Portrait of an American" soldier.[104] On another

[103] "Naval Relief Money Sought: Jaycees Gather Donations Tonight," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 9, 1942.

[104] "Victory Club Studies War Personalities," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946;" Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

occasion Sue Smith Ulmer led a program on "Is the United States a Good Neighbor?," where members most likely discussed the nation's foreign policy, particularly as it related to Latin American countries.[105] Evident in the club motto "the Path to Victory is Learning," education was essential to how Victory Study Club members understood and sought to contribute to the nation's wartime response.

Victory Study Club members also turned their attention to politics and encouraged clubwomen to become more active in national elections. Nationally, newspaper articles encouraged women to engage in politics during World War II. One article in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* in October 1942 revealed that an estimated 50 to 60 percent of the upcoming presidential vote during World War II would come from women; yet it reported on a disturbing national trend when it came to women in politics. A smaller number of women were running nationally for office than in the previous decade. In 1932, ninety-two women ran for either a senate, house, governor, or state office. By 1940, that number had dropped to eighty-three women in all categories, and since the outbreak of the war, the number fell even further: only sixty-six female candidates nationally were running for office.[106] The Texas Legislature also lacked a significant number of female candidates running for office or serving as representatives. As historian Ruthe Winegarten explains, "From 1922 when the first woman was elected until 1966 when Barbara Jordan won," only "twenty women" in total served, all of which "were white Democrats."[107]

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[105] "Mrs. Ulmer is Program Leader," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946;" Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[106] "More Women Voting, But Fewer Seek Political Office This Year," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 20, 1942.

[107] Ruthe Winegarten, "Women in Red," in *Capitol Women: Texas Female Legislators, 1923 to 1999*, eds. Nancy Baker Jones and Ruthe Winegarten (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 8.

Leading female politicians asked what might explain this national drop in female candidates. Marian Martin, head of the women's division of the Republican National Committee, and Lorena Hickock, executive secretary of the women's division of the Democratic National Committee, contended that home front preparedness was probably the number one reason. They reasoned that "the concentration of women on war work"—whether as housewives, defense workers, or serving in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACS) or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES)—consumed most American women's patriotic efforts. Women in the Victory Study Club certainly were consumed by their wartime activism, but another national leader offered a strident and perhaps more perceptive answer for the lack of women candidates. Alice Paul, executive committee member of the National Women's Party, argued that the problem was the result of "tremendous obstacles" that "women have to face in getting nominations as . . . political groups are still controlled by men."[108] What was needed in order to improve women's political participation in the nation during the war was to challenge previous stereotypes of women' apolitical nature and to encourage women to become more familiar with political developments, Paul concluded.

Victory Study Club programs focused on improving women's political education during World War II. From the very beginning of the club's establishment, members conducted their meetings following *Robert's Rules of Order*, a parliamentarian procedure manual that dictated rules and practices to govern non-legislative organizations in a decorous manner. Army Engineer Henry Martyn Robert published the first edition in 1875, and since

[108] "More Women Voting, But Fewer Seek Political Office This Year," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 20, 1942.

then, thousands of organizations have turned to the manual as an example of the "guiding principles that ensured order while protecting and advancing democratic principles."[109] In October 1942, Verlie Schonrock, club president at the time, distributed booklets on parliamentary procedures and led the assembled group in practicing parliamentary drills.[110] Since many of the procedures and rules presented in *Robert's Rules of Order* also mirror congressional practices, the manual provided Victory Study Clubwomen with an opportunity to learn the basics of parliamentary procedures and apply them to understanding the workings of the United States government as a whole.

Particularly toward the end of World War II, Victory Study Club members also took it upon themselves to learn about congressional legislation. In one 1943 meeting, they put on a short skit entitled "A Bill Becomes a Law—A One-Act Play" to "emphasize the importance of following a bill from beginning to end before passing judgment." Clubwomen took on roles of different types of representatives in the legislature and presented an almost-reality show of political personalities with such characters as "Representative Talk (who likes to be heard)" and "Representative Against (since there is always one)."[111] At an early March 1945 meeting, Dr. Claire Crawford Peterson, a local osteopathic physician, also spoke to the Victory Study Club regarding certain national and state bills currently before Congress. She urged the members present to recognize that "This year, perhaps more than any other time in

[109] "An Army Engineer Brought Order to Church Meetings and Revolutionized Parliamentary Procedure," *U. S.ArmyCorpsofEngineers.com* (accessed May 3, 2020), https://www.usace.army.mil/About/History/Historical-Vignettes/General-History/038-Church-Meetings/

[110] "Ethics Studied by Victory Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard, October 6, 1942;* "Parliamentary Law Studied by Victory Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* October 20, 1942.

[111] "Bill Becomes a Law" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

history, many bills need women's attention and votes." The issues that Patterson mentioned included juvenile delinquency, the state cancer clinic, raising salaries for schoolteachers, freight rates, the secret ballot, Aid to Dependent Children, and the National War Service Act.[112]

In early 1945, as the war wound down, San Angelo's City Federation of Women's Clubs received a special treat when the TFWC President Ethel Foster and Heart O' Texas District President Leona Bruce held a conclave at the Hotel Cactus. San Angelo's City of Federated Women's Clubs assembled—including the Victory Study Club. In front of more than one hundred members, Foster applauded San Angelo clubwomen's wartime activism. She explained, "Through Victory gardening and canning, women have helped meet the problem of food shortage. . . . Housing is also an important division. Many clubs have committees to aid newcomers to find houses. . . [and] club members have co-operated in the grease, hose, scrap iron, and tin can campaigns." All of this work was commendable, but what appeared in all caps in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* was Foster's report on nursing recruitment efforts. She stated, "The most important of the points has been the nursing program for which the National Organization of Nurses has commended the GFWC. At the last general report, this spring the Texas Federation had recruited 125 girls and had raised $20,000 in scholarships."[113] Foster also praised the money individual federated clubs had

[112] "Dr. Peterson Speaks on Legislation at Victory Club Tea, March 30, 1945" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946;" Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Dr. Claire Crawford Peterson," *FindAGrave.com* (accessed May 3, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/43572034/claire-peterson

[113] "War Service Main Project for Clubs, Says Speaker at First Annual Junior Conclave," *San Angelo Evening Standard* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946;" Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

raised. Collectively, the General Federation of Women's Clubs produced "a fleet of 50 bombers [to] go out from the federation," and the Texas Federation alone raised three hundred thousand dollars to buy an aircraft bomber. Hearing these reports of the federation's collective accomplishments, Victory Study Club members could feel proud of their wartime work.[114]

District President Leona Bruce shared a different message with San Angelo clubwomen. While she also praised clubs' wartime activism, she contended that their duties were hardly complete with the war's end; clubwomen needed to continue their political education and activism in the postwar period. She explained, "The future of the country in a political way belongs to the young women. To prepare themselves for this obligation, they should keep themselves informed through studying. THESE ARE THE YEARS OF PREPARATION . . . . Be sure that you use them profitably." In urging young women to seize these opportunities in the postwar era, she declared, "The future of the world is yours. You are building for a better womanhood, better Texashood, and a better world." Recognizing the significance of this moment for young women, Bruce concluded before she walked off stage, "To you, we throw the torch. Be Yours to Hold it High."[115] Victory Study Club members received this message warmly and took up the torch. A month after this conclave, Victory Study Clubwoman Kathleen Estes noted in a 1945 April program to members assembled that "women wear slacks but they think political affairs too non-

[114] "War Service Main Project for Clubs, Says Speaker at First Annual Junior Conclave," *San Angelo Evening Standard* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946;" Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[115] "War Service Main Project for Clubs, Says Speaker at First Annual Junior Conclave," *San Angelo Evening Standard* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946;" Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

feminine," and this was something she and her fellow club members sought to amend in the postwar period.[116]

World War II transformed San Angelo and San Angeloans' lives. It brought the establishment of military bases, the influx of soldiers, the formation of new businesses, and the arrival of new populations. It altered West Texans personally, economically, and culturally, and it united military officials and civilians in warfront and home front preparedness. After the war ended, San Angelo did not resume its reputation as a small West Texas town. Instead, the population of San Angelo boomed in the postwar period and continued to grow over the next half-century.

World War II also prompted white, middle-class housewives to organize collectively in their wartime activism, and the Victory Study Club provides a case study of how women's clubs contributed to the war and home front. Victory Study Clubwomen engaged in similar wartime activism as housewives all over the nation, but rather than doing so individually, they joined together collectively to meet the wartime emergency. As a group, they rationed food and wartime supplies, supported American Red Cross activities, raised money, and boosted morale and patriotism among fellow citizens and soldiers alike. On top of these familiar wartime activities, members of the Victory Study Club also dedicated themselves to cultivating one another's education. Though formed in World War II San Angelo, the Victory Study Club existed far longer and grew even larger after the war's end, and the club provided a means for West Texas housewives to continue their education, to serve their community and nation, and to provide a foundation for expanding women's rights in the

[116] "Victory Club Studies Racial Programs and Appoints Committees, April 13, 1945" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1942 to 1946;" Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

postwar period. As the war came to an end, clubwomen began to ask questions of the post-World War II nation: Would prewar gendered prescriptions still apply for American women? Or, could middle-class housewives carve out new political and social roles for themselves within the "Arsenal of Democracy" amid the rekindled emphasis on American women's domesticity?

CHAPTER TWO

V IS FOR VIGILIANCE: THE VICTORY STUDY CLUB'S INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM IN COLD WAR SAN ANGELO, TEXAS

> The next war, the scientists tell us, means annihilation. To prepare for it, therefore is to prepare for our own suicide.[1]
> -Eleanor Roosevelt, 1947

San Angeloans read the *San Angelo Evening Standard* with grateful hearts on August 15, 1945. The front page featured an image of President Harry Truman, "smiling and surrounded by his staff," who declared that the Japanese finally decided to accept unconditional surrender. More than seventy-five thousand people swarmed outside the White House that day as he read the formal message from Emperor Hirohito. With World War II finally over and victory secured, President Truman called for a national holiday, known as VJ Day or Victory over Japan Day, and he mandated federal employees receive the next two days off with pay. "Only skeleton forces should be maintained," he declared.[2]

The day after President Truman declared the holiday, San Angeloans joined the national celebration. Police and fire departments continued their operations and the city swimming pool stayed open, but for the most part, San Angelo simply shut down. "Local business will not open today at all," the local paper announced. Businesses, cafés, and liquor stores temporarily closed their doors. The postal service limited mail delivery, and planes ceased to fly over Goodfellow Air Force Base and Mathis Field. All over town, San

[1]Eleanor Roosevelt, "Now Is Time to Reach Agreement With USSR," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 4, 1947.

[2] "Truman Confirms Jap Surrender," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 15, 1945; "San Angelo Takes a Full Holiday," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 15, 1945.

Angeloans privately and publicly celebrated VJ Day in their own ways; they attended parades and parties or spent time at home with loved ones.[3] San Angelo clubwomen also organized festivities. Just as they had done during the war to boost wartime morale among servicemen and civilians, the Victory Study Club members helped coordinate a "Victory Dance" on August 16, 1945 at Goodfellow with free shuttle services to and from the Hotel Cactus. A local band named the Yardbirds played throughout the night.[4]

For many Americans, however, the price the world paid for peace seemed costly and dangerous, particularly since peace came after "an atomic [bomb], hailed as the most terrible destructive force in history and as the greatest achievement of organized science," detonated in Japan on August 6, 1945.[5] San Angeloans read that sixteen hours after dropping the first bomb, President Truman issued a strong warning to Japan that "if they [the Japanese] do not accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air the like of which has never been seen on earth."[6] Three days later, the second "most terrible weapon" detonated in Nagasaki. While some Americans questioned whether "obliterating" the Japanese people was the best way to "spare" them, most national leaders praised this new destructive force and committed the nation to a massive military stockpile of these new destructive weapons in the postwar period. They celebrated the atomic bomb as "a powerful and forceful influence towards the maintenance of world peace" since errant nations knew what might happen if they instigated

[3] "San Angelo Takes a Full Holiday," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 15, 1945.

[4] "Victory Dance To Be Held at Goodfellow," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 16,1945 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1942-46, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas. For music aficionados, this is not the famous British rock band, which became popular in the 1960s. This is most likely a local San Angelo band with the same name.

[5] "Atomic Bomb, Most Terrible Weapon," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 6, 1945.

[6] "Atomic Bomb, Most Terrible Weapon," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 6, 1945.

hostilities with the United States. Simply having an arsenal of nuclear weapons, many officials reasoned, made "the bomb a great bloodless force for peace today."[7] Some Americans questioned whether atomic weapons secured a "bloodless" peace. For instance, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt wrote a 1947 column, which San Angeloans read in the local paper. She surmised, "I can subscribe to universal military training. . . . but to accept, as most speakers seem to be doing, that within a short time we must be prepared to go through another war" by enlarging the atomic arsenal "seems to me to be completely unreasonable. These speeches seem rather futile." If the bombs were unleased, she contended, "the country attacking and the country attacked may both be wiped out. All the scientists seem fairly well agreed that our world, as we know it, will be gone." She concluded, "Now is the time to reach [an] agreement with the USSR."[8]

The Victory Study Club concurred with Roosevelt's sentiments and engaged in international activism with the hope that global cooperation rather than global annihilation would prevail in the postwar period. One of clubwomen's central pursuits toward this goal harkened back to the club's founding motto: "the path to victory is learning." Ranging from thirty-five to fifty members during the Cold War era, the Victory Study Club devoted extensive energy to educating themselves and their fellow clubwomen about new international organizations and commissions tasked with ensuring postwar world harmony, and clubwomen read widely about political issues on the state, national, and global level. Club members interrogated the concepts of freedom and democracy and encouraged

[7] "Atomic Bomb, Most Terrible Weapon," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 6, 1945; "Atom Bomb Not Likely To Be Used Again in This War," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 22, 1945.

[8] Eleanor Roosevelt, "Now Is Time to Reach Agreement With USSR," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 4, 1947.

members to learn more about various world cultures. In addition to studying, the club also extended their international activism to learning about and helping women in other countries, an effort that members hoped might provide a foundation for mutual understanding rather than mutual destruction in the atomic era. Nevertheless, Victory Study Club women were not naïve. They prepared for destruction with housewives and other clubwomen all over the nation, who actively engaged in civil defense programs and planning, and readied themselves, their homes, and their families for the potential of a nuclear fallout.

This chapter explores the Victory Study Club's international activism in the Cold War. Like the Progressive-era women who embraced domesticity and maternalism as an argument for their involvement in state and national politics, Victory Study Club Clubwomen argued that their obligations as wives and mothers required them to engage in peacetime activism even as powerful postwar gender prescriptions mandated them to stay at home. Like many middle-class, white, married women in the immediate postwar years, most members identified primarily as homemakers, and they celebrated domesticity. Yet as their international activism indicates, they certainly did not consider themselves as "cloistered, depressed, valium-popping housewives" nor as "foot soldiers to their husbands or slaves to patriarchy." Instead, Victory Study Clubwomen used their privileged economic and social circumstances to "form a highly effective female sphere of activism" during the Cold War. [9] To use a term coined by historian Paige Meltzer, the Victory Study Club evoked "international maternalism" and a celebration of womanhood during the postwar period, which encouraged homemakers to become not only wiser United States citizens but also

[9] Michelle Nickerson, "Women, Domesticity, and Postwar Conservatism," *OAH Magazine of History* 17, no. 2 (January 2002): 20.

vigilant world citizens dedicated to maintaining harmony within a precarious new world situation.[10]

Figure 4: Victory Study Club Installation Breakfast, May 1947 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1947-54," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

During World War II, Victory Study Club members contributed to the nation's victory, but their activism of that period centered in and around their homes. Their experiences differed from other American women who produced "the vital machinery of war" by working in factories, serving as nurses, or joining military auxiliaries, and perhaps for this reason, Victory Study Clubwomen did not experience as much change in the postwar period when male soldiers returned home as the women who worked outside the home during World War II. Outside employment opportunities for many women ceased as government

[10] Paige Meltzer, "The Pulse and Conscience of America: The General Federation and Women's Citizenship, 1945-1960," 60-61.

officials and cultural prescriptions delivered strident messages that encouraged women to resume prewar domesticity patterns and to "defend steadfastly the . . . idea of traditional home and family and their traditional place in it."[11]

The white, middle-class, housewives of the Victory Study Club had already adopted this postwar cultural mandate during the war years, and other young Americans joined them after the war ended. Of the generation that experienced the warfront and home front in World War II, about 96 percent of young women and 94 percent of young men married. After marriage came the baby carriage. Between 1946 and 1964, 76.4 million babies were born during the "baby boom." Since the total population of the nation at that time was about 192 million, the children born during this period "constituted a whopping 40 percent" of the general United States population.[12] These phenomena were firsts in United States history.

To explain why Americans married younger at greater numbers and dramatically increased the national birthrate, historian Elaine Tyler May argues that their upbringing had a lot to do with it. This was a generation that came of age during great times of insecurities, particularly the Great Depression and World War II. With the war finally over, young Americans wanted to feel secure, and one way to achieve this feeling of security was to celebrate and support traditional American family values. May argues that for many young families, security meant creating nuclear families during the nuclear age. "Domestic

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[11] Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004,) 34 as quoted in Maria Cristina Santana, "From Empowerment to Domesticity: The Case of Rosie the Riveter and the World War II Campaign," *Frontiers in Sociology*, December 23, 2016 (accessed May 19, 2020), https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2016.00016/full.

[12] James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 77 quoted in "The Baby Boom," KhanAcademy.com (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.khana
cademy.org/humanities/us-history/postwarera/postwar-era/a/the-baby-boom

containment. . . allowed them to pursue, in the midst of tense and precarious world situations, the quest for a sexually fulfilling, consumer-oriented personal life that was free from hardship."[13] Historian John Lewis Gaddis, in his political history of the Cold War, agrees with that assessment. "What did the Americans want after the war? Unquestionably security." [14]

One of the basic elements needed to ensure this security for new families was access to housing. An immediate issue San Angelo faced after World War II was the lack of available housing. After release from their wartime service at Goodfellow and Mathis, several soldiers decided to make San Angelo their permanent home. Moreover, in 1949 a drought hit West Teas and lasted for nearly ten years. In 1957, President Dwight Eisenhower visited San Angelo to inspect the drought's devastation, and it was the only time a sitting US presidential visited the city. Due to the drought, many ranchers and their families began to move into the city in 1949, a trend that continued well into the 1950s.[15] After the war ended, the city's estimated population was at forty-eight thousand residents, but by 1950, officials estimated the population at fifty-two thousand.[16]

Concerned with how San Angelo would meet the housing demands of a growing population, the Victory Study Club hosted a series of programs in the immediate postwar period on the subject. Katheryne Sally Turn, Tom Green County home demonstration agent

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[13] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 226.

[14] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 15.

[15] Gerron S. Hite, *Images of America: San Angelo 1950s and Beyond* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 38.

[16] "San Angelo Sure to Pass 50,000 in 1950 Census," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 6, 1948.

and occasional substitute teacher in San Angelo's public schools, spoke to the Victory Study Club in the spring of 1944 on the subject of "Plans for the Postwar Home."[17] Turn explained that after the war, construction on new housing needed to begin quickly, and prefabricated homes seemed the most logical way to address housing shortages in San Angelo. Businessmen were in the process of heeding this call as new subdivisions began to pop up on the outskirts of the city. John Moss developed one postwar housing construction project called the "San Angelo Plan." He designed a "550-square-foot house costing $3,000" that contained two bedrooms and one bath built on a concrete slab. When Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson inspected the houses constructed in this new Ben Ficklin housing addition in 1951, he praised Moss's design. "This is the beginning of what should be a revolution in housing development. I am amazed and thrilled."[18]

Victory Study Clubwomen also worried about the lack of available private dwellings for returning servicemen and their growing families at Goodfellow Air Force Base. Colonel Robert M. Perry of Goodfellow painted a troublesome picture of how military families lived in the immediate postwar period. He explained to clubwomen at a 1948 meeting, "We now have married families with children living in barracks at the field. . . . It is common sight now to see a man, his wife, and one-to-two children occupying three-to-four cots on one end of the barrack, while no more than ten feet away another similar situation appears." After hearing his concerns, clubwomen were relieved to learn that the situation was improving, and

[17] Sally Katheryne Riddling Turn, Corsicana, Navarro County, Texas, digital image s.v. "Sally Katheryne Turn," FindAGrave.com (accessed May 19, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/196679865; "San Angelo, Texas, City, Directory, 1941," San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s.v. "Alonzo Turn," Ancestry.com; "Postwar Homes, Medicine Program Topics for Afternoon Meet of Victory Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, May 5, 1944.

[18] "Postwar Homes, Medicine Program Topics for Afternoon Meet of Victory Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, May 5, 1944; Hite, *Images of America: San Angelo 1950s and Beyond*, 53

local businessmen were in the process of building forty-two new houses for military families around the base.[19] As many members were wives of World War II veterans themselves, it was reassuring to learn that military families also had the opportunity to find security and happiness within domestic containment.

Even though these cookie-cutter homes went up quickly to meet postwar housing demands in San Angelo, home demonstration agent Turn assured Victory Study members that women would have a say in their home's construction since all homes "will be designed for individual taste."[20] Yet that was not necessarily true. Historian Dolores Hayden in her study of postwar suburban developments in the northeast notes that it was common for developers to claim that women were part of the design process, but in reality, postwar gender stereotypes dedicated architectural designs, not the individual women themselves. "Large master bedrooms, extensive closets and dressing rooms, and gourmet kitchens" provided "settings for women and girls to be effective social status achievers, desirable sex objects, and skillful domestic servants" while "paneled dens, home workshops, and large garages" provided opportunities "for men and boys to be executive breadwinners, successful home handymen, and adept car mechanics."[21] As Hayden argues, "More than ever, the way to assure public virtue through the family was to consider the setting where the family would live. . . . Homogeneity of dwellings, representing a shared set of values, would be the

[19] "42 Houses Cinched New Goodfellow: Quick, Low-Rent Structures Go Up; Air Field Families in Barracks," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 6, 1948.

[20]"Postwar Homes, Medicine Program Topics for Afternoon Meet of Victory Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, May 5, 1944.

[21] Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002), 33-34.

evidence of. . . . America's 'pleasing uniformity of decent competence.'"[22] Writer Sarah Rich puts it more simply: "In the housing boom that followed the war, the campaign to turn young adults into homeowners wasn't just about promoting a residence itself, it was about defining a norm for family and domesticity, and glorifying the pursuit of that norm."[23] Postwar dwellings—based on stereotypical gender convictions—became important to nurturing a feeling of individual and national security during the emerging Cold War.

Aside from creating gendered spaces that shored up postwar domesticity, newly constructed houses provided another important element that defined postwar culture: consumerism. In her presentation on postwar housing, Turn told the Victory Study Clubwomen that new homes in San Angelo "will have one fundamental aim—the creation of a home that will contain at the very lowest cost all the elements which in age and scientific wizardry can produce for a living as we would like to live."[24] Buying postwar goods was just as important as having private dwellings for nurturing Americans' sense of security. Hayden writes that middle-class, white couples emerging from World War II justified "the dream home as a place where they can give their children 'all the things we didn't have.'"[25] Certainly, this sentiment referred to the ease of access postwar families had to a plethora of consumer goods, but psychologically, it meant more than that. Filling private homes with

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[22] Dolores Hayden, quoted in Sarah Rich, "The American Dream House Only Worked in Dreams and Commercials," *The Atlantic*, September 25, 2015 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.theatlantic.com /business/archive/2015/09/the-post-war-american-home/407227/

[23] Sarah Rich, "The American Dream House Only Worked in Dreams and Commercials," *The Atlantic*, September 25, 2015 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/09/the-post-war-american-home/407227/

[24] "Postwar Homes, Medicine Program Topics for Afternoon Meet of Victory Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, May 5, 1944.

[25] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 34.

appliances, furniture, bicycles, and various bric-á-brac was evidence that this young generation had overcome its experience growing up when the Great Depression and World War II required individuals to ration.

The ability of white middle-class Americans to buy new postwar goods in their suburban, private dwellings provided the extra benefit of shielding them from the insecurity that other Americans faced. Hayden contends, "'The things we didn't have' is also a euphemism for a private life without problems such as unemployment, poverty, hunger, racial prejudice, pollution, or violent crime. As a solution to those problems, this housing type offers short-term incentives to a particular kind of economic consumer" who could pretended these "problems do not exist."[26] Turn's presentation to the Victory Study Club regarding postwar housing developments in San Angelo confirms much of Hayden's arguments. Turn made no attempt to address the housing and consumer concerns of lower-income or minority San Angeloans, who lacked the disposable income to buy newly constructed San Angelo homes or the new consumer goods to furnish them. The ideal residents of these new San Angelo homes in postwar period consisted of middle-class, white families in West Texas, much like the members of the Victory Study Club themselves.[27]

The emphasis on postwar containment and consumerism did not just offer security to individual families; on the international level, both became key sites of conflict when it came to Cold War foreign policy. One of the most recounted events that exposed the ethical, political, and economic disparities between the Soviet Union and the United States was "The

[26] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream,* 34.

[27] "Postwar Homes, Medicine Program Topics for Afternoon Meet of Victory Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, May 5, 1944.

Kitchen Debate." On June 24, 1959, US Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev met at the US Embassy in Moscow and had a live television exchange where the Soviet premier toured an American kitchen exhibit to showcase the genius of America's domestic technology and highlight Americans' high standard of living. Quickly, however, what was supposed to be a pleasant exchange turned into a fervent disagreement. It started after Nixon showed Khrushchev the latest model dishwasher. Nixon expressed, "In America, we like to make life easier for women. . . . What we want to do is make it easier for our housewives." Khrushchev was skeptical and quickly snapped, "Your capitalistic attitude toward women does not occur under Communism." Women in the Soviet Union, he argued, enjoyed greater freedom since they were not drawn into the endless patterns of domestic consumption that inundated American housewives' lives. Disagreements continued as each debated the merits of these "new inventions" and the "liberating" effects they provided for women. Regardless of who "won" the debate, the episode provided a worldwide audience the opportunity to learn how the two governments approached the intimate subject of the home—and of course, women's labor within it.[28]

Elaine Tyler May is one of many scholars who explores the significance of "The Kitchen Debate" in connection to the United States' Cold War foreign policy. She argues in *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* that Nixon was right when he told Khrushchev that American housewives had access to a plethora of new appliances and home goods in the postwar period, but they symbolized more than just a way to "make life easier" for American women. Buying these goods served US foreign policy interests in the

[28] Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, "The Kitchen Debate Transcript, 24 July 1959," *Central Intelligence Agency Library* (accessed January 10, 2020), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1959-07-24.pdf

Cold War: women contributed to the postwar economic boom, shored up American capitalism abroad, and reinforced traditional gender roles within the home.[29] For these reasons, May suggests, the emphasis on postwar women's consumerism and domestic containment within the home was part of "the larger political culture, not outside of it." The suburban, family-centered consumer culture contained "the potentially dangerous social forces of the age"—those of communism and women's emancipation—and promoted "national security, civil defense, and the struggle for supremacy over the Soviet Union."[30]

At the local level, San Angelo entrepreneurs recognized the vital roles that postwar housewives provided to the city's burgeoning economy and security, and merchants competed for their dollars. By the early 1950s, the city directory listed more than 130 grocery stores. San Angelo's downtown district thrived with national stores, such as Walgreens, S. H. Kress & Co., Sears, and J. C. Penney, along with local businesses, like Findlater Hardware Co., Paul O. Mills Jeweler (operated by the husband of Victory Study Club member Erlene Mills), Maurice's Shop, and Coney Island Café.[31] The Village Shopping Center on West Beauregard Avenue also provided new shopping opportunities for postwar San Angelo women. As "the first major shopping center outside of downtown," the Village Shopping Center experienced a steady stream of customers since more than four thousand residents lived within a one-mile radius of the center in the newly constructed suburban houses.[32] Clearly, there were plenty of places where postwar housewives could shop in San Angelo;

[29] May, *Homeward Bound,* 171.

[30] May, *Homeward Bound,* 13, 226, 14.

[31] Hite, *Images of America: San Angelo 1950s and Beyond,* 7, 16-17.

[32] Hite, *Images of America: San Angelo 1950s and Beyond*, 35, 22, 24.

businesses thus needed to attract San Angelo's housewives. Ranging from dress shops to grocery stores and banks to car dealerships, business advertisements appeared regularly in the local paper to attract postwar housewife consumers. For example, the Angelo Motor Company ran a 1948 advertisement in the local paper addressing San Angelo's married women. It read, "By tradition, she's [the wife] entitled to the last word. . . Come on in—learn all the reasons why the most enthusiastic 'man who owns one' is more often a woman!"[33] The Angelo Motor Company assumed that wives had more control over the purse strings than their husbands and recognized postwar housewives as powerful and potentially lucrative customers.

Leading financial institutions also took notice of women's increasing purchasing power in the postwar period, but unlike some San Angelo merchants who valued and encouraged housewives as consumers, other San Angeloans diminished homemakers' postwar economic significance. A curious trend reported in 1948 by the Federal Reserve Board found that "Women Are Better Credit Risks Than Men." Rather than applauding this news, some San Angeloans downplayed women's creditworthiness and offered various theories that perhaps eased postwar men's wherewithal ego. The *San Angelo Standard Times* featured a column on the frontpage offering explanations regarding the report's findings. One theory in the paper suggested, "Many husbands don't give their wives a lot of cash to carry around, preferring for them to charge clothes even when the family budget allows for cash payment. . . . The husband pays the wife's bills and that makes her look like a better credit risk." Such an explanation might invoke skepticism since most married women did not have charge cards in their own name. If anyone got a boost in their credit rating by paying clothing

[33] "Ask the Woman Who Owns One," *San Angelo Standard Times*, October 26, 1948.

charges, it most likely was the husband who paid the bill in his name. Another reason put forth to explain why a wife might have a better credit rating than her husband was that each spent money on different items. The local paper rationalized, "The husband uses his money to take care of the household and living expenses, and the wife can put all her earnings into clothes."[34] It is safe to assume that postwar housewives bought more with their "earnings" than clothes despite what the paper reported; many homemakers also balanced household accounts and helped pay the bills by working in full-time or part-time positions outside the home. So why is this article significant in understanding postwar housewives' consumerism? It served as a powerful reminder that postwar gendered assumptions devalued housewives' purchasing power in San Angelo. Many San Angeloans assumed housewives' ability to engage in postwar consumerism remained ultimately tied to the male breadwinner.

Victory Study Clubwomen participated to some extent in postwar gendered consumption patterns by hosting programs designed to inform members about items considered typical of women's purchasing patterns. Right after World War II ended, members gathered for a meeting on perfumes, and Carla Byrmer gave a program on "the origin of perfume making from the earliest days when flowers and woods were burned to present." What was new in the postwar period, however, is that women could now choose a variety of "synthetic perfumes." Verlie Youngblood Schonrock explained that synthetic perfumes were "often made from coal tar . . . [they] are so similar in fragrance to the original that even experts cannot always be certain of their difference."[35] Considering that synthetic

[34] "Few Bad Debts: Women Found to Be Better Credit Risks Than Males," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* September 2, 1948.

[35] "Victory Study Has Program on Perfumes," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 6, 1945.

perfumes imitated natural fragrances and were most likely cheaper than natural perfumes, some clubwomen likely welcomed and purchased this new luxurious postwar item. Clubwomen also heard a program by Annie Cornick on the history of Chinese pottery, stating that "most of the work is done by women, some of the women in the factories being very old," and she provided tips on how to buy genuine pottery that members could display in their homes.[36] Victory Study Club members also organized a fashion show sponsored by local dress shops, such as The Fashion Shop, Barnes & Company, Solon's Women's Wear, and the Jack and Jill Shop. They invited the Westland Park Study Club and the Women's Study Club to their program, and four Victory Study Clubwomen were among the adult members, who along with their children, showcased the latest in "Holiday Fashions."[37]

Even as the Victory Study Club hosted programs about the latest postwar consumer goods targeted at women, it is important to note that the club devoted very little time or energy to homemaking topics. Despite "The Kitchen's Debate's" emphasis on the significance of postwar home appliances for American housewives, no evidence has been uncovered that the Victory Study Club dedicated programs to buying or using modern home appliances; nor did they generally host programs dedicated to best housekeeping practices. While food was undoubtedly a vital part of meetings and clubwomen most likely swapped recipes with one another, it does not appear—at least in the official records—that members gave programs regarding food preparation or cooking in their postwar kitchens.

The lack of these traditional domestic topics by the Victory Study Club provides

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[36] "Cornick Gives History of China and Officers Elected at Victory Study Club Meeting" in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1946 to 1948, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[37] "Holiday Fashions," November 12, 1946 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1946 to 1948, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

evidence that not all middle-class, white housewives were consumed by the renewed emphasis on postwar women's domesticity. As historian Helen Laville argues, American housewives were not simply "passive symbols . . . content in their kitchens [and] surrounded by the marvels of domestic technology" even as popular advertisements, television, and films depicted postwar "American housewives . . . as lipstick symbols of the superiority of American capitalism."[38] Local, state, national, and international issues also drew their attention, and for this reason, Laville argues that the image of the postwar suburban housewife was a "cultural fantasy," not a historical fact. [39]

Rather than simply staying at home in the immediate postwar period, San Angelo women were working outside of the home more than ever before. In 1948, the local paper reported that San Angelo hit a new all-time-high employment level, which was largely due to "women's increasing employment" after World War II. Women made up over 70 percent of all temporary workers during the Christmas season and was expected to increase over the next year.[40] Proprietors actively recruited women in paid employment. Segregated by sex, advertisements in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* sought employment in housework, restaurants, retail, and clerical sectors, and San Angelo women took advantage of increasing occupational opportunities, even if on a part-time basis. [41]

In San Angelo, the numbers of women engaging in paid employment outside of the

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[38] Helen Laville, *Cold War Women*, 197, 4.

[39] Laville, *Cold War Women*, 2; To see more examples of women working outside of the home in the postwar period, see *Not June Cleaver*: *Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. by Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

[40] "Employment Hikes to New High Peak: Christmas Maximum Expected to be Equaled Here During February, *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 22, 1948.

[41] "Employment Advertisements," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 23, 1948.

home continued to rise, and while the racial demographics of working women are unclear, what was unique was that married women outnumbered single women. A 1950 poll in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* found that 75 percent of the women working in San Angelo were married.[42] Explanations as to why more married women engaged in employment outside the home varied. Employers told the local paper that they believed it was "the high cost of living [that was] the basic reason for the women working." Some women admitted that they started working because of economic necessity; others wanted to buy postwar consumer goods to improve their families' standard of living. Some married women, however, told the paper that they chose to work because they enjoyed their jobs so much. "It gives them a feeling of independence," the local paper reported.[43]

This was certainly true for the "sweetheart" of the local J. C. Penney store, Eva Robinson. She and her husband, Frank, moved to San Angelo from East Texas in 1920, and while keeping house during the day, she took night classes at the local business college. In 1949, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* featured a column about Robinson's experiences. After graduating from business school, she took a job at the local J. C. Penney store, and other than taking a brief hiatus when she had her children between 1932 and1936, she had worked there ever since. Financial necessity did not compel Robinson to work since her husband owned the prosperous Robinson Grocery and Market. Instead, nurturing self-reliance and independence as an example for her children kept Robinson on the job for nearly fifty years. When asked why she continued her work, she simply stated, "A working mother

[42] "Married Women Outnumber Singles On Angelo's Jobs," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 19, 1950.

[43] "Married Women Outnumber Singles On Angelo's Jobs," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 19, 1950.

better realizes the opportunities waiting her children in the business world. . . . It's a mother's job to make her children see these opportunities and take advantage of them."[44] Being a mother and the primary homemaker did not preclude Robinson from engaging in paid employment; instead these were primary reasons that she wanted to do so.

Some working women disagreed with Robinson's assessments that mothers should work outside of the home. A lengthy article appeared in 1949 in the Society Pages of the *San Angelo Evening Standard* and featured a column about Mildred Fenton, a "Top Career Girl [who] Says Women Belong at Home." Fenton, "who has chalked up success in a tough hitherto-all male field" of radio packaging and had six running radio programs nationally, argued that most women should not seek professional careers. She explained, "I think that any woman who makes a success in business is an oddity. . . . I believe that most women belong in the home. They are the happiest as wives and mothers. I don't mean they should never do anything else. They should pursue every interest possible to develop themselves. But they are meant for homemakers."[45] Fenton herself, however, worked more than twelve hours a day at her job, and she praised her staff, all of whom were women. "I started with women because I had to," she explained. "There were not enough men available [during World War II], but I have been so gratified with the results that I certainly . . . will keep on with women. They are more conscientious than any man."[46] It seems a bit ironic that a career businesswoman, who hired an all-woman staff, advocated that a postwar woman's proper place was in the home.

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[44] "Career Mother Shows Children Business World Opportunities," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 5, 1949.

[45] "Top Career Girl Says Women Belong at Home," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 5, 1945.

[46] "Top Career Girl Says Women Belong at Home," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 5, 1945.

As an association of housewives, it appears that most Victory Study Club members agreed with Fenton's assessment that women's primary function in the immediate postwar period was to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. While the Victory Study Club allowed employment as a legal excuse from meetings in the 1950s, most working women could not join the club since it held its regular meetings on Tuesday afternoons. Clubwoman Nita Archer explains, "They [members] were mostly homemakers. If they had a job, they wouldn't have been able to come during the day."[47] Most members of the Victory Study Club were proud homemakers. Edith Calkin, a longtime member and past club president, believed that her "greatest joy and satisfaction came from her role as [a] wife and mother."[48] Another clubwoman—Mary Frances Russell who served in various officer positions for the Victory Study Club and the City Federation of Women's Clubs—also noted while she assisted her husband with secretarial work during his time as manager on the Board of City Development, "I [always] put the children first and go from there." She explained that while "I am awfully interested in Russell's work," "mostly I just serve as a friendly critic" since "he's the leader of our family."[49]

Even though Victory Study Club members primarily identified as housewives, they did not believe that traditional family obligations were the only roles that married, middle-class housewives should perform. Clubwomen actively supported homemakers who moved outside of the home and volunteered in various organizations that benefited San Angelo's

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[47] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[48] "Edith Garrison Calkin Obituary," *The Victoria Advocate*, October 27, 2007 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/obituaries/edith-garrison-calkin/article_5359b1ce-5155-5a60-becd-2ef2da29d8d2.html

[49] "Mrs. Russell Willis Sells the Town She's Sold On," *San Angelo Standard Times*, October 19, 1958 in Scrapbook 1958-59, Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

community. For example, they nominated Anne Clare Wray Bolding as San Angelo's Woman of the Year in 1948. Anne Clare Wray was born in 1901 in San Angelo and married Sidney Porter Bolding at the age of twenty-six. While Sidney worked as a radio salesman, Anne occupied a place on the San Angelo School Board where she worked steadily on behalf of the schoolteachers and students of West Texas. San Angelo clubwomen celebrated her as she fought city officials to increase school funding for the growing city. When the City of San Angelo declined to authorize a summer recreation fund in 1947, Bolding told the *San Angelo Evening Standard*, "The School Board has advised it lacks the funds with which to continue to provide the recreation program alone, citing that it has had to make a 10 percent cut in the salaries of teachers." She urged the city to implement a five-cent tax increase. Though this measure failed, the Victory Study Club women applauded her activism as Bolding sought to improve school conditions for San Angelo children.[50]

Outside of their primary roles as housewives, Victory Study Clubwomen also frequently aided in their families' businesses, though they did not receive pay from their work. Oral histories from Victory Study Club members indicate that most members received some level of higher education and worked outside the home prior to marriage and children. After marriage, they applied their skills to help their husbands' businesses. One example is longtime Victory Study Clubwoman, Mary Nell Mahon. She was born Mary Nell Lea in 1926 and grew up in Levelland, Texas, about twenty-five miles west of Lubbock. She

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[50] "What City Is Doing to Fight Delinquency Topic at Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 14, 1948; *U.S., School Yearbooks, 1880-2012. "*San Angelo High School,1943," digital image s. v. "Anna Clara Bolding," Ancestry.com; "City Declines to Share Recreation: Days Program Not Dependent Upon It Since Schools Have Taxing Authority," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 15, 1947.

remembers, “My father [Ingle Lea] was a young man with a dream. He wanted to build an ice plant” in West Texas, and “he built the ice plant there, almost by himself.” After Lea graduated from Levelland High School, she enrolled in education classes at Texas Tech University and graduated in 1947. She began teaching at her high school, and one day, US Congressman George H. Mahon, who served twenty-two consecutive terms for the Lubbock-based Nineteenth Congressional District, came to the school to make a speech. After Congressman Mahon toured various classrooms, he asked the young Mary Nell if she would come work for him in Washington, DC. She remembers at first, “I said no, but he asked if I would come to his office in Lubbock and we would talk about it . . . . Well, I thought that couldn’t hurt. And the next thing I knew I was on my way to Washington.”[51]

From 1948 to 1952, Lea worked for Congressman George Mahon in Washington and described the experience as “the best liberal education [I received] because a day never passed where I didn’t learn something.” She was just twenty-two years old, and when she arrived in Washington, her first memory was seeing Harry Truman’s inauguration and parade. For a small-town girl from West Texas, she remembers that experience as “being pretty exciting.” As far as her salary, she did not complain. “I don’t remember how much . . . [but] it was quite a bit more than I was getting teaching school.”[52] It was not just the move to Washington that educated Lea; she also worked for “a very powerful man.”[53] Congressman George H. Mahon served more than forty-four years in the United States House of Representatives from 1935 to 1979, and as recently as 2008, the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*

[51] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

[52] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

[53] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

declared him as "the most influential figure in Lubbock's 20th century history."[54] Lea recalls, "He was Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, which raised all the money for running the government and all . . . the military services;" this meant "that we had lots of generals and lots of admirals come to our office." [55] An expert in defense matters, Mahon also served on the committee that developed the Manhattan Project, and he "was one of a handful of congressmen" who had knowledge of the development of the atomic bomb during the war.[56] Lea learned a great deal from her time in Washington, which served her well as past president and member of the Victory Study Club for more than forty years.

One Christmas while working for the congressman, she came home to West Texas, and there she met the love of her life. The Congressman introduced his nephew, Bryan Mahon, to Lea, and he told him, "This is my secretary. She is gonna be here a couple of weeks, and I hope you'll be nice to her." Lea remembers, "And he sure was!" The couple courted for just two weeks before they decided to get married, and after she finished up her term in Washington six months later, they married in June 1952. Mary Nell remembers that Congressman Mahon was somewhat startled: "All I said was to be nice to her," but overall, the congressman approved of the marriage.[57] A year later, the couple moved to San Angelo where Bryan owned and operated a men's clothing store, and Mary Nell worked for the district attorney for the first few months. "I liked [San Angelo] immediately," Mary Nell

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[54] "Lubbock Had a Strong Voice in Washington: George H. Mahon*," Lubbockcentennial.com*, May 2, 2009 (accessed January 10, 2020), https://www.kcbd.com/2019/08/02/mahon-library-receive-historic-marker/

[55] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

[56] "George H. Mahon: An Inventory of His Papers, 1887-1986," Southwest Collections/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

[57] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

remembered, and shortly after arriving, she joined the Victory Study Club. Busy raising three children, Mary Nell decided to stay at home and not engage in paid employment, but she regularly applied her professional skills to help her husband with bookkeeping at his store.[58] These skills undoubtedly assisted her in the Victory Study Club, where she served as president, parliamentarian, secretary, and treasurer among other officer positions.

Another example of a Victory Study Club member who worked outside the home to help with the family business is Nita Allen Archer. After graduating valedictorian in business from San Angelo College, Allen worked on the seventh floor of the San Angelo National Bank Building where she made five dollars a week working one to four hours a day. In 1946, Allen married William "Bill" Archer, and the couple had four children. Right after her marriage, Nita worked for a law firm for a couple of years; then, once Bill's flooring business started to take off, she became its fulltime bookkeeper. Nita also worked for several other businesses in San Angelo, which included balancing the books of fellow clubwoman Verlie Schonrock's husband's sheet metal company.[59] Nita Archer and several other Victory Study Club members did more than "just help" their husbands in their businesses; their unpaid labor provided valuable services to keep family business running. Nevertheless, most Victory Study Club members identified as primarily homemakers, even if they worked part-time outside the home or assisted family businesses.

Outside of assisting family businesses, Victory Study Club housewives expanded their interests outside of the home by studying national and international events in the Cold War. Of course, one of the first issues to arise concerned the Soviet Union. Historian John

[58] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

[59] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

Lewis Gaddis argues that even before World War II ended, the Cold War was imminent. He writes, "The war had been won by a coalition whose principal members were already at war—ideologically and geopolitically if not militarily—with one another. . . . Victory would require the victors either to cease to be who they were, or to give up much of much of what they had hoped, by fighting the war, to attain." By 1945, many United States and British leaders already convinced themselves that peace with the USSR was out of the question. While each nation shared "compatible objectives," they had "incompatible systems," making cooperation difficult.[60]

The Victory Study Club, however, was not so quick to agree. In the immediate post-World-War-II period, Victory members displayed compassion at first for what some officials called the "the enemy of the nation."[61] They believed that citizens in the two nations shared similar goals and could get along in the new postwar period. On April 24, 1946, Elise Partin gave a program entitled "Our Ally Russia" where she pointed out that "Russian people are a great deal like us, that they are resourceful, capable of understanding huge projects, boastful, have a pioneer spirit, and accustomed to wide open spaces. They want war with us no more than we do of them." Invoking images and sentiments similar to West Texans, Partin hoped to show members that they had more in common with the Russian people than others might suspect, and the program was received "warmly."[62] Another program featured Margaret Mayer, "one of the state's top newspaperwomen" and later "the first woman to Head a

[60] Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 6.

[61] Eleanor Roosevelt, "Now Is Time To Reach Agreement With USSR," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 4, 1947.

[62] "Russia Discussed at Victory Club Meeting," *San Angelo Standard Times*, April 24, 1946 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Washington news bureau." She was as a guest speaker at a San Angelo City Federation forum where over a hundred women from different clubs attended. Mayer's topic was "Her Travels in Russia," and while it is not known particularly what she conveyed to clubwomen, Mayer was known to find "the depth of each story" and gave a "magnificent performance."[63] As evident in these early programs, Victory Study Clubwomen did not immediately make rash judgements about the Soviet Union; instead, they sought to understand the nation before forming strident opinions.

Nevertheless by the late 1940s, it was clear that the Soviet Union had become a major threat to the United States' security. San Angeloans routinely read the news that blamed the Soviet Union's uncompromising impulse for the escalating tensions. For instance, one front page editorial in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* 1948 explained, "The United States, Britain, and France accused Russia before the bar of the United Nations today of menacing world peace with a blockade of Berlin which has brought Germany's first city to the brink of economic ruin." The Soviets, however, "fired back . . . and blamed the West for the breakdown of the Moscow negotiations of Berlin," and a few weeks later, the "Reds" refused to take part in UN votes regarding what to do "with the Berlin case."[64] By early 1949, there was little doubt that a new war between the USSR and the United States was fully engaged when President Harry Truman advocated for "a record $41,858,000,000 peacetime budget"—"half of it to wage the cold war with Russia." He warned the nation that "the price

[63] "Margaret Mayer to Speak on Her Travels in Russia," in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Margaret Lucie Mayer Ward Obituary," *Austin American Statesman*, October 3, 2007.

[64] "UN: West Powers Accuse Russia of Being Peace Menace," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 29, 1948; "UN Votes to Discuss Berlin Case; Reds Won't Take Part," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 5, 1948.

of bulwarking freedom in the world is going to be higher still."[65]

Heeding President Truman's warning, San Angelo's Victory Study Clubwomen turned their attention to educating themselves on national politics. Several programs in the late 1940s and early 1950s encouraged clubwomen to vote in national elections and learn about the election process. This was especially important, as one article in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* pointed out, since "women hold a slight edge over men in the number of potential ballot casters" in the 1949 election.[66] Clubwomen who attended meetings in the 1949-50 year heard programs on "The Electoral College," "The Popular Vote," "How a Bill Becomes a Law," and "The Constitution of the United States" as well as watched films on parliamentary procedures—all of which sought to make them motivated United States citizens within the Cold War.[67]

Though Victory Study Club members were concerned with politics, official club records remain silent on the political affiliations of individual members, most likely because the Victory Study Club pledged to be apolitical. No political candidates came to speak at meetings. Even if members had strong political leanings, they kept these feelings to themselves and out of the official records. Clubwoman Nita Archer remembered members rarely discussed political candidates or political parties at meetings, and even now, she maintains, "I don't talk to many people about politics. . . Not even to our [extended]

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[65] "Truman Hands Congress Record Peacetime Budget: Half of It For Cold War Against Reds," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 10, 1949.

[66] "Women Candidates Score Major Victories This Year," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 26, 1949.

[67] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1949 to 1950" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

family."[68]

It might be safe, nevertheless, to assume that most members voted as Democrats, just like much of the rest of San Angelo in the postwar period.[69] Nita Archer did, and even when a majority of white Texans began transferring their political loyalties from the Democratic to the Republican party in the 1970s, she remained a faithful Democrat her whole life. As she explained in 2019, "Texas is now a red state. San Angelo is probably the reddest city. We're Democrats, [but] we don't talk about that because everybody is a Republican. . . . I don't know what's wrong with people [laughs] . . . you know our governor and lieutenant governor, they're just not very kind to education and welfare and things like that."[70] Though it would be interesting to know the political leanings of individual members, Nita Archer's comments remind readers that specific political loyalties did not determine membership to the Victory Study Club; instead, when it came to politics, what mattered most to these white, middle-class housewives was to educate themselves on the election process.

By the early 1950s, Victory Study Club members used club activities to help women secure democracy at home, and they eagerly took on this task by educating themselves on what freedom meant in this new Cold War context. The 1952-53 Yearbook's theme was "Citadel of Freedom," and it opened with Carl Sandburg's poem "Freedom Is A Habit." In the poem, Sandburg tries to define freedom, which was (and is) no easy task. He writes that "Freedom is a habit and a coat worn. Some born to wear it. Some never to know it. Freedom is cheap or again as a garment is so costly. Men pay their lives rather than not have it.

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[68] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[69] "Tom Green Record Smashed as Truman, Johnson Okayed," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, November 3, 1948.

[70] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

Freedom is baffling: men having it often know not they have it till it is gone. . . . What does this mean? Is it a riddle? Yes it is the first of all the primers of riddles. To be free is so-so: you can and you can't."[71] The inclusion of this poem in the Victory Study Club Yearbook reveals their desire to understand this first of all "primer of riddles" as such a vexing and constantly-evolving term required much study.

One of the primary ways that the Victory Study Club encouraged individual members to think about freedom and democracy during the Cold War was to create a list of five books that each member needed to read during the 1952-53 club year.[72] The first book listed was *The Citizens Decide* by Ralph Barton Perry. Perry, a "realist" philosopher and Harvard professor, argued that "the threat posed by new weapons of demagoguery, of the ambiguity of words in their international implications. . . and the dubious information available" required citizens to engage in "thoughtful, self-education."[73] Given the Victory Study Club's emphasis on individual and group study as well as its concern with international politics, it is unsurprising that Victory Study Club members chose Perry's book as the first on the list. Perry also discussed "the disintegration of public morals" in education, but rather than buttressing anti-communism Cold War hysteria, he advocated for the exact opposite in *The Citizens Decide*. Perry trusted "the importance of educational institutions" that built "a

[71] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1952-1953" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[72] "Freedom is Topic for Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 29, 1953 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[73] "Perry, Ralph Barton (1876-1957)," Encyclopedia.com, May 13, 2020 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/perry-ralph-barton-1876-1957; "Review of The Citizen Decides," Kirkus Reviews, October 29, 1951 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/a/ralph-barton-perry-4/the-citizen-decides/

community of freedom where the art of freedom, the art of decision, can be taught and practiced in an atmosphere of academic freedom." Perry contended that the "quality of our citizenship depends on [this] education," and "leaders must meet that challenge." Learning in an academic environment that encouraged students and citizens alike to explore conflicting ideas while also engaging in self-study were essential tasks to ensure that citizens were not "imperiling the cause of peace."[74]

Victory Study Club members received a very different message when they read an article in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* about legislation proposed in the Texas House of Representatives. According to the paper, "The House . . . decided that it wanted a workable and practical way to get communists out of state colleges." This conflicted with what Perry advocated in the book Victory Study Club members read, and it appears that clubwomen agreed with Perry that "academic freedom" did not threaten their children's educations. No evidence in club records indicated that members feared that "subversive organizations" influenced their children while they were "attending classes, teaching, or even working for a state college."[75]

Other books that Victory Study Club members read that year echoed Perry's sentiments. One required book published in 1951 was *Living Ideas in America* by Henry Steele Commager, an American historian later noted for his campaigns against McCarthyism and his criticism of the Vietnam War. A reviewer of the work at the time praised Commager's emphasis on the "organic definition of Americanism to which a free and

[74] "Review of The Citizen Decides," Kirkus Reviews, October 29, 1951 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/a/ralph-barton-perry-4/the-citizen-decides/

[75] "Housing Pushing bill Outlawing Reds in School," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 29, 1949.

healthy skepticism, freedom of expression and intelligent protest are essential," which in "these days . . . is undergoing some rational and irrational bruiting."[76] Another book assigned by the Victory Study Club was *How to Keep Our Liberty* by Raymond Moley, published in 1952. Moley was an American economist who strongly opposed "statism," a belief against government increasing intervention in economic, social, and personal life. He encouraged Americans to be skeptical of the government's increasingly incursive role, particularly regarding McCarthyism. According to one reviewer, his book inspired "the millions who have ruefully asked themselves, 'What can I do about it,' and then proceeded to do nothing at all." It was these citizens who "should read Mr. Moley's book from beginning to end," the review concluded.[77]

Victory Study Clubwomen also read books exploring the innerworkings of the democratic process. The club assigned *The Challenge of Democracy*, published in 1953, which was hailed as a "handbook to the American high school pupil on entering life in the present-day community." It provided information that ranged from "views on the necessary elements in successful marriage" to "the useful if simple information on the working of government institutions, and such social problems as slums and housing, corruption and crime, race relations in the Union, and 'the American way of life.'"[78] Also assigned to clubwomen was journalist George Stimpson's *A Book About American Politics*, published in 1952. It provided a "potpourri of curious facts" and "terms . . . linked by the basic concern

[76] "Living Ideas in America," Kirkus Reviews, October 31, 1951 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/a/henry-steele-commager-4/living-ideas-in-america-2/

[77] Clarence E. Manion, "Review of How to Keep Our Liberty by Raymond Moley," *Scholarly Works* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Law School, 1952), 632-633.

[78] H. R. G. Greaves, "Reviewed Work: The Challenge of Democracy by Theodore P. Blaich and Joseph C. Buamgartner," *International Affairs* 29, no. 4 (October 1953): 478-79.

with politics in its broadest sense." One reviewer piqued potential readers interest by asking, "Do you know the story behind the terms Kitchen Cabinet, gerrymandering, Loco foco, mugwump, dollar diplomacy, [and] lame duck?" Well if not, "For the fact finder, this is fun—and it also provides a generous supply of specialized information for American citizens."[79]

Overall, it appears that the Victory Study Club's reading list was quite progressive in the early 1950s. Sadly, minute records of meetings and scrapbook clippings remain silent on how Victory Study Clubwomen chose or received these books, but perhaps a few suggestions can be gleamed from authors on their reading list. Perry's book undoubtedly struck at the club's core—in order to understand international issues, he stressed that it was important to explore various ideas individually while also having a safe setting among others to discuss controversial ideas without fear or attack. Commager's and Moley's books warned Victory Study Club members of the pitfalls one might encounter if they followed the nation blindly. The last two texts focused on understanding the workings of government, which was crucial for Victory Study Clubwomen to evaluate national and international abuses of power and government mistrust. While no direct mention of McCarthyism exists in club records, the books members read during the period as well as individual clubwomen's reflections suggest that they did not support Senator Joseph McCarthy's campaign since it compromised the idea of American freedom that the club read about. When asked about how she felt about "the second red scare," Nita Archer explained that it was "distasteful. There was such a fear of communism, I mean if you labeled a communist, you were ostracized, and I wasn't for

[79] "A Book About American Politics," Kirkus Reviews, June 15, 1952 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/a/henry-steele-commager-4/living-ideas-in-america-2/

that."[80]

With the Cold War heating up during the late 1940s and 1950s, Americans increasingly turned to religion as another ideological weapon to discredit the Soviet Union. Depicting the USSR as atheistic, immoral, and corrupt, America's Christian leaders transformed into Cold War Warriors. As historian Dianne Kirby explains, emphasizing the nation's Christian traditions became a key way to differentiate the United States from the Soviet Union as well as to cast the Cold War crusade "as a holy war" against an "evil power." This emphasis on the "holy" crusade of the Cold War even compelled President Dwight Eisenhower to include the words "under God" in the United States Pledge of Allegiance in 1954. [81] This atheistic criticism of the Soviet Union was evident even in San Angelo. As early as 1949, the column of DeWitt MacKenzie, a noted Associated Press correspondent, appeared in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* and warned West Texans that "the real point, of course, is that nobody can be a Communist and at the same time hold religious beliefs."[82]

Over time, the Cold War emphasis on religion gradually influenced Victory Study Club programs. At the time of the club's founding in World War II, there was scarce mention of religion, but by the late 1950s and 1960s, religious programs became more prominent in the club's yearbooks. The 1958 Yearbook opened its dedication with a poem by Angela Morgan, an early-to-mid twentieth century writer and journalist:

To be alive in such an age!

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[80] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[81] Dianne Kirby, "Divinely Sanctioned: The Anglo-American Cold War Alliance and the Defense of Western Civilization and Christianity, 1945-48," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 3 (July 2002): 392, 412.

[82] DeWitt MacKenzie, "The Reds' Fight on Religion," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 9, 1949.

With every year a lighting page
Turned in the world's great wonder book
Whereon the leading nations look.

When men speak for strong brotherhood
For peace and universal good,
When miracles are everywhere
And every inch of common air
Throbs a tremendous prophecy
Of the great marvels yet to be.

O, thrilling age,
O, willing age!
When steel and stone and rail and rod
Become the avenue of God
A trumpet to short His thunder through
To crown the work that man may do.[83]

Other than encouraging Victory Study Clubwomen to appreciate the momentous times in which they were living, Morgan's poem also reminded members that the United States was on a divine mission. Reflecting the language of American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, the poem indicates the important role that religion played during the Cold War.

While the Victory Study Club never opened meetings with an official prayer like the San Angelo's Pocahontas Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, clubwomen followed the national trends. Rather than reciting a prayer, members opened every meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, which was printed in every yearbook. Congress incorporated "Under God" into the Pledge in 1954, but the words "Under God" do not appear in the official Victory Study Club yearbooks until 1961. Evidently, Victory Study Clubwomen did not immediately adopt the words; federal campaigns designed to underscore Christianity in

[83] Angela Morgan, "To Be Alive in Such an Age," Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1958-59 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1958-60," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

the Cold War eventually encouraged them to do so.[84]

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, specific programs included religious leaders in San Angelo, who linked Christianity with America's fight against communism. For example, Revered James L. Christenson, pastor of the First Christian Church in San Angelo, addressed some two hundred clubwomen who were attending the annual Heart O' Texas District of Federation of Women's Clubs Convention. He recounted his recent missionary trip to Asia and "presented new insight into several of the world's troubled areas." Echoing sentiments similar to 1890s religious imperialists, Christenson told the clubwomen that winning the Cold War not only meant the spread of democracy, but it also offered the benefits of civilization, particularly in introducing other region's inhabitants to Christianity. Even though China "had fallen" to communism, the speaker warned that "America must not ignore the huge block of the world's people within China." During his missionary trip, Christenson recounted, "I found, in spite of all we hear to the contrary, a broad base of appreciation of what Americans are doing and have done in these countries," particularly in "spreading the doctrine of Christian theology" which "hindered the communist influence."[85] Winning the Cold War, spreading democracy, and diffusing Christianity were inextricably linked and offered tangible assistance to people all over the world, Christenson told clubwomen.

Religious leaders were not the only ones to advocate for the benefits of Christianity to Victory Study Clubwomen during the Cold War. At one meeting in 1950, County Judge Carl

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[84] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1961-1962," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1963 to 1964," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[85] "Club Women Told Policies on China Need Overhauling" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1961 to 1962," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Runge gave a program on "Laws Affecting the Home" where he explained current statutes within the context of the Ten Commandments. He lamented to the women present that "we still break them [the Ten Commandments], and for this reason, we have our courts." Judge Runge warned women that "early training [is] the solution to the problems of lawbreakers," and he charged the twenty-one Victory Study Clubwomen present to "teach their children how the tenets of Christianity and democracy work together." Judge Runge also hinted at the dire straits that might be facing the nation if women did not heed his call. He warned, "We are instrumental in bringing about the condition of the government as it is today, and we as parents must be responsible." He advised the group to "write their Congressmen" to ensure that Americans' religious convictions were represented at the state and national level. According to records, this was a message that the Victory Study Club received "warmly."[86]

Even as Victory Study Clubwomen included more religious programs in their yearbooks, there is little evidence that the club restricted membership or programs to specific religious denominations. While most members belonged to various Protestant churches, clubwomen welcomed women from a variety of different religious backgrounds. For instance, Nita Archer belonged to the First Christian Church of San Angelo, and Verlie Shonrock worshiped at the First Baptist Church of San Angelo. Edith Calkin attended the United Methodist of San Angelo, and Mary Nell Mahon devoted her time to Johnson Street Church of Christ.[87] Member of the Victory Study Club for over twenty years, Bessie Kurtz

[86] "Laws Affect Home Discussed at Study Meet" in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[87] "Nita Allen Archer Obituary," Johnson Funeral Home, San Angelo, Tom Green, County (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/san-angelo-tx/nita-archer-9073892; Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock, grave marker, Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas digital s.v. "Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock," FindaGrave.com (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/173777478/verlie-opal-schonrock; "Edith Garrison Calkin Obituary," GoSanAngelo.com (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/gosanangelo/obituary-

worshiped at the Congregation Beth-Israel, San Angelo's oldest synagogue and home to the third oldest Jewish congregation in the State of Texas.[88] In a March 1957 meeting highlighting San Angelo's religious diversity, Kurtz presented a program to clubwomen entitled "An Introduction to the Synagogue."[89] Another member, Florence Riley, who belonged to the Cathedral of the Scared Heart—the "mother church for many Catholic parishes in West Texas"—also lectured in that March 1957 meeting on "The History of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church." Clubwoman Betty Jo Reagan also gave a presentation of "The First Presbyterian Church of San Angelo" in March.[90] As the small sample indicates, the Victory Study Club was non-denominational in their religious study and did not restrict membership or programs to specific religious doctrines.

While the Victory Study Club's emphasis on religion increased during the Cold War era, it did not draw the same amount of attention from the club as perhaps the gravest

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preview.aspx?n=edith-garrison-calkin&pid=134668334&referrer=2791; "Bryan Gale Mahon Obituary," Johnson's Funeral Home, San Angelo, Tom Green, County (accessed May 2020,), https://www.dignitymemorial.com/ obituaries/san-angelo-tx/bryan-mahon-6547324.

[88] Matthew McDaniel, "Congregation Beth-Israel's Synagogue marks 90 years in San Angelo," GoSanAngelo.com, February 23, 2019 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.gosanangelo.com/story/life/faith/2019/02/23/congregation-beth-israels-synagogue-marks-90-years-san-angelo/2922995002/; Jenna Kelley, "The Third Oldest Jewish Congregation in Texas Resides in San Angelo," ConchoValleyHompage.com, January 4, 2019 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.conchovalleyhomepage.com/news/the-third-oldest-jewish-congregation-in-texas-resides-in-san-angelo/; Texas Historical Commission, "Congregation Beth Israel Historical Marker," Marker Number 17314, Atlas Number 5507017314, TexasHistoricalSitesAtlas.com (accessed May 20, 2020), https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/

[89] Texas Historical Commission Historical Marker quoted in "Cathedral Church of the Sacred Heart—San Angelo," *The Diocese of San Angelo* (accessed May 20, 2020), http://sanangelodiocese.org/cathedral#; "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1956 to 1957" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1956 to 1957," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Matthew McDaniel, "Congregation Beth-Israel's Synagogue marks 90 years in San Angelo," GoSanAngelo.com, February 23, 2019 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.gosanangelo.com/story/life/faith/2019/02/23/congregation-beth-israels-synagogue-marks-90-years-san-angelo/2922995002/.

[90] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1956 to 1957" in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1956 to 1957, Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

concern of Americans during the Cold War: the threat of nuclear war. A looming, cataclysmic, and mushrooming cloud hovered over the heads of military officials, political leaders, and citizens. After the Soviet Union successfully tested and increased its nuclear arsenal in 1949, San Angeloans read *constantly* in the local newspaper about the dangers of nuclear fallout. For example, a 1949 front page article in the *San Angelo Evening Standard,* entitled "Death or Survival: You Can Live After A-Bomb If You Know What To Do," presented a horrifying depiction of what might happen when the bomb released "black rain." Citizens read, "The spout will form a cloud, explosively expand. . . . It will look like any other cloud and rain exactly the same [but] every drop will carry dangerous radioactive atoms. . . . A white radioactive fog will spread at high speed. You will not be able to see, smell, hear or feel these rays," and if exposed to this fog, citizens should "strip naked if your clothes have picked up any moisture. Atomic rain and fog can't follow you indoors, except if your clothes carry them."[91]

The threat of nuclear war intensified in the 1950s. By 1958, nearly two hundred atomic and hydrogen bomb tests had occurred throughout the world, with the United States the prime detonator. The United States detonated 125 bombs, the Soviet Union completed 44 tests, and Great Britain tested 21.[92] Aside from environmental destruction, scientists warned in a *San Angelo Evening Standard* article that the continued use of atom bombs could lead to "genetic death" by destroying "the human gene system and result in the disappearance of

[91] "Death or Survival: You Can Live After A-Bomb If You Know What To Do," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* January 12, 1949.

[92] Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 43.

mankind of hundreds of millions of years—if not forever."[93] A 1959 *Consumer Reports* article brought the dangers of these tests very close to home—into the kitchens of American women. The article, entitled "The Milk All of Us Drink—And Fallout," reported a sharp rise in Strontium90 levels in milk and warned, "The fact is that fresh milk, which looks and tastes just as it always did, nevertheless contains . . . an unseen contaminate a toxic substance known to accumulate in the human bone."[94] Even though nuclear war had not yet occurred, American citizens nevertheless experienced dangerous health effects of these new and destructive weapons.

Widespread fear and panic encouraged President Truman to create a new agency in 1951 to prepare citizens for the worst possible scenario. Staffed by military personnel and civilian planners, the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) sought to alleviate citizens' concerns about nuclear war by preparing them for a potential but "*unlikely* attack."[95] Perhaps one of the most famous—and often satirically—remembered programs was the "Duck and Cover" drill, which taught schoolchildren that to survive a nuclear blast, they must duck under their school desks and cover their heads. Another 1954 FDCA film entitled "The House in the Middle" also told Americans "to paint their houses to increase their chances of surviving an atomic bomb." The film explained, "In every town you'll find houses like this: run down, neglected, trash and litter disfigure the house and yard. An eyesore? Yes. And as you'll see much more a house that's neglected is a house that may be doomed in the

[93] "Scientists Say Unwise Use of Atom Could Kill Mankind," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 10, 1947.

[94] Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 43; "The Milk All of Us Drink—And Fallout," *Consumer Reports*, March 1959, 103.

[95] "Scientists Say Unwise Use of Atom Could Kill Mankind," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 10, 1947, emphasis original.

atomic age." Other FCDA plans advised American citizens to construct public and private fallout shelters and to establish clear evacuation routes from cities into rural areas. Films became a popular way for FCDA officials to educate Americans what to do if a nuclear bomb detonated in their neighborhoods. One of the earliest began with a dire warning: "Let's Face It—the threat of hydrogen bomb warfare is the greatest danger our nation has ever known. Enemy jet bombers carrying nuclear weapons can sweep over a variety of routes and drop bombs on any important target in the United States. The threat of this destruction has affected our way of life in every city, town, and village coast-to-coast." Images of air raid sirens blasting and Americans running to fallout shelters filled the screen as the narrator explained, "These are the signs of the time." The video concluded by trying to assure American citizens that military strategists and scientists were doing everything in their power to assure a nuclear war did not happen, but if it did, national officials would be prepared.[96]

Official FCDA plans were one thing, but federal administrators knew that for the plans to work, they needed to get citizens at the local level to take responsibility for nuclear war preparedness. The agency recognized its limitations. First, the agency lacked enough funds to launch a comprehensive national preparedness program for every American. As more and more federal dollars gushed into the ballooning military defense budget, Congress simply did not have enough financial resources to allocate toward this goal. Moreover within the Cold War context, many politicians shied away from programs that might appear too

[96] Laura McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meet Everyday Life in the Fifties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4-6; Mark Byrnes, "In 1954, Americans Were Told to Paint Their Houses to Increase Their Changes of Surviving an Atomic Bomb: How the Paint and Varnish Lobby Used the Cold War to Sell Property Upkeep," Citylab.com, May 8, 2013 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.citylab.com/design/2013/05/1954-americans-were-told-paint-their-houses-increase-their-chances-surviving-atomic-bomb/5523/; Federal Civil Defense Administration, "Let's Face It: Hydrogen Bomb Survival and Atomic Test Film," 1954, Youtube.com (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPrxsrCyQ3I

"communistic" and feared that Americans might resist what could be perceived as preparing for a "postattack welfare state." Instead, the FCDA wanted to inspire Americans to think "individually" about protecting their own private property and families. For these reasons, as historian Laura McEnaney describes, civil defense planners embraced "the doctrine of self-help," which encouraged citizens to "think of themselves as an integral part of military mobilization even more than they had during World War II, for they were now vulnerable as ever before."[97]

The Federal Civil Defense Administration remained highly decentralized during the Cold War, and officials urged states and individuals to take on the burden and responsibility of atomic attack preparedness. In 1951, the Texas legislature responded to FCDA recommendations by passing the Civil Protection Act, and Texas Governor Allan Shivers served as the head of the state's Disaster Relief Council.[98] Shivers appointed William L. McGill to serve as the state coordinator of the new organization, and McGill came to San Angelo in 1952 to see how civilians were preparing for the possibility of a nuclear attack. He conducted a "practice test" of a nuclear attack to see if West Texas citizens took seriously civil defense recommendations. Spoiler-alert, they did not. He issued a report and delivered it to San Angelo Mayor Armistead D. Rust, outlining several problems of grave concern. San Angeloans failed the test: there was failure of motor traffic to carry out the standard instructions; failure of pedestrians to remain in shelters; inadequacy of the alarm system; and lack of insignia for Civil Defense personnel. While McGill was shocked that San Angelo

[97] McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home*, 24, 70.

[98] James A. Marten, "Emergency Management," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 12, 2020 (accessed May 20, 2020), http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mze01.

motorists failed to stop for fire, police, and ambulances, he was even more dismayed that pedestrians simply "stopped to see the show." City officials were equally to blame. They had spent "just under $75 out of the $1,000 budget" allocated for the city's civil defense programs. If there was a bright spot (and according to McGill, there were not many), it was the school drills. The San Angelo School District was given a "commendable" status in his report, which taught students how to Duck and Cover.[99]

Federal and state civil defense officials struggled to implement nuclear preparedness policies on the local level, but they found a surprising ally: American housewives. As news spread about the potential dangers of a nuclear attack, women became m ore concerned since "the explosion of atomic weaponry effectively destroyed the idea of a safe home front."[100] All over the nation, women eagerly wrote FCDA officials expressing their concerns and offering solutions about protecting their families from an atomic attack. Mirroring earlier women's reform tactics in the Progressive era, postwar clubwomen argued that home protection was "immediately a 'woman's concern,' for the skills and services required to prepare for and survive an attack were virtually the same as a housewife's domestic chores and community service."[101] In taking on civil defense, American housewives became "deeply political creatures who spoke a tactical language" that was a "quirky blend of postwar political ideologies: anticommunism, maternalism, and feminism."[102] To encourage grassroots preparedness, leading civil defense officials listened to American housewives who

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[99] "State Civil Defense Head Cites Alert's Deficiencies," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 8, 1952.

[100] Laville, *Cold War Women,* 2.

[101] McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home*, 89.

[102] McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home,* 103, 93.

were actively involved in the postwar women's club movement. Officials invited representatives from the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPWC), and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to a series of "Women and Civil Defense Conferences" during the 1950s.[103]

The advice national clubs received trickled down to the local club level. In San Angelo, Victory Study Club members joined more than sixty clubwomen from eleven different women's clubs one evening in a civil defense workshop at the local high school. The *San Angelo Standard Times* reported, "San Angelo club women are joining the current swing to learning what can be done in the event of a national atomic emergency." While the workshop was open to the public, only a handful of men attended the meeting. Claude Wooley, a certified Civil Defense instructor and physics teacher at San Angelo Central High School, gave the program and urged the women to "bring a pencil and pad for note taking for the shortest three hours of your life." It is unclear what exactly the women learned in this civil defense training session, but it is noteworthy that a "male expert"—as the paper reported—taught the course. Even if clubwomen believed women were responsible for safeguarding their homes, families, and communities against a nuclear attack, male professionals gave the instructions on how to do so. [104]

As more American housewives engaged in civil defense preparation, in 1953 the federal government created a new agency dedicated to educating housewives on home front preparedness. The National Women's Advisory Committee on Civil Defense worked closely

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[103] McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home*, 96, 88.

[104] "City Federation Sponsors Course on Civil Defense," in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1961 to 1962, Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

with the FCDA and stressed that "the patriotic duty of women" was to protect the nation from nuclear destruction. Katherine Howard served as the agency's first director, and she affirmed what clubwomen already knew: that housewives played a crucial role in safeguarding the nation in the private and public sphere. In a series of pamphlets and speeches, Howard routinely lauded housewives' ability to stave off nuclear annihilation since "good housekeeping is one of the best protections against . . . an atomic blast."[105] Civil defense programs and literature featured topics on how to properly store and prepare food, how to clean effectively and efficiently radioactive dust particles, and how to perform basic first aid while minimizing the risk of infection and disease.[106] Historian Laura McEnaney argues, "Home protection campaigns were kind of a nuclear-age version of the early twentieth-century domestic science movement['s]" obsession with home economics.[107]

Howard also told women that "civil defense was a unique opportunity for them to display leadership in a public setting." Building on the Progressive Era's emphasis on "municipal housekeeping," women believed that Cold War civil defense planning provided opportunities for wives and mothers to shape public policies without threatening postwar gender conventions, and evident even in San Angelo, clubwomen eagerly took part in civil defense planning. By the late 1950s, the work of the Women's Advisory Committee and the millions of American housewives committed to its programs and activism drew the attention of the president. President Eisenhower remarked at the Women's Advisory Committee national convention in 1960, "The strength of the United States is represented . . . in the spirit

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[105] McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home,* 110.

[106] McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home,* 109-110.

[107] McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home*, 110.

that you women show, not only in your comprehension of what this thing is about, and what you must do, but your readiness to do it."[108]

Outside from working in civil defense preparedness, American housewives embraced another strategy to combat an outbreak of nuclear war: stop it from happening in the first place. On the local, state, national, and international levels, thousands of women organized and campaigned for world peace. Historian Helen Laville explains, "The home as a private retreat. . . seemed increasingly defenceless" since the introduction of atomic weaponry destroyed the fantasy of "the security of the home." Rather than constraining women in the home, Laville argues in her study of national women's organizations that the atomic age extended "women's roles beyond the national boundary" since the avoidance of mutually assured destruction rested on assuring international peace.[109]

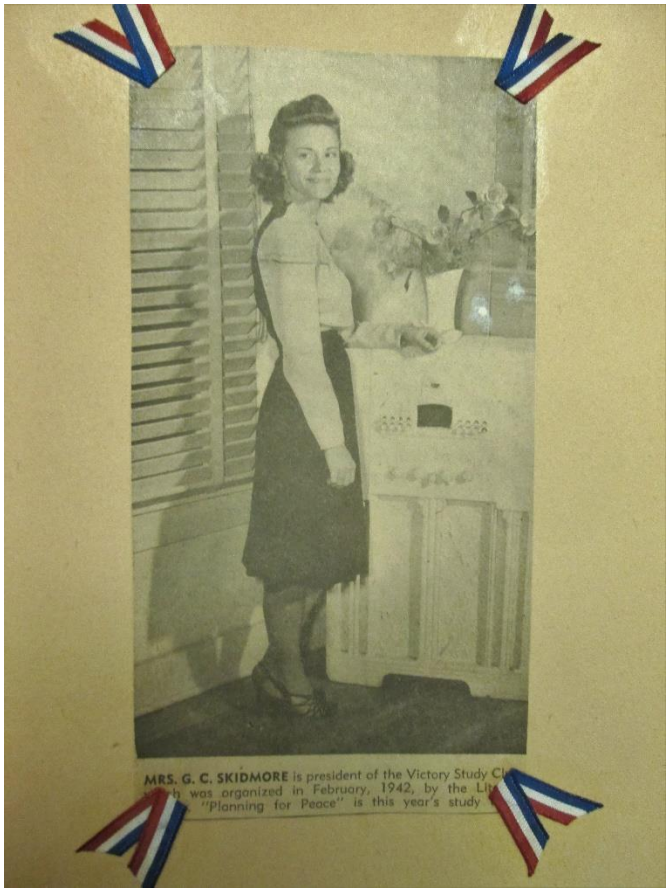

Figure 5: Mrs. G. C. Skidmore, 1948 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1952," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas

[108]Kathleen Johnson, "The Federal Defense Agency: Women Defend the Nation," The Cold War Museum (accessed May 20, 2020), http://www.coldwar.org/articles/50s/women_civildefense.asp#wd28

[109] Laville, *Cold War Women,* 1, 28, 26. 28.

Women believed they had a unique role to play in securing international peace. Drawing on essentialist claims of women and men's differences, peace activists stressed women's pacifism as opposed to men's aggression and women's compassion as opposed to men's callousness. Women, they argued, also had a "political obligation" to "divert men from their aggressive ways," and the stakes could not be higher in the nuclear age if men's aggression went unchecked.[110] Susan B. Riley, president of the American Association of University Women, put it clearly in 1947 when she encouraged women's international activism: "For in this Atomic Era, we must live in peace if we would live at all."[111]

San Angeloan women read columns that encouraged them to engage more in international affairs to secure permanent peace. Written by an unidentified "spokeswoman" for the National Council of Women of the United States, a 1947 column appeared in the "Society News" section of the *San Angelo Evening Standard*. The article stressed that the time "is now [for] women to be given a hand in achieving a lasting peace." The author candidly pointed out, "The record of men at achieving peace is such as to merit a welcome toward getting some help as it is offered." Though citizens heard "over and over again that the lack of understanding between nations is the great obstacle to peace," male leaders had made little effort to empathize with one another, but women—as "better understanders than men"—might be more successful in ensuring harmony. "Give them a chance," the article concluded, and "they [women] will not only get together on questions of world peace but they will get the men together too."[112]

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[110] Laville, *Cold War Women,* 28.

[111] Susan B. Reilly as quoted in Laville, *Cold War Women,* 28.

[112] "Woman's Voice in Peace Effort Might Bring About Improvement," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 9, 1947.

The Victory Study Club heard various programs during the postwar years that suggested they too believed women should assume more active roles in the nation's effort to maintain peace, and men and women delivered this this message. In 1945, Captain Raymond A. Kehl, a Goodfellow officer, gave a presentation to the club entitled "It Will Take Ruths to Bring About Peace." Kehl highlighted five Biblical women—Rebecca, Miriam, Esther, Ruth, and Mary—to show how women aided in the development of human society and ensured harmony.[113] Of the five women he identified, Ruth was certainly his favorite. A native of Moab, Ruth was not an Israelite, but after being widowed, she accompanied her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehem, where she worked in the fields. Her hard work drew the attention of Boaz, a prosperous relative of Naomi. According to the story, Ruth and Boaz married and started a new family whose lineage ultimately led to the birth of David. For these reasons, Ruth is often depicted as a "symbol of abiding loyalty and devotion." [114] Kehl related Ruth's story to women's important role in the postwar era. He told the thirty Victory Study Club members present, "It will take women like Ruth to make men lift their heads again, to build their homes and rear their families, in no matter what land." Postwar women also had other roles necessary to perform. Kehl continued: "There are many Ruths today, standing all tears in alien corn [as a widow in a new land], and it will be those Ruths who will bring about a peace that is worthwhile . . . There are many Ruths and Naomis today whose love and loyalty for a human being surpasses national boundaries, religions, and customs of their people. . . . Women can give that love and loyalty to other women, as well as to men, and to teach men to

[113] "It Will Take Ruths to Bring About Peace—Capt. Kehl Compares the Biblical and Modern Woman," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 27, 1945 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[114] "Ruth," *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ruth-biblical-figure

love one another and thus bring an end to wars."[115] Kehl also commended Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses, who along with her brothers led the Jewish people during the Exodus. Kehl compared Miriam to "the career woman of today," who "proved that woman can take care of her home, children and husband's possessions and still be a leader of the people."[116] When discussing the story of Esther, Kehl applauded her "courage," which "dared to defy the customs of her time for the salvation of her people," and her story paid "tribute to the strength, nobility and power of women which can be used for good or evil."[117] In the notes saved on Kehl's speech, the Victory Study Club failed to mention what he had to say about the two other biblical women discussed, Rebecca and Mary. It is also interesting that of the notes kept, only women from the Old Testament appear; no notes were taken on women of the New Testament, including Mary the mother of Jesus.

What lessons did the Victory Study Club learn during the presentation by Captain Kehl? By presenting notable women in the Bible, Kehl provided examples of the rich

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[115] "It Will Take Ruths to Bring About Peace—Capt. Kehl Compares the Biblical and Modern Woman," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 27, 1945 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[116] "It Will Take Ruths to Bring About Peace—Capt. Kehl Compares the Biblical and Modern Woman," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 27, 1945. Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.*Note: Kehl failed to mention the part of Miriam's story where she is severely punished by God after criticizing her brother Moses and his treatment of women. In recent years, Miriam has become a popular figure among Jewish feminists. "Miriam's Cup: Miriam's Cup rituals for the family Passover Seder," Miriamscup.com (accessed May 20, 2020); Chaya Sarah Silberberg, "Why Was Miriam Punished So Harshly?" Chabad.org (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1888770/jewish/Why-Was-Miriam-Punished-So-Harshly.html.

[117] "It Will Take Ruths to Bring About Peace—Capt. Kehl Compares the Biblical and Modern Woman," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 27, 1945 Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Recent feminist scholars also praise the story of Esther. Susan Zaeske writes, "By virtue of the fact that Esther used only rhetoric to convince the king to save her people, the story of Esther is a rhetoric of exile and empowerment that, for millennia, has notably shaped the discourse of marginalized peoples such as Jews, women, and African Americans" by "persuading those who have power over them." Susan Zaeske, "Unveiling Ester as A Pragmatic Radical Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33, 3 (2003): 194.

diversity of women's experiences and their contributions to society, which hopefully inspired Victory Study Clubwomen to become more active in the postwar period. He believed women could perform various roles in securing local, national, and international harmony. He used Ruth to remind clubwomen to be loyal and devoted to their families, even as the world faced unforeseen challenges in the atomic age. Miriam—in contrast—provided an example of how women could be leaders within their traditional roles as wives and mothers, and Esther used persuasive arguments in order to secure "the salvation of her people." As evident in the club programs and projects, the members of the Victory Study Club embraced all these roles in the postwar period: they safeguarded their homes, served their communities, and advocated for international peace.[118]

Another means by which the Victory Study Club worked for international peace was to support the United Nations. As early as 1946, Victory Study Club members in their "roll call" at meetings were asked to name a member country of the United Nations and discuss the country's significance to "securing international peace."[119] Other Americans shared their backing of the new organization. A poll conducted in 1945 showed that 85 percent of Americans supported the efforts of the United Nations in its attempts to promote "international education and cultural exchange" and avoid global destruction.[120]

In 1949, San Angeloans joined together to celebrate the new organization and its leaders at an annual event attended by thousands of West Texans, including members of the Victory Study Club. In March, the Sixteenth Annual San Angelo Fat Stock Show & Rodeo

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[118] Meltzer, "The Pulse and Conscience of America," 54.

[119] "Victory Study Club Yearbook 1946" in Victory Study Club Scrapbook May 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[120] Laville, *Cold War Women*, 96.

opened with a parade under "blue skies, dotted by a few scattered clouds [with] spring weather tempered by a warm sun." The Goodfellow Military Band led the parade followed by "brilliantly dressed cowgirls," "a donkey-riding clown," the latest model automobiles, and more than 150 rodeo performers. The special guests, however, were not from San Angelo nor connected to the livestock industry. They were UN officials from Britain, China, France, and the United States, who not only donned their military uniforms and walked in the parade but inspected West Texans' livestock. General Sir Richard McCreery of the British Army, who served in both world wars and was current Head of United Kingdom UN Representatives, joined Rear Admiral Lord Ashborne of the Royal Navy and Air Vice Marshal G. E. Gibbs of the Royal Air Force as the British dignitaries. Rear Admiral R. Wietzeh of the French Navy accompanied Rear Admiral W. J. Harrill of the United States Navy, and from China, Lieutenant George Mow Pong-tsu of the Chinese Air Force, Captain Kao of the Chinese Navy, and Commodore Kao Ju-Fon of the Chinese Navy took part in the festivities. San Angeloans were proud to host these UN dignitaries, and pictures of the group—all in uniform—appeared in the *San Angelo Evening Standard's* pages.[121]

Both men's and women's clubs in San Angelo supported the United Nations, but San Angelo clubwomen, believing that peace was possible due to the organization's efforts to compromise, supported the UN more enthusiastically than did local men's clubs. The San Angelo Lions Club hosted a banquet in early 1949 that featured the second vice president of the Lions International, Herbert P. Petry, Jr., who urged his fellow Texas Lions to support the United Nations. Nevertheless, he admitted that this new organization "was having troubles." While acknowledging that the United Nations "had saved many lives and property so far,"

[121] "World Title Rodeo Draws Big Throng," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 3, 1949.

Petry told the men assembled that "the United Nations has got to go to work." [122] Other San Angelo residents also second-guessed the United Nations, particularly as front page reports in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* throughout the 1950s continued to point out its failures.[123] Fears became even worse as the nation entered into another war.

From 1950 to 1953, the Korean War created skepticism about the United Nations' ability to keep world peace. San Angeloans read in the local newspaper about how the UN had failed to prevent this war. While the United Nations offered "a political conference on Far Eastern problems in return for a cease-fire in Korea," officials noted that "little hope [existed] that China's Communists would agree to a final peace." For many, this became "a demonstration that the UN explored the last possible avenue for peace" and failed. More than thirty thousand American causalities resulted. Just five years after World War II ended, Americans were once again at war with the United States sending the most troops as part of United Nations forces in the Korean peninsula. [124]

Many San Angeloans doubted whether the United States had done the right thing entering the conflict. For example, First Lieutenant Frank Meadows, Jr., returned to San Angelo after forty-four months in Korea. When asked about his thoughts on the war, he reported, "I think it is too soon to tell if the United States did the right thing in entering the Korean War. . . . The goal of the war is somewhat obscured for many of the military

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[122] "Lion Leader Urges Aid for UN," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 11, 1949.

[123] "UN West Powers Accuse Russia of Being Peace Menace," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 28, 1948; "USSR Charged With Defying Human Rights," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 29, 1948; "UN Votes to Discuss Belin Case; Reds Won't Take Part," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 5, 1948; "UN Vote Looming on Last Peace Bid," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 12, 1951.

[124] "UN Vote Looming on Last Peace Bid," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 21, 1951; "Korean War Fast Facts" CNN.com June 10, 2019 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/28/world/asia/korean-war-fast-facts/index.html.

personnel serving in the Far East, as well as many of the folks at home."[125] Lieutenant Elton Kiesling, husband to Victory Study Clubwoman Mary Kiesling, also served in Korea where he oversaw transporting communist prisoners of war. In some cases, he recalled that communist fighters simply gave up since "they were starving." Kiesling came home with unappreciated surprises for his wife. The *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported that he "arrived home . . . slightly heavier, and his sole sign of defiance [was] a glossy handlebar mustache." His wife hated it, but he explained that "officers and men in Korea are given to fads from sheer boredom." His general impressions of Korea was that he "never saw so backward a sinking hole," and he lamented that he never got to try Korean food since it was prohibited by the U.S. Army "for health reasons."[126] To Kiesling, it was a very Cold War indeed, with little action, and he had strong reservations about why United States troops were even there in the first place.

Victory Study Clubwomen experienced the Korean war personally and educated themselves as much as they could about Korean culture. Victory Clubwoman Thelma Rea Miller, married to Newman Miller, shared letters he sent to her along with several items he had sent to her during his Korean War service in a January 1952 meeting.[127] Clubwoman Annie J. Swain also gave a program on "Oriental Influence." Before marrying Emsey Swain, Annie was a missionary in Korea for three years. She enlightened clubwomen about Korea's

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[125] "GI Foggy On Goals in Korea, Reports Angeloan," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 5, 1952.

[126] "Angelo Wife Frowns Upon Hubby's Lip Adornment," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 21, 1952; "Elton Clinton Kissling Obituary," Johnson's Funeral Home, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/san-angelo-tx/elton-kiesling-4984167.

[127] "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1956" in Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "William 'Bill' Thomas Miller," DailyTrib.com March 9, 2011 (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.dailytrib.com/2011/03/21/william-bill-thomas-miller/

"turbulent history" and remarked that "it was considered an honor to have been in jail. It indicated that a person had resisted the constant suppression from Japan, China, and Russia," a fact that was probably highlighted as a celebration of Koreans' resistance to communism. She described the Koreans "as a proud people, although their living standards are below the poverty level" and told of "an odd custom observed by the Koreans is the naming of their children. Boys are given names, but the girls, instead of being named are numbered."[128] This last observation is difficult to confirm, but Swain's program nevertheless indicates that women in the Victory Study Club were making every effort possible to understand the conflict and Korea's people on personal and international levels.

While popular support for the United Nations waned during the Korean War, Victory Study Club members retained optimism throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and they actively sought to get this message out within West Texas. They held annual UN programs at San Angelo schools where club members gave speeches. They sewed UN flags, which they disbursed and displayed at club meetings, businesses, and schools. Along with the City Federation of Women's Clubs in San Angelo, Victory Study Club members hosted a debate between two San Angelo college students who discussed "The Purpose of the U. N." Victory Study Clubwomen also openly supported the American representative on the UN Human Rights Commission, Eleanor Roosevelt, who proposed and actively campaigned for an "international declaration of human rights."[129]

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[128] "Mrs. Swain Is Speaker At Victory Study Club Meeting," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 10, 1952.

[129] Phila Club, "Program Summary," in Philia Club File, Box 6.147, Series 6C: Membership (Clubs, City and County Federation), Texas Federation of Women's Clubs Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas. "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

The Victory Study Club not only supported the United Nations' overall goal to maintain peace, but it also encouraged clubwomen to engage in group study sessions in order to understand how this organization operated. Several programs centered on understanding the organization's parliamentary procedures. Victory Study Club members—using a script provided by the General Federation of Women's Clubs—put on a play where they acted out various members of the UN General Assembly.[130] As clubwoman Nita Archer explained, "To see an organization like the United Nations bringing people and the world together was just. . . . a wonderful thing. We all supported it." [131] Through their efforts to back the UN, Victory Study Clubwomen nurtured grassroots support of the organization because they hoped it would foster international cooperation and peace.

Despite efforts of clubwomen to promote international peace and understanding during the Cold War, another conflict emerged that drew the attention of Victory Study Clubwomen: the Vietnam War. Records remain silent as to how club members initially thought about the war and the United Nations' inability to maintain peace, but by the early 1970s, they joined thousands of other Americans in local chapters of Operation MIA/POW and criticized President Richard Nixon's secretary of state, Henry Kissinger. The pamphlet explained that Kissinger assured Americans after the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 that US soldiers missing in action and held as prisoners of war would be returned promptly during "Operation Homecoming." Kissinger promised, "The return of American personnel and the accounting of missing in action is unconditional and will take place within the same time

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[130] "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1946 to 1948," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[131] "USSR Charged With Defraying Human Rights," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 29, 1948.

frame as the American withdrawal."[132]

Unfortunately, that did not happen. A pamphlet from the larger organization called the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Action in Southeast Asia that was organized largely by "wives, mothers, and families" of servicemen explained, "Those words . . . caused Americans across the land to rejoice and to offer prayers of gratitude that finally, after long, harsh years of war, the fate of all Americans captured or missing in Indochina would be known and those alive would be returned home. Those words, spoken by the United States representative who negotiated the terms of the Agreement in Paris, have proven to be misleading and false causing more years of anguish and suffering by wives, children, parents, families and friends." Over a thousand American soldiers and civilian workers reportedly did not return home even as the Department of Defense initiated "reports of sightings of American prisoners. . . in South Vietnam," and Operation MIA/POW advocates asked, "Is it possible some of these missing men are still alive and imprisoned by the Communists? Yes, not only possible, but very probable." The Pentagon allegedly stated in 1973 that "the status of <u>all</u> POWs and MIAs who did not return" were "presumptively dead," but members of Operation MIA/POW—"a small group of brave, angry MIA families"—took legal action against this designation, which was "made unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court" in 1974.[133] Still, as late as the 1990s, many of these family members had yet to hear what happened to soldiers in the Vietnam War.

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[132] Henry Kissinger "White House News Conference, January 24, 1973" as quoted National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southwest Asia, "Fact Sheet," in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1973-76, Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[133] National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southwest Asia, "Fact Sheet," in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1973-76, Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas. Underlying original.

Victory Study Clubwomen joined these brave and angry families in advocating for the return of POW and MIA Vietnam soldiers, even as they acknowledged that "some men will never be known."[134] Still, they heeded the advice of the national organization that urged Americans to make their convictions known since "the pen is mightier than the sword." The national organization advised, "On behalf of the POWs and MIAs who did not return and their families, we urge all Americans to start asking questions—loud and clear—about these men at every opportunity. We want these questions asked in the White House, repeated in the State and Defense Departments, written into the Congressional record, restated in our Embassies abroad, at the United Nations, and in every Nation's Capital across the face of the Earth. Alive or dead, we want our men home!"[135] Club member Kaye Fleming and her son David attended a POW/MIA banquet in 1973 as a "symbolic adoption of two men listed as missing in action in Southeast Asia." The mayor of San Angelo, C. S. Conrad, Jr. sent a telegram to Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe encouraging the state government to "hasten the progress in accounting for 1,300 MIAs," which appeared in the Victory Study Club scrapbook. The club responded with a letter and donation campaign. Victory Study Club President Zula Jones Hall received a response addressed to the Victory Study Club from the secretary of Operation MIA/POW. She read it to the club: "Dear Club Members—We would like to thank each and every one of you for through thoughtful letters and generous $25 donations. It was presented by Mrs. Zula Jones Hall to our Chairman, Craig Pugh, at our

[134] National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southwest Asia, "Fact Sheet," in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1973-76, Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas. Underlying original.

[135] National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southwest Asia, "Fact Sheet," in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1973-76, Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

annual installation dinner in January. Your generosity and support are greatly appreciated. . . . In faith always, Cherri Ward."[136]

What might explain the Victory Study Club's activism in the MIA/POW Vietnam campaigns? Though it is not clear if club members' sons served in Vietnam, it seems reasonable that their support of the organization drew from their own experiences as mothers and wives. Since members sought to secure peace and international cooperation early within the Cold War, it is also safe to assume that clubwomen questioned what these servicemen sacrificed as the war ended. Historian Michael Allen explains, "The ordeal of captivity during the war and the inability to recover missing Americans at its end became the dominant means through which millions of Americans addressed their nation's defeat in Vietnam." Moreover, "because most captive and missing Americans were well-educated, white, middle-class airmen that civilians came to know more intimately than other populations fighting in Vietnam, their loss came particularly hard to Americans, many of whom lacked more direct connections to war."[137] What Americans involved with MIA and POW campaigns voiced most strongly was "the politics of loss" as the nation experienced the human cost of war. For wives and mothers who had lived through three international wars and advocated for peace during their time in the Victory Study Club, "the politics of loss" explains why they actively supported Operation MIA/POW efforts.

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[136] "MIA-POW: Symbolic Adoption at Banquet," *San Angelo Times* in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1973-76, Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Telegram to Governor Dolph Biscoe from Mayor of San Angelo, C. S. Conrad, Jr., November 15, 1973 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1973-76, Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Cherri Ward to the Victory Study Club, no date, in Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1973-76, Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[137] Michael J. Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3, 5, 8.

While the Victory Study Club advocated for the return of Vietnam soldiers, they also turned their attention to understanding various world cultures as a part of their international postwar activism. The Victory Study Club members included international study as a vital part of their programs in the 1960s and dedicated its 1960-61 yearbook's theme to "International Understanding of Substance of Peace." Clubwomen gave various programs about political issues occurring in other countries during this time. Presentations by clubwomen included "The United Nations" by Kay Fleming, "Russia" by Frances Willis, "Name African Countries & Understanding Ghana" by Mary Nell Mahon, "China" by Bessie Kurtz, "Brazil" by Virginia Hart, and "Divided Land—Germany" by Aylne Rodgers. [138] It is unclear from the minutes and club records the information clubwomen presented in these programs, but it is evident that they did not limit their study just to issues concerning the United States during the Cold War. At one city federation 1961 meeting attended by the Victory Study Club, past District Six Heart O' Texas President, Ruth Modena Sain Moseley from Rochelle, Texas, underscored the significance of clubwomen's international study. "One of the most important steps in friendship through federation is the strengthening of ties on an international basis. Of top importance to us today is the desire for permanent peace and friendship for all nations of the world. It's through the understanding of people in other countries [that] we can hope to accomplish our aim. . . . Thus by study and active participation, federated club members can accomplish much in promoting friendly relations between nations."[139] Victory Study Clubwomen believed that educating themselves on what was happening in other countries

[138] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1960-61" in Scrapbook 1960-61, Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[139] "City's Federation Clubs Hear 'Friendship' Plea," *San Angelo Standard Times*, September 19, 1961 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1961 to 1962, Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

was key to ensuring international peace and cooperation.

Long before the United Nations declared 1975 as the International Women's Year, Victory Study Club members also focused on learning and absorbing as much as they could about women's experiences in other countries. In one meeting, clubwomen donned native garbs of China, Japan, India, Ireland, Israel, Mexico, Spain, and Switzerland in observance of United Nations Day with Victory Study Club member Fahima Edmiston, a native of Israel, opening the meeting with the official United Nations prayer.[140] Violet Heslep, a guest lecturer at a 1960 meeting, presented on women's conditions in the recent American state of Hawaii based on her personal experiences. Born on the island of Maui, she married a San Angelo man and came to the United States in 1954. Members also dedicated a "Victory Study Club Tea" to "foreign-born women now living in San Angelo," and guests included married women from Hungary, Germany, Crete, England, Scotland, Japan, Taiwan, Jordan, and Mexico.[141] Other programs focused on international women's rights such as "The American Woman and Foreign Trade," "Social Standing of Women of the Orient," and "Women and Iran."[142] Though it is not evident exactly what was said in these programs, their presence in club scrapbooks reveals that the Victory Study Club identified that women's experiences internationally were important topics of study that could perhaps foster an

[140] Unfortunately, the researcher has not been able to find a copy of what was considered the "official" UN Prayer. "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1960 to 1961," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[141]"Alaska, Hawaii Are Topics For Victory Club Program," May 1, 1960 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1960-61, Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, Box 3, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Foreign-Born Women Honored at Victory Study Club Tea," March, 3, 1961 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1960-61, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, Box 3, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[142] Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

international sisterhood dedicated to peace.

In addition to learning about and from international women, the Victory Study Club provided concrete assistance to them. Early in the postwar period, Victory Study Clubwomen organized reading material to send to women in Italy, France, Paraguay, Colombia, and Chile, though it is not clear what reading material they sent. Members also donated clothing and money to women in foreign countries. One favorite program of the club was to provide funds and sponsor female foreign exchange students from Peru, Bolivia, and China who would then present programs on their homelands at club meetings. Pooling resources with other postwar federated clubs in San Angelo, Victory Study Club members expressed that "one of the aims of the federation is to educate women who have had no opportunity for education," and "scholarships . . . create good will for the United States." Clubwoman Josephine Carlton explained to the club in 1962, "We act as sort of a Peace Corps by training teachers and sending them to various countries to help improve educational standards."[143] Victory Study Club members sought to improve women's conditions worldwide through their international activism.

Some scholars argue that white women's attempts to nurture international sisterhood and support women's international rights were efforts to encourage Americanization in the Cold War rather than to promote international good will and understanding. For example, Anne Marie Goetz contends "While basing their actions on an expression of shared interests and experience, 'the claim to know' [of] Western feminists nevertheless quickly [became] a

[143] "Mrs. Carleton Tells Women of Goals," September 19, 1962 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1961-62, Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

'claim to know better'" than women of color in other countries.[144] Though Goetz makes a valid argument, without knowing exactly what reading material or clothing Victory Study Club women sent to women internationally, it is difficult to know if her assessment applies to the club. Moreover, it is significant to note that often, Victory Study Club members heard directly from international women themselves, not solely through the voices of other American women.

While Victory Study Club women supported women internationally, the same cannot be said of their support of minority populations at home during the Cold War. This was particularly true when it came to African Americans in West Texas, although one program proved the exception. As early as 1945, Victory Study Clubwoman Kathleen Estes led a program on "Interpreting the Negro Status in the Postwar Era." She stressed, "We should believe enough in the white race that we would not have to make laws discriminating against other races," and members formed a committee dedicated to "Meeting Racial Problems." There is no evidence what these clubwomen proposed as solutions to the "race problem" in San Angelo or in the nation. Nevertheless, they joined some other Americans who believed early in the Cold War that reducing racial antagonisms was of critical importance for the nation's international reputation.[145]

"Interpreting the Negro Status in the Postwar Era" echoed what many reformers argued was a blot on the United States' character: the racism and violence experienced by African Americans. In 1948, an editorial by Eleanor Roosevelt appeared in the *San Angelo*

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[144] A. M. Goetz, "Feminism and the Limits of the 'Claim to Know': Contradictions in the Feminist Approach to Women in Development," *Millennium: A Journal of International Studies* 17 (Winter 1988): 3.

[145] "Victory Club Studies Racial Programs and Appoints Committees," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 13, 1945.

Evening Standard. She explained, "There can be no real democracy [in a nation] where 15,000,000 people feel that they are discriminated against and cannot live on equal term with their neighbors."[146] This was certainly a problem at home, but it also had larger implications. She explained, "This is no longer a question we can regard as purely domestic. . . . It touches the whole world international situation, and it is time we faced it in that way."[147] The Soviet Union noticed this as well and produced propaganda, which routinely highlighted the hypocrisy of the United States' insistence that it was a beacon of freedom and democracy for the rest of the world.

Democratic President Harry Truman agreed, and in 1948, he issued a "Ten-Point Civil Rights Program" that included a federal anti-lynching law and an end to "job discrimination on groups of race, creed, or color."[148] The *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported that some southern Democrats were furious and threatened to split the party over this "storm stirred up by the President's civil rights declarations."[149] Representative John Rankin (D-Miss.) went so far as to shout in a hearing that Truman's agenda "ought to be called the bill to encourage rape!"[150] Eleanor Roosevelt made public her disdain of Representative Rankin's comments, calling him "one of the worst reactionaries," and she

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[146] "USSR Charged With Defraying Human Rights," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* September 29, 1948; Eleanor Roosevelt "Hue and Cry of Segregation Is an Expression of Fear," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* February 11, 1948.

[147] "Hue and Cry of Segregation Is an Expression of Fear," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* February 11, 1948.

[148] "Civil Rights Foes Prepare to Block Truman's Measure," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* February 5, 1948.

[149] "Texas Demos Head For Another Split?" *San Angelo Evening Standard,* February 4, 1948.

[150] "Civil Rights Foes Prepare to Block Truman's Measure," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* February 5, 1948.

urged the national party to "purge State Rights supporters from the party."[151] Democrat leaders did not heed her call, but at the national convention, most Democrats largely supported Truman's civil rights measures. Eleanor Roosevelt lamented, "I wish these southern gentlemen had a little more faith in the white race and believed that we were capable of associating with and doing justice to another race without being swallowed up by that race."[152] This sentiment echoes what Kathleen Estes told members at the Victory Study Club two years earlier: "We should believe enough in the white race that we would not have to make laws discriminating against other races."[153]

Other than this one program, Victory Study Club members did not devote significant attention to the issues facing African Americans during the Cold War, but clubwomen did turn their attention to understanding the culture and history of their closest international neighbor—Mexico. In the immediate postwar period, the Victory Study Club devoted an entire course of study during the 1948-49 year to Mexican culture and history.[154] Though it appears no local chapter of the international women's organization of the Pan American Round Table (PART) emerged in San Angelo, Victory Study Club members shared much of PART's mission: "to provide mutual knowledge and understanding and friendship among the peoples of the Western Hemisphere, and to foster all movements affecting the women and

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[151] "Mrs. FDR's Purge Proposal Receives Demo Cold Shoulder," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, November 9, 1948.

[152] "Hue and Cry of Segregation Is an Expression of Fear," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 11, 1948.

[153] "Victory Club Studies Racial Programs and Appoints Committees," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 13, 1945.

[154] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1948 to 1949," in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

children of the Americas."[155]

Clubwomen educated one another on Mexican culture and history. One meeting featured a program by clubwoman Edith Calkin, who presented a film and program dedicated to understanding the racial composition of Mexico. She explained, "The Mexican population is composed of 10 percent pure Spanish, 60 percent Spanish and Indian descent, and 30 percent pure Indian" and claimed that more than twelve million Mexicans were illiterate.[156] The club raised money to send reading material to several border towns as a means of increasing literacy rates, but there is no indication whether this reading material was in Spanish or English. Another program featured a lecture by clubwoman Kathleen Estes, who touted Mexico's economic resources. Focusing mostly on silver and oil, Estes argued that such resources could not only assist Mexico's economic development but also encourage a partnership between American and Mexican business interests, which would increase international cooperation between the two nations and cement alliances in the emerging Cold War.[157]

Clubwomen also heard guest speakers from the Latinx community in San Angelo. While it appears that no Mexican American women belonged to the Victory Study Club, at the September 1948 meeting of the club consisted of a program prepared by "Latin American" students in the region, which featured a luncheon of Mexican food and favors

[155] Helen B. Frantz, "Pan American Round Table," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 15, 2010 (accessed May 20, 2020) , http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vwp01

[156] "Mexican Mural Program Topic of Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 13, 1948 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[157] "Mexico Industrial Development Topic of Club Program," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, November 10, 1948.

made by the segregated-elementary schoolchildren of the Guadalupe.[158] Another program featured Reverend Carlos Ramirez, the minister of the Latin American Baptist Church in San Angelo, who talked to the women about the "influence of worship on the various civilizations of Mexico."[159] In April 1949, a Miss Fuentes, another student at the local Mexican American school, read three poems in Spanish to an audience of fourteen members and fifty-three guests, a program that members described as "one of the highlight[s]" of the year.[160]

The 1948-49 Yearbook also highlighted several books regarding Mexican tourism, folklore, and history that members could read. After listing several possible books, the Yearbook explained, "There is a wealth of information of valuable material at the Tom Green County Library. The above list is only a beginning. GO READ!"[161] Only one book was marked "essential" for club members: Pauline Kibbe's *The Latin American in Texas*. Kibbe, a distinguished Latin Americanist, traveled throughout Mexico in 1939 with her husband and two children, and once she returned to San Antonio, she wrote extensively on Latin American issues, worked as a bilingual secretary for San Antonio businesses, and produced

[158] "Victory Club Holds Mexican Luncheon" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 29, 1948 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[159] Newspaper Clipping—No Title, *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 15, 1948 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[160] Much more attention will be devoted to the segregated schooling system in San Angelo in Chapter Three. "Member Children Guests at Club Meet" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 14, 1949 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[161] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1948," 1948 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas, emphasis original.

more than twenty weekly broadcasts on Latin America for the local radio station. [162] Published first by Universidad Autónoma de México and later by the University of New Mexico Press in 1946, *The Latin American in Texas* became an instant success and won the *Saturday Review of Literature's* Anisfield-Wolf Award despite some reviewers' claims that it was too "angry."[163] She dedicated the book to "The People of Texas—All of Them and to the People of Mexico." Kibbe provided what she described as a "workable solution" to "Latin American" exploitation, and she encouraged "a mutual understanding among the people of Texas and a solemn appreciation of Texas' role in the maintenance of unity in the American Hemisphere."[164]

Pauline Kibbe joined the Good Neighbor Commission in 1943. The Good Neighbor Commission was an outgrowth of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's attempt to repair relationships with Latin American countries during World War II. Keenly aware of tense relations between Anglos and Latinx in the American Southwest, FDR created an agency called the Office of Inter-American Affairs whose purpose was "to promote better cultural and economic relations with Latin America."[165] Shortly thereafter, the United States negotiated the Bracero agreement with Mexico to mitigate wartime food shortages by encouraging Mexican laborers to work in the United States' southwestern agricultural fields. Per the agreement, employers promised Mexican workers decent living conditions, a

[162] Cynthia E. Orozco, "Pauline Rochester Kibbe," *Handbook of Texas Online,* http://www.tsha online.org/handbook/online/articles/fkign (accessed May 20, 2020).

[163] Pauline R. Kibbe, *The Latin Americans in Texas* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1946), xvii; Orozco, "Pauline Rochester Kibbe."

[164] Kibbe, *The Latin Americans in Texas*, v, vii.

[165] Orozco, "Pauline Rochester Kibbe;" George N. Green, "Good Neighbor Commission," *Handbook of Texas Online*, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mdg02 (accessed May 20, 2020).

minimum wage, and an exemption from discrimination in "white only" areas.[166] These proved to be false promises Learning these conditions were ignored, the Mexican government prohibited Mexican laborers entrance into Texas in 1943. Out of these concerns, Texas Governor Coke Stevenson appointed a commission to focus on improving education, health, and housing for migrant workers. Eventually, this became the Good Neighbor Commission in Texas in 1945.[167]

Pauline Kibbe became the first executive secretary of the Good Neighbor Commission, and *The Latin Americans in Texas* was an effort to inform Texans about the problems the organization encountered. She tackled such issues as Mexican American school segregation, inadequate health services, farm and factory workers' mistreatment, inadequate housing and city services, and the lack of political representation. She also spoke out against the Bracero program in 1947, rightly pointing out that discrimination and inadequate living conditions remained a constant experience for migrant workers despite the Good Neighbor Commission's efforts. Such a position drew wrath from agricultural businessmen, and Kibbe was forced to resign from her position and authorities imposed a "gag rule" on her.[168]

Kibbe's criticism of the Bracero program proved to be correct, and San Angeloans read in their local newspapers disturbing reports about the strained international relationship between Mexico and the United States. In 1947, Mexican Secretary of Interior Hector Perez Martinez announced that no more braceros would be allowed to enter Texas. "For 40 years,"

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[166] Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 139.

[167] George N. Green, "Good Neighbor Commission," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 15, 2010 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mdg02.

[168] George N. Green, "Good Neighbor Commission."

he said, “Mexicans had been discriminated against in Texas . . . but now the government has taken a definite stand” by doubling the number of Mexican troops at the border to prevent farmworkers from crossing the Rio Grande.[169] Illegal immigration, however, continued, and in October 1948, hundreds of farm laborers crossed into the United States at El Paso. The United States “expressed profound regret to Mexico” for the lack of oversight, but angry Mexican officials refused the apology and ordered that the farmworkers “all be rounded up and repatriated.”[170] In the 1950s, it was Mexican officials and troops who were trying to limit immigration into the United States as a means to protect its own citizens from American exploitation and discrimination.

President Truman—desperate to improve the United States international reputation—also took on the Bracero issue, much to the chagrin of Texas businessmen. Influenced by Mexican officials’ complaints and pressured by United States labor organizations such as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), Truman advocated for stricter laws against hiring illegal Mexican farm labor. One measure encouraged felony charges if an employer brought workers illegally into the United States from Mexico. The Texas Citrus and Vegetable Growers Association was furious, and it claimed that such measures would hinder the labor supply and drive up American prices for fruits and vegetables.[171] With tensions escalating around the state, San Angelo businessmen also supported the Good Neighbor Commission to “see if a simple workable agreement can be worked out between the two nations” since the region’s economy also depended on Mexican workers in agricultural and

[169] “Mexican Troops Redouble Border Watch,” *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 20, 1947.

[170] “Mexico Wont Sign Bracero Pack With the U.S.,” *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 29, 1948.

[171] “More Hit Truman For Bracero Stand,” *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 8, 1952.

sheep-shearing industries. One San Angeloan, Ed Nunnally, rose to one of the highest ranks of the Commission and became Commission Secretary.[172]

Clearly the Good Neighbor Commission was having problems repairing international relationships between Mexico and the United States, and after her resignation from the Commission, Kibbe offered solutions outside of the commission's scope in the late 1940s. Only then, she explained, could the "symptom of economic, education, and general level-of-living evils" be remedied. Kibbe advocated a variety of reforms to tackle these "evils": eliminating the poll tax, redistributing school funds, and passing a constitutional amendment that would abolish segregation and discrimination nationwide.[173] Aside from these systemic reforms, Kibbe decided that another crucial step in solving these problems was to increase Anglo Texans' awareness of the discrimination experienced by Mexican Americans, and she instigated a campaign to change public perceptions. An ideal medium in which to do this was to work with women's clubs. As a member of the Business and Professional Women's Club of San Antonio, she chaired a committee on the Inter-American Understanding while working on her book, and after it was published, she launched an extensive speaking tour on which she traveled all over Texas and Mexico. Primarily, she gave talks to women's clubs and explained Latin American culture and history while highlighting the discrimination that Mexican American communities experienced in Texas.[174]

Kibbe never made it to the Victory Study Club in San Angelo, but her book certainly did, most likely because of her activism with other women's clubs throughout the state.

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[172] "U.S. Mexico Farm Labor Groups Agree," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 10, 1952; "West Texan To Be Named on Good Neighbor Group," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 3, 1948.

[173] Orozco, "Pauline Rochester Kibbe."

[174] Orozco, "Pauline Rochester Kibbe."

Victory Club members distinguished *The Latin Americans in Texas* as an "essential" read for the 1948-49 year. Kibbe appealed to clubwomen because they saw in her much of what they saw in themselves: she was a wife, mother, public affairs advocate, and clubwoman who was trying to improve international relations within a precarious Cold War climate. While no specific documentation exists of how Victory Study Clubwomen received Kibbe's book, it seems reasonable to assume that they found merit in her arguments and insights since the club required all members to read her book and marked it as "essential."

Though the Good Neighbor Commission certainly had its problems, the Victory Study Club strongly supported the commission in its early years. Like their encouragement for the United Nations, Victory Study club members believed that the organization would help secure international cooperation and peace. Good Neighbor Commission Secretary Ed Nunnally delivered a special November 1948 program to the Victory Study Club where "his mother came as his guest." After highlighting and describing the history of the recent Mexican Revolution, Nunally explained that the nation was just "twenty-eight years young" and had "all the potential" to develop into an important ally to the United States.[175] He also informed clubwomen about various projects he had in mind that would improve international relationships with the United States' closest neighbor since most of them which had to deal with nurturing trade and tourism. The *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported, "Emphasizing the need of developing international relations and trade, the speaker advised the following projects: establishment of a consulate in San Angelo, airport of entry, connecting railways, the teaching of Spanish in schools, developing the Big Bend Park area, and the opening of a

[175] "Modern Mexico Speakers Topic for Program" in Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

free bridge at Del Rio." It was not clear if any of these programs were in the process of being implemented in West Texas or along the border.[176]

Another 1948 meeting featured members of the Victory Study Club brainstorming about possible solutions to improve international relations between Latin America and the United States. They submitted their ideas to the Good Neighbor Commission, and though it is unknown what they proposed, the club received accolades from the Good Neighbor Commission's executive secretary Thomas C. Sutherland, who replaced Kibbe after her resignation. The *San Angelo Standard Times* reported that a wire arrived addressed to C. W. Meadows, the acting consul for the Mexican government in San Angelo, from the Austin office. The wire read, "Congratulations to you and to the Victory Study Club and all other people who are helping to make Good Neighbor Week a success in San Angelo."[177] Stepping outside of the home and engaging in official policies during the Cold War, Victory Study Club members worked at the local, state, national, and international level to improve international relationships, cooperation, and peace during the Cold War.

Despite vigorous endorsement of *The Latin Americans in Texas* by the Victory Study Club and its support of Good Neighbor Week, clubwomen largely rejected Kibbe's systematic solutions for improving conditions for the Latin American population in San Angelo. They agreed with Kibbe's assessment that the San Angelo Latin American community needed assistance, but rather than wage political battles or redistribute funds from white schools in the region, they chose to work primarily within the segregated

[176] "West Texan To Be Named on Good Neighbor Group," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 3, 1948; "Modern Mexico Speaker's Topic for Program," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, November 24, 1948.

[177] "Praise Given Promotion of Good Neighbor" *San Angelo Standard Times*, November 16, 1948 in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

educational system on a volunteer basis—a subject that will receive much more attention in the next chapter when the limits and opportunities of the Victory Study Club's local activism are assessed.

After the denotation of the first atomic bomb ended World War II, the Victory Study Club women realized that their political education and involvement were more important than ever, and they directed their interests to events on the international scene. It was not enough to simply write officials or to vote for cautious politicians; the stakes were too high. Instead, women in the Victory Study Club pushed collectively for international peace and activism in order to protect their homes, nation, and world. This was essential, clubwomen believed, if current and future generations were to survive in the postwar period, and Victory Study Club members needed to remain vigilant of international issues and causes.

CHAPTER THREE

V IS FOR VOLUNTEERING: THE VICTORY STUDY CLUB'S LOCAL ACTIVISM AND ITS LIMITS

> Good work had been done by the Federation of Women's Clubs. . . . It made me feel very proud, but at the same time it gave me an overwhelming sense of responsibility. If we can do things, and we do know how to organize, then perhaps we should prove this in action more often than we do.
>
> -Eleanor Roosevelt, 1951[1]

In 1960, hundreds of West Texas clubwomen came together in Colorado City, Texas, to attend the District Six—Heart O' Texas Annual Convention of the Texas Federated Women's Clubs. San Angelo sent delegates from nine different federated women's clubs with members from the Victory Study Club among them.[2] Newspapers quickly picked up on this large gathering of "organized womanhood" in West Texas and reported positively about clubwomen's agenda and progress.[3] One editorial titled "Their Work Outshines Their Bonnets" explained that "there is more to the club group than hats and fashionable clothes. They are earnest, busy, studious women seeking consistently to broaden their interests and endeavor for better citizenship within our many communities." The editorial praised clubwomen's activism by noting that "you can observe the results of their interest and efforts every day" and cited multiple examples of their involvement in local politics, charity organizations, and public health and education. "Hats off to them," the editorial concluded,

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[1] Eleanor Roosevelt, "Air Force Brass Concerned Over Problems of Two Boys," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[2] "The Heart of Texas District Issue," *The Texas Clubwomen* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1960 to 1961," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[3] "Knock Out Barricades to Progress, Delegates Told," *Colorado City Record*, March 17, 1960 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1960 to 1961, 8.7," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

whose "club activities are among the modern factors which make our cities and communities better places to live and rear our children."[4]

This was good press for the District Six Convention as federated clubs tried to shake off the image of clubwomen "sitting in their clubhouses and playing bridge."[5] Speakers at the event encouraged clubwomen to embrace their vital role in community building, and they stressed that "civic betterment commands with impelling and increasing force a more substantial contribution to leadership in community affairs." Engage in your community was the resounding message at the convention as each woman was told to "remind herself that this is my community, that its people, that its problems are my problems and that its destiny is my goal."[6] This message was also imperative to nurture clubwomen's individual sense of purpose. As one speaker tersely reasoned, "You can't be a loser when you are working to better your community."[7]

The Victory Study Club joined other federated women's clubs in West Texas by engaging in community activism campaigns at the grassroots level in postwar West Texas. Much of their work concentrated on programs and projects centered around community health concerns as San Angeloans experienced new and old epidemics and other healthcare challenges. Though some citizens of San Angelo benefited more than others by their efforts,

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[4] "Their Work Out-Shines Their Bonnets" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1960 to 1961," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[5] "Clubwomen Seek New Image," *The Dallas Morning News* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1960 to 1961," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[6] "Knock Out Barricades to Progress, Delegates Told," *Colorado City Record*, March 17, 1960 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1960 to 1961," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[7] "Clubwomen Seek New Image," *The Dallas Morning News* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1960 to 1961, 8.7," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

the Victory Study Club devoted considerable time and money to nurturing a healthy citizenry. Equally important in the club's projects and programs were San Angelo's postwar youth. Improving local schools, increasing access to education, and curbing the growing concerns of rising postwar juvenile delinquency rates made sense to these club mothers who believed "it's a mother's job to make her children see opportunities and take advantage of them."[8] It was not just her own children, however, which compelled a Victory Study Clubwoman's attention. She also extended her efforts into the wider community and believed that she could help cultivate a healthy and educated citizenry in San Angelo at large. Building on the tradition of "maternalist politics" in the Progressive era, postwar clubwomen argued that it was their special role as mothers that compelled them to move into the public sphere, organize, and engage in local activism on San Angeloans' behalf.[9]

Whereas the previous chapter explored the Victory Study Club's international activism in the postwar period, this chapter focuses on clubwomen's grassroots activism from the late 1940s to the late 1960s in San Angelo. It reveals that middle-class white clubwomen did not simply stay at home or play bridge in their clubhouses; instead, they actively moved into their communities where they sought to ameliorate conditions for large segments of the population. Overall, San Angeloans benefited from this deployment of "organized womanhood," but there were limits as clubwomen failed to distribute their time, money, or activism evenly across various neighborhoods. Latinx San Angeloans received minimum assistance from the Victory Study Club's activism in health campaigns and school

[8] "Career Mother Shows Children Business World Opportunities," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 5, 1951 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, 8.1," in Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Anglo, Texas.

[9] Paige Meltzer, "The Pulse and Conscience of America," *Frontiers* 30, no. 3 (2009), 52.

reforms, and African Americans received almost no attention from the organization in the postwar period. The Victory Study Club's actions outside the home and into the community reveal the opportunities and limits of white, married, middle-class clubwomen's grassroots activism and illuminate the challenges that San Angeloans experienced in the immediate decades after World War II.

Members of the Victory Study Club noticed that San Angelo changed drastically in the postwar period, particularly as more "new-comers" came to the region in the late 1940s. In the five years after World War II, the city of San Angelo transformed from an isolated community into a booming urban powerhouse in West Texas and served as the region's commercial, medical, and entertainment hub. The population topped fifty-two thousand in 1950, and by 1960, the city's population neared sixty thousand and continued to grow. While most San Angeloans welcomed these transformations as more people traded, lived, and traveled in West Texas during the postwar period, an invisible enemy also arrived: disease. It is no secret that there is a "strong correlation between the risk of disease and human population density," and Victory Study Club members noticed a rise in certain diseases in postwar San Angelo. [10] They devoted time and money to improve San Angeloans' health, and though this aid varied along race and class lines, the Victory Study Club's healthcare activism played a significant role in improving West Texans' quality of life.

One of the most terrifying diseases to hit postwar America was polio. Officially called poliomyelitis, polio was a viral infection that attacked the gray marrow of the spinal cord, and while most patients recovered with few lingering side effects, others less fortunate

[10] Peter Dezak. M.D. as quoted in Bahar Gholipur, "What 11 Billion People Mean for Disease Outbreaks," LiveScience.com, November 26, 2013 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.scientific american.com/article/what-11-billion-people-mean-disease-outbreaks/

experienced permanent paralysis and even death. Since the disease seemed to target children in alarming numbers, a synonym for poliomyelitis was infantile paralysis, and while not much was known about how the disease spread, it frightened the American public perhaps more than any other disease in the twentieth century. As historian Heather Green Wooten contends, "With the exception of AIDS, no other twentieth-century disease has aroused such a high and sustained level of public fear."[11] Even President Harry Truman evoked language that linked the disease to a level of homefront preparedness akin to World War II. In 1946, he declared, "The fight against infantile paralysis . . . must be a total war in every city, town and village throughout the land. For only with a united front can we ever hope to win any war."[12] For many national officials and citizens, polio ranked as a top concern in the postwar period—right up there with the threat of nuclear war.

A rapid increase in population and a burgeoning integration into the state and national economy collided to form a perfect storm for a polio outbreak in the postwar years in San Angelo. In 1949, the city became "one of the worst-hit cities" during America's polio epidemic, and the disease seemed to come out of nowhere.[13] The year prior, San Angelo reported only 57 cases of the disease, but the next summer, that number skyrocketed to 420 with at least 28 patients dying. One case was confirmed for every 124 people living in San Angelo. This was staggeringly higher than the national average, which estimated one polio

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[11] Heather Green Wooten, *The Polio Years in Texas: Battling a Terrifying Unknown* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 1.

[12] Jason Beaubien, "Wiping Out Polio: How the U.S. Snuffed Out a Killer," *National Public Radio*, October 15, 2012 (last accessed March 20, 2020), https://www.npr.org/sections/healthshots/2012/10/16/162670836/wiping-out-polio-how-the-u-s-snuffed-out-a-killer

[13] Jason C. Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State: A Brief Examination in Rural and Urban Communities," Master's thesis, Texas State University – San Marcos, December 2005, 41.

case for every 3,775 Americans. Even as Houston experienced a polio outbreak in 1948-49, San Angelo's outbreak that year proved much more severe. Jason C. Lee's study of postwar rural and urban polio epidemics found that while "there were ten times as many people living in Harris County" in Houston, there "were over 100 more cases reported in San Angelo."[14]

These statistics initiated panic as San Angeloans read the regular tabulations of the growing epidemic in the local newspaper. They learned on May 27, 1949 that a one-and-a-half-year-old "negro" boy died from polio; a day later, the disease took the life of ten-month-old Esperanza Ramirez. A white, seven-year-old girl died twenty-four hours after being admitted to the hospital. Another white four-year-old succumbed two days later. Fear ensued as parents read these accounts. It seemed that the virus targeted one of the most vulnerable segments of the population: San Angelo's children. One editorial in the local paper further heightened parents' anxiety: "POLIO! Your child could be next! Protect your family!" Parents were not the only ones concerned. Tourism and interstate commerce stagnated during the epidemic. Officials called off wrestling matches; bands refused to come to San Angelo to play. One report even lamented, "People [are] afraid to even drive through here and put air in their tires."[15]

Medical officials and city leaders struggled to find solutions for the recent outbreak. Since no one really knew what caused the disease, precautionary actions to stop the spread of the epidemic varied. City officials urged neighborhoods to cut tall weeds and remove trash and standing water. Thinking that mosquitos might play a role in the disease's transmission,

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[14] Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State," 45.

[15] *San Angelo Standard Times*, May 27 and 28, 1949 as quoted in Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State," 47-8; Jayna Boyle, "Polio Held San Angelo In Grips of Fear," *San Angelo Standard Times*, May 9, 2007 (last accessed 3/20/2020) http://archive.gosanangelo.com/news/polio-held-san-angelo-in-grips-of-fear-ep-442743942-358369911.html/

city officials used foggers to spray DDT throughout the summer months. The most practical advice offered was to engage in regular hand washing. Nevertheless, the epidemic spread, and leaders took more drastic measures. In early June, the city "closed for one week all movie theaters, churches, schools and any other indoor public gatherings where children under the age of 15 might apply for entrance." Spiritual leaders recorded their sermons at local radio stations where "they asked for 'Devine [sic] guidance' to help them with the plague that had befallen them." San Angelo also closed the city pool, and physicians urged residents not to swim in the Concho River, even as summer temperatures soared.[16] "We got to the point no one could comprehend. People would not even shake hands," a local pediatrician noted.[17]

Throughout 1949 and 1950, Victory Study Club members, just like other San Angelo mothers, sought to combat the spread of the disease within their own individual homes. They took seriously the advice of San Angelo's City Health Officer Dr. R. E. Elvins, who insisted that "You can't wave a wand and clear up polio. . . . It's largely up to individual families."[18] With the federal government offering little help to curb the epidemic, local officials reasoned that the first step was to "make filth the enemy and cleanliness the goal" within the home.[19] Officials urged housewives to use specific cleaners in and around their homes and to spray their lawns and garbage cans with "Nok-Out Liquid Concentrate Insect Killer."[20] They kept a

[16] Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State," 54-56.

[17] David M. Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

[18] Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 2.

[19] Oskinksy, *Polio: An American Story*, 2.

[20] Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State," 59.

watchful eye on their children for symptoms and engaged in rigorous handwashing inside and outside of the home. According to local officials, the first step in this "war" was for women to protect those who resided within their walls through meticulous sanitation and housekeeping practices.

Compounding the panic was the fact that the number of San Angelo's medical facilities and numbers of personnel were woefully inadequate to handle the epidemic. There was only one hospital—Shannon Hospital, established in 1932—in the region, and polio patients, mostly children, occupied more than half of the city's hospital beds.[21] The entire basement and second floor of the hospital housed polio victims, but during the epidemic, the hospital desperately needed more resources.[22] There was also a shortage of physicians willing to work with polio patients, as doctors feared they might contract the disease. Dr. Ralph Chase, a young pediatrician during the crisis, remembered he saw "about one patient a week who had polio, and many of those polio victims were referred from other doctors because of their [the doctors'] fear."[23] A scarcity of nurses available to work with patients meant that nurses had to work double shifts to meet demands. As cases escalated over the summer months of 1949, San Angelo clearly needed more medical assistance. The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, founded just before World War II, stepped in to help the growing crisis. It sent a team of specialists and four iron lungs, along with financial

[21] Diana J. Kleiner, "Shannon Medical Center," *Handbook of Texas Online,* June 15, 2020 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/sbs09

[22] Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 3; Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State," 53.

[23] Jayna Boyle, "Polio Held San Angelo In Grips of Fear," *San Angelo Standard Times*, May 9, 2007 (last accessed March 20, 2020), http://archive.gosanangelo.com/news/polio-held-san-angelo-in-grips-of-fear-ep-442743942-358369911.html

assistance to fight the mounting epidemic in San Angelo.[24]

One of the Foundation's founders and a polio victim himself was US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who helped garner support for the organization during his presidency. After FDR died in office in 1945, the United States memorialized the former president on the dime in 1946, and because of its practice of collecting of dimes for the purpose of funding and assisting medical research on polio, the Foundation became known in perpetuity as the March of Dimes.[25] While this organization contributed significantly to the development of a vaccination against polio, historian David Oshinksy argues that its significance lies far beyond that. He writes, "In truth, polio was never the raging epidemic portrayed in the media, not even at its height in the 1940s and 1950s. . . . Polio's special status was due, in large part to the efforts of a remarkable group, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, which employed the latest techniques in advertising, fundraising, and motivational research to turn a horrific but relatively uncommon disease into the most feared affliction of its time."[26] By making this dreadful disease seem omnipresent yet curable, the National Foundation revolutionized "the ways charities raised money, recruited volunteers, organized local chapters to care for local people, and penetrated the mysterious world of medical research."[27] To put it another way, it was not the federal government that took the lead to eradicate polio in the 1940s and 1950s; instead, it was a private charity engaged in grassroots activism that largely mitigated the worst effects of the epidemic and eased the

[24] Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 4; Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State," 48, 53.

[25] March of Dimes, "A History of the March of Dimes," Marchofdimes.org (last accessed March 20, 2020) https://www.marchofdimes.org/mission/a-history-of-the-march-of-dimes.aspx

[26] Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 5.

[27] Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 4.

suffering of polio victims.

Engaging in philanthropy at a mass level, middle-class white housewives served as one of the March of Dimes' most important fundraisers at the grassroots level. It made sense to the National Foundation to make middle-class mothers "the ideal foot soldiers of the polio crusade" since they had time to give and every reason to be concerned. After all, Oshinksy explains, "What could be more natural than a mass movement based on the maternal protection of the young?"[28] Beginning in 1950, a campaign known as the "Mothers March" emerged throughout the nation where women went door-to-door collecting dimes to donate to the organization for medical research and for patient care. Oshinksy describes how these middle-class women "formed the largest charitable army the country had ever known, serving as models for the later marches by mothers against nuclear testing and environmental pollution."[29]

The Victory Study club members became "foot soldiers" in the streets of San Angelo's polio crusade. Bonnie Batts, a member of San Angelo's Altrusa Club, asked the City Federation of Women's Clubs to join her on January 31, 1950 from 6:30 to 7:30 as "marching mothers" against polio. Though it is not clear from the records if clubwomen actually took to the streets or stayed home and made telephone calls, the Victory Study Club's Yearbook and Scrapbook for the year of 1950 reveals that several members participated in the "Mothers March." The operation was a huge success, and Bonnie Batts was unanimously named "San Angelo's Woman of the Year" due to her "polio leadership." Victory Study Club members—along with other federated women's clubs—attended a

[28] Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 86, 89.

[29] Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 89.

banquet in 1951 in her honor for her work in organizing the "Mothers March."[30] Evident in their participation in the "Mothers March" in San Angelo, Victory Study clubwomen joined millions of other women in the nation and became "one of the indelible images of postwar America['s]" postwar women's activism. [31]

As an organized body with an extensive network of women who had time on their hands, San Angelo clubwomen were reportedly better at fundraising than men. One 1949 local article explained that "Women Outgive Men Here in Annual Polio Campaign," which drew a wry response from the Tom Green County March of Dimes chairman Herbert Wilson. "This is a fight to end polio, not a battle of the sexes," he told reporters, but he conceded that San Angelo's clubwomen were doing a better job at raising funds than leading businessmen.[32] By the early 1950s, the local San Angelo chapter of the March of Dimes had sent twenty-five thousand dollars to the national headquarters, and undoubtedly, San Angelo's clubwomen contributed to this large donation.[33]

While much of the money collected was sent to the national organization, San Angelo clubwomen also distributed funds locally to fight the polio epidemic during the early 1950s.[34]

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[30] "She's Woman of the Year: Mrs. Batts Wins Award on Polio Leadership," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 8, 1950 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954," in Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Anglo, Texas; "Marching Mothers to Call Jan. 31" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 4, 1951 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954," in Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Anglo, Texas.

[31] Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 89.

[32] "Women Outgive Men Here in Annual Polio Campaign," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 19, 1949.

[33] "Marching Mothers to Call Jan. 31 on All Angeloans," *San Angelo Standard Times*, January 4, 1951 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954," in Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Anglo, Texas.

[34] "She's Woman of the Year: Mrs. Batts Wins Altrusa Award on Polio Leadership," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 8, 1950 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954," in Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Anglo, Texas.

Victory Study Club members assisted other San Angelo mothers in this charitable army by raising funds for local families in need. For instance, a 1949 *San Angelo Standard Times* article highlighted Bettye Lou Erickson, a "brave polio woman," and her fight against the disease. She was described by the paper as "a courageous young mother in an iron lung," whose family desperately needed financial assistance. More than eighty women—representing thirteen different San Angelo women's clubs, including the Victory Study Club—devoted several days addressing envelopes and preparing them to be mailed asking for donations for the family. They mailed more than seven thousand cards in Tom Green County, and, given that large number, it seems safe to assume that Erickson and her family received some sort of financial assistance during her illness.[35]


San Angelo, Tex., Standard-Times, Sun., Jan. 9, 1949 13B

MAIL DIMES TO HER—The addressee in Tom Green County's March of Dimes campaign is Mrs. Bettye Lou Erickson, 909 Tarver, who has had polio for two years, is now paralyzed from the shoulders down. Money sent in her name will aid all needy polio victims of the county, but every card mailed to her will also be a vote of confidence for her to continue her brave fight against the disease. Her sturdy three-year-old daughter, another Bettye Lou, here delightedly shows her mother the first dime card sent in. (Staff photo by Nodler.)

BRAVE POLIO VICTIM

Figure 6: "Brave Polio Victim," *San Angelo Standard Times*, January 9, 1949 "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Anglo, Texas.

Clubwomen also allocated money to address the lack of medical equipment necessary to fight the disease. While the March of Dimes sent four iron lungs to San Angelo in 1950, "local charities" provided another two, and since women donated more money than men in the region, it seems safe to assume that women's clubs helped provide some of the funds to

[35] "Brave Polio Victim: Bette Lou Erickson Becomes 'March of Dimes' Addressee," *San Angelo Standard Times*, January 9, 1949 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954," in Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Anglo, Texas.

secure these lifesaving machines.[36] Over the next few years, Victory Study Club members also voted in meetings to distribute a small amount of club money to the local polio fund. These donations ranged from one to five dollars and were used to help local families—just like Bettye Lou Erickson—defray the costs of the disease.[37] Another club project of the 1952-53 year was to provide "individual service by club members to aid Tom Green County Crippled Children Association."[38] The county organization was the result of the Texas Society for Crippled Children, a nonprofit organization established in 1929 that focused on "the care, treatment, education, training and employment of handicapped children and adults," which successfully lobbied state and federal governments to allocate funds to aid their cause.[39] It is not clear what exactly Victory Study Club members' "individual service" entailed, but through their fundraising campaigns and volunteerism, Victory Study Clubwomen heeded President Truman's advice and stepped up to wage war against this invisible enemy in San Angelo.

By 1956, the San Angelo polio epidemic had thankfully subsided, a trend also visible throughout the rest of the nation. This was largely due to the development of the Salk vaccine. Millions of American children received polio inoculations that year, and the cases of polio in San Angelo diminished thanks to the widespread administration of this modern

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[36] Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State," 48.

[37] "Freedom Is Topic for Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 29, 1953.

[38] "Victory Study Club Yearbook 1952 to 1953," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954," in Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Anglo, Texas.

[39] The Texas Society for Crippled Children, Inc., "What It Is: What It Does," *The Voice of Texas Crippled Children* 11, no. 9 (March 1939): 2 in University of Texas at Arlington's Online Digital Collections (accessed May 30, 2020), https://library.uta.edu/txdisabilityhistory/sites/default/files/docs/20003202.pdf

medical miracle. There were only nineteen cases of polio reported in San Angelo in 1956, and only seven thousand cases reported overall in the United States.[40]

Undoubtedly, the vaccine is largely credited for ending San Angelo's polio epidemic, but before medical officials found a successful strategy to stop the disease's spread, it was clubwomen—just like the members of the Victory Study Club—who alleviated some of the burdens that West Texan patients suffered through their grassroots community health activism. Not only did the Victory Study Club join the Altrusa Club in their activism, but they also joined with other City Federated Women's Clubs, such as Las Hermanas, the San Angelo Women's Forum, the 32 Club and others in providing assistance to those suffering from the 1948-49 polio outbreak.

The polio epidemic that raged in San Angelo during the late 1940s and early 1950s was only one of several health concerns during the period; tuberculosis also became a major problem. San Angelo had a unique relationship with the disease. In 1911, when Texans were dying at alarming rates from pulmonary tuberculosis, the state legislature passed a bill creating a tuberculosis sanatorium. For the entity known as the "Anti-Tuberculosis Colony No. 1," the State of Texas purchased 330 acres sixteen miles outside of San Angelo. As historian John Henderson explains, this was "the first institution of its kind in Texas," and it "provided the isolation [necessary] to calm the fears of the pubic, as well as rest and clean air, [which was] the only known cure for TB suffers."[41] According to many medical professionals, those suffering from tuberculosis benefited from the dry and mild climate of

[40] Lee, "Poliomyelitis in the Lone Star State," 67.

[41] John C. Henderson, "Sanatorium, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online,* June 15, 2010 (accessed March 20,2020) https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hls16

West Texas, making San Angelo an ideal place for a state sanatorium. Hundreds of patients flocked to the region, even though there was no proof that any "particular climate was superior to any other for tuberculosis patients." [42]

The facility outside of San Angelo became one of the leading sanatoriums in Texas during the next four decades and grew under the leadership of Joseph B. McKnight. Renamed the State Tuberculosis Sanatorium, the facility treated more than thirteen thousand patients by the 1930s, and it developed into its own independent community with a "library, barber shop, dairy, hog farm, butcher shop, bakery, powerplant, and laundry." The State Sanatorium even had a school for children and a post office. By 1949, there were 970 beds in the facility with a waitlist of more than 300 patients. After McKnight retired as the superintendent in 1950, the State renamed the institution in his honor. The McKnight State Sanatorium continued to serve tuberculosis patients until 1969 when the number of TB cases declined due to new vaccinations and treatment methods. Renamed the San Angelo State School, the facility was repurposed to assist intellectually disabled men and women in West Texas.[43]

During the 1940s and 1950s, tuberculosis was a hot issue in San Angelo, especially with the McKnight State Sanatorium located just outside of town. To fight the spread of the disease, local chapters of the National Tuberculosis Association materialized in the mid-twentieth century, and they provided communities with mobile X-ray machines where citizens could be easily screened for TB at little to no charge. San Angelo's leading officials

[42] Heather Sinclair, "White Plague, Mexican Menace: Migration, Race, Class, and Gendered Contagion in El Paso, Texas, 1880-1930," *Pacific Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (November 2016): 479.

[43] Henderson, "Sanatorium, TX."

encouraged residents to get tested. At one meeting of the Victory Study Club in early 1945, Tom Green's County Nurse, who distributed information to citizens throughout the region, gave a special program to Victory Study Clubwomen and recommended that "all members attend the mobile X-ray unit" to be screened for TB. [44] It is unknown if members heeded the call that year, but the urgency escalated three years later when the number of confirmed TB deaths rose nationally and locally. In 1948, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported that "fifty thousand people die in the U. S. each year from TB: 3,265 deaths [were reported] in Texas this year," and a significant number occurred in Tom Green County.[45]

After learning these alarming statistics, the Victory Study Club held another program in February 1948; this time headed by the executive secretary of the Tom Green County Tuberculosis Association, Elise Wendt Gayer. Originally from Washington County, Texas, Gayer arrived in San Angelo in the 1920s, and over the next fifty years, she became one of the most prominent nurses and medical administrators in San Angelo.[46] Even today, one of the best-known nursing homes in San Angelo bears her name—the Elise Gayer Health Care Center.[47] In this meeting at the Victory Study Club, Gayer told clubwomen that a "mass X-ray campaign" would arrive in the spring. At specific sites such as schools, the jail, and

[44] "Health Measures Topic of Victory Study Club Meet," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 25, 1945 2/25/1945 1948 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[45] "Geneva Curry Heads County Bangle Sales," San Angelo Evening Standard, October 26, 1948 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[46] Elsie C. Wendt Gayer, grave maker, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Elise C. Wendt Gayer," FindaGrave.com (last accessed March 30, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/22128944

[47]"About Elise Gayer Health Care Center," *Nursinghomes.com* (accessed March 30, 2020), https://www.nursinghomes.com/tx/san-angelo/elsie-gayer-health-care-center/

county courthouse, between five hundred to a thousand San Angeloans could be screened each day, and she explained that "this mass service will be given at no cost to schools, *clubs*, or individuals" since "it is financed through funds derived by the sale of Christmas seals."[48] A fundraiser to raise contributions for TB, Christmas Seals were stamps that could be bought by individuals and the proceeds were donated to tuberculosis associations at the local and national level. Strong evidence suggests that Victory Study Club members took part in these free screenings funded by Christmas Seals since this newspaper clipping appeared in the Victory Study Club's 1948-1950 Scrapbook. Most likely, Victory Study clubwomen hoped TB screenings would not only ensure their own health but also curb the spread of disease among their families, friends, and communities. In addition to receiving TB screenings personally, Victory Study Club members also engaged in local activism to stop the disease's spread, and much of their efforts mirrored grassroots techniques used against the polio crusade.

There was one crucial difference, however, as Victory Study clubwomen turned their attention to a specific segment of the San Angelo population. Research indicated that the Latinx populations were one of the largest segments hit when it came to TB in San Angelo. The Victory Study Club 1948 Scrapbook included a clipping from the *San Angelo Evening Standard* that announced that clubwomen volunteered their "time and money to securing free X-rays for the Latin American population." They devoted particular attention to the

[48] "Tuberculosis Unit to Send Mobile Equipment Here," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 9, 1947 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Mass X-Ray To Be Outlined Here: TB Consultant Here; Board Meet Scheduled Tonight," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 5, 1948 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas. Emphasis my own.

segregated Guadalupe Elementary School.[49] Though it is not known how much "time" Victory Study Club members volunteered, they certainly donated money by selling "TB Bangles," which were was bracelets citizens could wear to show their support against the disease. They then gave the funds collected to the local tuberculosis association, which was responsible for distributing educational brochures. It is not clear if the material was in English or Spanish, however. These funds also aided the local TB association by providing free X-ray screenings to the Latinx community.[50]

In addition to this specific fundraiser, the Victory Study clubwomen voted to make annual club donations throughout the late 1940s and 1950s to the local TB association to provide resources to "the Latin American TB population." Clubwomen paid annual dues to belong to the Victory Study Club, and they frequently used the money to fund local projects. Ranging between ten to twenty dollars, the work with the Latin American population was one of the largest community donations by the club in the late 1940s and 1950s.[51] Victory Study Club members also made it an annual project to volunteer at the McKnight State Sanitorium. Mostly supporting recreation, they sponsored Christmas and Valentine's Day parties and children's events and organized Bingo parties with prizes. Clubwomen routinely bought Spanish-language magazines for the Latinx patients residing there and sewed curtains

[49] "Co-Operation in TB X-Ray Check Assured," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 16, 1948 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[50] "Rev. Bratton is Guest Speaker" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, December 11, 1955 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Mrs. Kennard Moss, "Minutes March 8, 1962," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[51] "Victory Study Club Yearbook 1948 to 1949: Theme "Mexican Murals" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

and laundry bags for them.[52] Unlike their grassroots activism against the polio epidemic, Victory Study Club members directly targeted the "Latin American" population in their fight against this disease. One of the most likely reasons the Latinx community received this attention is because they were the largest minority population in San Angelo; additionally, as evident in the previous chapter, the Victory Study Club studied vigilantly Latin American issues within the postwar period.

While Victory Study Club members and local San Angelo health officials supported efforts to minimize the suffering of the Latinx population with tuberculosis, they did not extend this same effort toward San Angelo's African American community. A small percentage of San Angelo's World War II population, more African Americans moved into West Texas in the 1940s due to the demand for agricultural workers and jobs in the oil and gas fields. Additional opportunities also became available due to development of new air bases in San Angelo and Lubbock.[53] Some African Americans, however, moved to West Texas for health reasons. Ella Mae Johnson moved to San Angelo in 1940 when she was just five years old, and she continues to live there today. After working at a hospital in Hillsboro, Texas, her mother—Rosie Lee Gordon, who was the fourteenth child in the family—came down with typhoid malaria fever. She was a single mother with four young children and decided to move to San Angelo. The West Texas climate provided an opportunity for Rosie Lee to recover from her illness, and even though her daughter remembers that her mother

[52] "Victory Study Club Yearbooks from 1950 to 1966" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," and "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1956 to 71," Box 2 and 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[53] Bruce A. Glasrud, Paul H. Carlson, and Tai D. Kreidler, "Preface," in *Slavery to Integration: Black Americans in West Texas*, eds. Bruce A. Glasrud, Paul H. Carlson, and Tai D. Kreidler (Abilene, TX: State House Press, 2007), 10

was "sick for a very long time," she slowly recovered and worked cleaning rooms at the oldest hotel in San Angelo—the Hotel Cactus—with its fourteen floors.[54]

Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, the unreliability of portable X-ray machines meant that certain sectors of the population did not routinely have access to screenings. In April 1948, the *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported that the "mobile unit is out of order thanks to an overload of electricity," and the X-ray drive was called off until technicians could arrive to fix the machines.[55] Other counties besides Tom Green experienced technical difficulties with mobile X-ray machines. Taylor and Orange counties also reported routinely about their unpredictability, but when the machines shut down in San Angelo that month, local officials made a decision that adversely affected one segment of the population more than any other: African Americans.[56] When the mobile units were repaired, they announced that they would skip the Blackshear school—the all-black school—altogether and instead place the machines at the county courthouse when appointments resumed.[57] Ella Mae Johnson, who enrolled in Blackshear at five years old, remembers that she was thirteen when San Angelo city officials skipped Blackshear in their tuberculous screenings, and there were about forty-five students in her eighth-grade classroom who did not receive access to these tests.[58]

White San Angeloans' prejudice might explain why leading officials decided to skip

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[54] Ella Mae Johnson, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 13, 2017.

[55] "X-Ray Drive Waits Repair of Machines," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 22, 1948.

[56] "TB Bangle Sale To Open Tuesday," *Abilene Reporter,* December 5, 1954; "Chest X-Ray Program Is Continuing," *The Orange Leader*, December 16, 1953.

[57] "X-Ray Drive Waits Repair of Machines," San Angelo Evening Standard, April 22, 1948.

[58] Ella Mae Johnson, interview by author, July 13, 2017, San Angelo, Texas.

the Blackshear school in their tuberculosis screenings. Historian Heather Sinclair's study of tuberculosis in El Paso, Texas, in the early twentieth century among ethnic Mexicans and white Americans contends that by invoking studies on tuberculosis based on race, white health officials "effortlessly tapped into a pre-existent vocabulary and set of discourses on disease that racialized colonized groups as innately susceptible to disease in order to shut down discussions" about providing adequate healthcare.[59] She argues that some white health officials believed that the high death rates in minority populations were the result of some sort of biological inadequacy and not an inherent lack of medical and sanitation services provided to these communities. While no direct evidence has been uncovered to confirm that this explicitly influenced San Angelo officials' decision to exclude the Blackshear school, there is little doubt that medical and sanitation services in San Angelo's African American neighborhoods lagged far behind those of white neighborhoods, and that racial prejudice may have played a significant role in the discrepancies.

During the late 1940s and 1950s, leading African Americans spoke out against the lack of health care services offered to the black community in San Angelo. In April 1948, S. C. Clay, the principal of the Blackshear school, held a community meeting in San Angelo to address the divergence between white and black healthcare opportunities. He lamented, "The health facilities provided for negro citizens are woefully short of minimum needs" at the local level, and this was evident in national trends as well. There was one physician for every 750 whites but only one for every 3,777 African Americans nationwide. While African Americans consisted of 10 percent of the population, only 1 percent of the hospital beds were dedicated to African Americans' use. "As a result of these conditions," Clay concluded, "the

[59] Sinclair, "White Plague, Mexican Menace," 495.

United States Health Department discloses that the death rate of Negroes is 33 percent higher than that of whites." Moreover, Clay explained that most African Americans were dying from "tuberculosis, kidney disease, and pneumonia"—diseases that had successful treatments but from which treatments African Americans were largely excluded. Statistics on infant mortality were even more appalling: African American babies died at a rate that was 63 percent higher than white babies. Clay concluded his speech with a plea to white health care officials in San Angelo. "Disease knows no color line, nor can it be confined to any group. A weak and sickly body is costly to the whole community and to the whole state." He urged that for the good of the city overall, San Angelo officials must direct more attention to African Americans' health care concerns.[60]

Inadequate medical services were among other factors that contributed to the poor health of San Angelo's African American community; poor neighborhood sanitation also played a significant role in the spread of disease. Clay acknowledged in his speech that "sewage and inadequate housing are twin problems of the Negro community in regard to better health." Residents in the African American community neighborhood on Randolph Street where the Blackshear school was located not only "lived with significant trash but also [with] numerous privies." Ella Mae Johnson remembers growing up on West 10th Street, close to Randolph Street and within walking distance to Blackshear. Her mother was a single parent, raising four kids, and they lived in "a two-room house, not two bedrooms. Two rooms." There was no gas, no lights, and no indoor plumbing. "We had outside toilets," she recalled, and "we had running water, but we had to go bring it from outside from the

[60] "Negro Health Week Closes Here Sunday: Leaders Talk, League Meet and Sermons Mark Observance," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 9, 1948.

hydrants. It wasn't inside the house."[61] Johnson's personal reflections growing up in San Angelo's African American neighborhood confirm why Clay urged San Angelo city officials and community members to instigate regular community clean-up campaigns and improve sanitation services. It does not seem that much help materialized, however. During the 1950s and 1960s, unsanitary conditions remained in the neighborhoods where African Americans lived, and diseases—including tuberculosis—continued to spread. [62]

While actively supporting TB health campaigns in the Latinx community, the Victory Study Clubwomen remained silent on the health and sanitation issues of San Angelo's black community. They were, however, active in some health initiatives during the 1950s and 1960s that might have indirectly benefited minority populations. For instance in 1953, Victory Study Club members actively solicited funds for cancer research and distributed information pamphlets on cancer awareness and prevention throughout the community. Victory Study Club President Erlene Mills was proud of their results and told members "our club has collected more money than any other club during this [cancer] drive."[63] Much of their work with cancer awareness focused directly on women's concerns: they showed films to club members on how to do a proper breast exam and held special programs on the importance of getting regular pap smears to identify cervical cancer.[64]

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[61] Ella Mae Johnson, interview by author, July 13, 2017, San Angelo, Texas.

[62] "Negro Health Week Program is Prepared," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 30, 1949.

[63] Mrs. John C. Mills, "Progress and Activities on Cancer Research: Report of the Victory Study Club, San Angelo, Texas, " *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 17, 1953 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[64] "Films to Be Shown at Study Club Meet," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 26, 1952 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Mrs. Kennard Moss, "Minutes of the Victory Study Club," March 8, 1962 in Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

The Victory Study Club also became active supporters of San Angelo's emerging birth control movement. In 1938, San Angelo became the site of the state's sixth operating birth control clinic under the direction of the Birth Control League of Texas, and it was the only birth control clinic between San Antonio and El Paso from the 1930s to late 1950s.[65] The impetus to establish birth control clinics in Texas intensified in the 1930s under pressures of the Great Depression. Maternal and infant mortality rates rose in Texas, largely due to a lack of proper maternity care, an inadequate awareness of women's contraceptive devices, and a rise in botched abortions. Upper-to-middle class, white mothers became the crusaders for Texas's birth control movement, and as early as 1936, the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs (TFWC) adopted resolutions supporting the establishment of birth control clinics statewide.[66] Referred to as the "Margaret Sanger of Texas" and founder of the Maternal Health Center of San Angelo in 1938, Agnese Carter Nelms of Houston actively courted women's clubs to support this cause and pointed out that "all good things [i.e. reform movements] start with women."[67] It made sense, then, to tap into the largest gathering of "organized womanhood" in the state: clubwomen, most of whom were mothers.

Upper-to-middle class mothers, however, had to be careful in advocating for the establishment of birth control clinics, and historian Harold Smith describes how they employed various strategies to prevent opposition to their cause. Using a "conservative

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[65] Harold Smith, "Birth Control Movement in Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online* (accessed March 20, 2020), https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vib02

[66] Harold Smith, "All Good Things Start with the Women: The Origin of the Texas Birth Control Movement, 1933-1945" *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 114, no. 3 (January 2011): 257; Kristina Shuanfield, "Nelms, Agnese Carter," *Handbook of Texas Online,* April 20, 2017 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fnelm

[67] Smith, "All Good Things Start With the Women," 262.

ideological context" to advocate for the establishment of birth control clinics, clubwomen focused on birth control "as a pro-motherhood and pro-family reform" by stressing that the issue was a matter of economic necessity and not of sexual freedom. Women birth control advocates did not want conservative officials or religious leaders to believe that access to birth control would increase female promiscuity, destroy the harmony of the marriage bed, or encourage women not to become mothers. Rather, birth control "was intended to help mothers space births in order to increase the likelihood of healthy mothers and healthy children." [68] For this reason, birth control clinics would be available only for *married* women. Early birth control advocates argued that married women would be able to choose when to have children based on financial stability and optimum health, and this would protect the marital relationship and the health of the American family, not undermine it.

In addition to a woman's marital status, birth control clinic advocates placed another limitation on who could access these services. Since upper-to-middle class, married women likely had some access to birth control devices through their private doctors, birth control clinics throughout the state targeted primarily low-income married women. This was important during the Great Depression since those needing access to birth control were more often than not on the county relief rolls. For instance, Harold Smith found that "during its early years, two-thirds of the San Angelo clinic's patients were being supported by community relief or the federal government's Works Progress Administration."[69] Birth control for women was expensive. During the 1930s and early 1940s, twelve condoms cost a

[68] Smith, "All Good Things Start With the Women," 272.

[69] Smith, "All Good Things Start With the Women," 263.

dollar while spermicidal jelly and a diaphragm ranged from four to six dollars.[70] For couples who could not afford these products, early birth control clinics focused on providing services for married, low-income women. There were plenty of these women in San Angelo who took advantage of these services.

Following national and statewide trends, the San Angelo Maternal Health Clinic changed its name to Planned Parenthood of San Angelo in 1946. By changing the name, the organization hoped to "increase public acceptance by conveying that [its] purpose was to help plan families rather than simply restrict family size."[71] San Angelo had the only Planned Parenthood Clinic in West Texas until the 1960s. Lubbock established a clinic in 1963, and Midland and Odessa did not have a clinic until 1965-66.[72]

Evidence suggests that the Victory Study Club supported the San Angelo clinic as early as 1948, since the organization's mission resonated with Victory Study clubwomen's dedication to improve community health. One newspaper clipping from 1948 told of a "$5,000 fundraising campaign" launched "by the Planned Parenthood Center of San Angelo, Inc." urging "the public to study the object of family and community betterment." To solicit funds, the article put the need in language that San Angeloans could understand: "The world is facing the same problem as some overgrazed West Texas ranches—too many mouths to feed with the food supply at hand." "Birth control," advocates reasoned, was "one of the

[70] Smith, "All Good Things Start With the Women," 272, 274.

[71] Harold L. Smith, "Birth Control Movement in Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 12, 2010 (accessed March 20, 2020), https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vib02

[72] "Mission," PlannedParenthood.com (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/who-we-are/mission; "Facts and Figures," PlannedParenthood.com (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/facts-figures; Smith, "Birth Control Movement in Texas."

most important elements" to prevent "economic, human and spiritual waste."[73] In 1952, another local campaign hoped to raise over seven thousand dollars for the San Angelo clinic. Chairwoman of the campaign, Gladys J. Aikman, former secretary of the San Angelo chapter of the American Association of University Women, asked the City Federation of Women's Clubs—of which the Victory Study Club was a part—to contribute. She explained why she believed supporting the organization's imperative for married families in San Angelo. Aikman stated, "Because I believe that Planned Parenthood is a basic charity, I am willing, even eager, to devote considerable time and energy. I am thinking of all the calamities, physical, emotional, and economic, which can be averted when a married couple plans its family." To raise the funds necessary for the clinic, Aikman organized a massive mailing campaign. Though it is not clear how many Victory Study Club members participated, San Angeloan women sent out over a thousand letters seeking donations for the clinic.[74] As married mothers engaged in their own family planning in the postwar period, it made sense that Victory Study Clubwomen would support the Planned Parenthood Center of San Angelo, Inc.'s general mission; they also believed that responsible family planning played a role in maintaining the health of the community.[75]

In addition to raising money for San Angelo's Planned Parenthood, the Victory Study

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[73] "Planned Parenthood Urged As Better Community Need," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* February 19, 1948.

[74] "$7,000 Goal Is Set By Planned Parenthood Unit," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* February 10, 1952; U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Gladys J. Aikman," Ancestry.com

[75] While Planned Parenthood's stance on abortion has garnered significant attention and criticism in the early twenty-first century, the question of the organization's support of abortion was not a prescient concern in the postwar years. Abortion was not officially legal in the United States until the *Roe v. Wade* decision, but even in the immediate years after the court's decision, the issue of abortion did not become a key source of conflict in the organization until in the 1980s.

Club held regular programs to learn about the work the organization was doing in the community, and they relied on experts to keep them updated about what the clinic needed. For example, Elise Wendt Gayer, the same nurse who served as the executive secretary of the Tom Green County's Tuberculosis Association, came to a Victory Study Club meeting in February1949. Gayer was passionate about and dedicated to her work with San Angelo's Planned Parenthood Clinic, and she boasted about the clinic's success. News of its good work had even reached the attention of the national organization's founder. In May 1949, Margaret Sanger visited the San Angelo clinic, and afterward, she sent Gayer a personal letter thanking her for her work and hospitality. "Everyday at San Angelo was a delight," she wrote. "It gives one a better idea of how the work is progressing" in local affiliate clinics all over the nation. She concluded, "May I tell you how very much I enjoyed everything you did to make my trip so pleasant." While Sanger clearly appreciated her trip to San Angelo, she nevertheless expressed some "disappointment" with "the very small case loads of new patients" who were visiting the clinic. [76] To amend this "disappointment," Gayer and others dedicated themselves to increasing awareness of the services offered with the hope of increasing patient numbers at the local level.

Informing clubwomen of the needs of San Angelo's Planned Parenthood Clinic was precisely why Gayer came to a Victory Study Club meeting in March 1949. She explained that the clinic had seen "49 new patients during February," but sadly, "29 [of these patients] had TB." Given this statistic, it seemed logical that Gayer combined her work with the local

[76] Margaret Sanger to Mrs. Louis D. Gayer, May 9, 1949 in Stephanie March, "Turning Our Backs on Women, Morality," GoSanAngelo.com, March 21, 2010 (accessed May 20, 2020), http://archive.go sanangelo.com/business/stephanie-march-turning-our-backs-on-women-morality-ep-439353628-356349481.html/

chapter TB association and the local birth control clinic. She indicated to clubwomen "that illness and low income brings an ever increasing caseload" for both organizations. The concerns of tuberculosis, family planning, and lack of economic resources merged at this Victory Study Club meeting, and afterward, clubwomen pledged to support the organization by donating money and increasing community awareness about the clinic's mission.[77] They had used similar strategies in their fight against polio and tuberculosis, but now their local activism extended to family planning, which was a vital aspect of enhancing community health.

Although Victory Study Clubwomen encouraged low-income women to engage in family planning during the 1940s and 1950s, it is unclear how much support San Angelo's Planned Parenthood Clinic offered to women of color. Accompanying Gayer, another speaker at the Victory Study Club March 1949 meeting was Ethel M. Anderson, a physical education teacher at the Blackshear School. Anderson informed the clubwomen assembled of the work the "Planned Parenthood Auxiliary Committee" was doing with "the Negros," but the account failed to mention what specific services were being delivered to members of the black community.[78] This silence points to a larger question considering the legacy of Planned Parenthood when it came to race. Some recent scholars have chastised the national founder Margaret Sanger for her lack of involvement with women of color. She did make it clear in 1946, however, that she believed adequate family planning was necessary for African

[77]"Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[78] "Planned Parenthood Case Load Increases Clinic Report Shows," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 3, 1949 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Texas Department of State Health Services: Death Certificate, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital s.v. "Ethel M. Anderson," Ancestory.com.

American women. She wrote, "It has been argued that Negros do not need birth control, what is needed, it is said, are better living conditions, better working conditions, more medical services, improved diets and schools." She maintained that of course they needed all of those things, but when forty thousand black mothers and babies died in childbirth in 1945, Sanger also contended, "Negro parents need birth control to help alleviate some of the needless suffering and heartbreak, to get firmly established on the road to health, and better living."[79]

While this might have been the official directive of the organization's founder, it is unclear whether black women received services at the local level, and while Victory Study Club members heard of the work Planned Parenthood was doing with black women in San Angelo, no evidence directly points to their activism on behalf of this segment of the population. Historian Harold Smith notes that different clinics throughout the state struggled with the question of how to support and serve minority women. Some cities were better at it than others. For instance, the Austin clinic offered more access to African American and Mexican American women by opening their doors on specific days to different ethnic groups. The Dallas clinic was much more restrictive in the hours of operation for minority women in "order to abide by the state's segregation laws."[80] San Angelo's clinic appeared to reach out to African American women, but without knowing specifically what services it offered, it is difficult to make an overall assessment as to the organization's success at reaching this minority population in West Texas.

In addition to concerns over polio, tuberculosis, and family planning, the members of

[79] Margaret Sanger, "Love or Babies: Must Negro Mothers Choose," *Negro Digest,* August 1946, (accessed March 20, 2020), https://www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger/webedition/app/documents/show.php?sangerDoc=320905.xml

[80] Smith, "All Good Things Start With the Women," 265, 262.

the Victory Study Club also turned their attention to the health concerns of people with mental disabilities in San Angelo in the postwar period. In 1954, club members sponsored an all-day conference at the St. Angelus Hotel with other federated clubs, which highlighted the issues of the "mentally ill." The conference was open to the public, and more than two hundred San Angelo clubwomen attended a presentation from John Lane, field representative for the Texas Society of Mental Health. Originally founded as the Texas Society for Mental Hygiene, the Texas Society of Mental Health reorganized in 1950 to address the "the low quality of mental-health care in Texas" and to persuade the Texas legislature to allocate more funds for mental health.[81] At the conference, Victory Study Club members joined other Texans who increasingly paid more attention to mental health issues in the postwar period, and they learned about the organization's plans to conduct a survey of the problems of people with mental disabilities as a means to increase awareness. At the end of the Saturday conference, San Angelo women's clubs pledged to support local efforts to improve mental health care access in West Texas. They supported a "proposed ward to be built to the county jail" that "would accommodate persons awaiting trial for commitment to mental-health institutions."[82] The Victory Study Club members also routinely volunteered and participated in fundraisers for San Angelo's School for Special Education, San Angelo Handicapped

[81] Dan Creson, "Mental Health," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 15, 2010 (accessed May 30, 2020) https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/smmun

[82] "Mental Workshop Is Set By Groups," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 20, 1954 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Women's Clubs Told Many Mentally Ill Go Untreated," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, February 20, 1954 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Center, and the San Angelo State Center for Mental Retardation.[83]

Other disabilities affecting San Angelo residents also caught the attention of the Victory Study Club. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, clubwomen supported the West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind, a local organization that still exists to help San Angeloans live successfully with vision impairments. One annual program of Victory Study Club members was to provide transportation to "blind persons every Saturday in October" to the local bowling alley, where the visually impaired received at no charge "games, lessons, and transportation" provided by the club.[84] In the late 1960s, the Victory Study Club also served as the organizing committee of the Concho Division of the West Texas Chapter of the National Arthritis Foundation's March in San Angelo. Fifteen hundred San Angeloans came out to march and raised nearly six thousand dollars for research and awareness of West Texans who were coping with arthritis.[85]

Victory Study Club members also extended their time and energies to improving conditions for San Angeloan children. This made sense since most club women had children about the same age and in the San Angelo public school system. As a random sample, charter member Verlie Opal Youngblood Schronrock had one daughter; members Zula Marguerite Jones Hall and Ida Faye Coward each had two daughters; Geraldine "Jerri" Bates had one

[83]"Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1948-1949; Yearbook, 1965-66; Yearbook 1970-71; Yearbook 1971-72," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[84] "Bowling Transformation Set for Blind Angeloans," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 9, 1964 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1964-1964, 12," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[85] "Arthritis Chapter Schedules March," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 9, 1964 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1964-1964, 12," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

daughter and one son; and Nita Archer had four children—two boys and two girls.[86] Their motherhood drove a large part of their local grassroots activism when it came to improving conditions for San Angelo's youth.

The first project along these lines seemed obvious: Victory Study clubwomen worked independently from other organizations to expand their children's education opportunities in local schools. For instance, Nita Archer remembers that while she belonged to the local Parent Teacher's Association (PTA), she did not get "too involved" with the PTA. Mary Nell Mahon also recollected that she did "some work" with the association but not too much. [87] Many Victory Study Club members, instead, worked independently from the PTA and created their own programs and projects. Why might this be the case? Victory Study Club members had over the course of the years created strong bonds with one another and worked well with each other. This may have made it easier to coordinate projects and volunteers in their own club rather than within the much larger association. Victory Study clubwomen also most likely had more autonomy in deciding which projects and programs they wanted to support. They did not have to limit their activism solely to the much-larger PTA's agenda.

One of the earliest projects that the Victory Study Club supported at San Angelo's local schools was the need to improve educational standards by supporting and encouraging teachers to stay in West Texas. As early as 1947, the club joined the Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) in their support for the Blankenship Bill in the Texas legislature that

[86] Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock, grave marker, Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas digital s.v. "Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock," FindaGrave.com (accessed May 20, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/173777478/verlie-opal-schonrock; Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[87] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

sought to raise teachers' salaries.[88] Clubwomen joined TSTA President Elizabeth Koch in her contention that "higher wages would help keep qualified teachers in rural areas because they would not have to seek better pay in urban areas."[89] Victory Study Club members actively wrote letters encouraging their state representatives to pass the bill. After much back and forth in the Texas legislature, the bill passed in 1950. Renamed the Gilmer-Aikin Act, the legislation "garnered praise from all areas" for it "meant more funds to improve local schools," which was particularly important in the growing population of West Texas.[90] During an era when San Angelo's population continued to grow, Victory Study Club members supported this legislation in order to make sure the local school district had a steady and qualified stream of teachers.

Besides supporting educational reform at the state level, Victory Study Club members also sought to improve individual students' education in San Angelo's schools by recruiting teachers. In 1950, the Victory Study Club launched a project to employ different types of teachers who would enhance their children's education. The specific need that the Victory Study Club identified that year was the arts, and they devoted their efforts "to be influential in securing an art supervisor for elementary grades." In the postwar period, parents supported their children's involvement in extracurricular lessons. This was another example—in the words of historian Dolores Hayden—of postwar middle-class families wanting to provide their children with "something more" than they had growing up in the pre-war years. This

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[88] "Beauty in Speech, Action, Thoughts is Club Program" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 12, 1947 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[89] Gene B. Preuss, *To Get a Better School System: One Hundred Years of Education Reform in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 78.

[90] Preuss, *To Get a Better School System*, 94.

emphasis on arts education also was important within the Cold War context. As historian Meredith May explains, "While many historians have examined the role of conformity in the mid-century, this [affluent, middle-class] culture emphasized parents raising 'creative children,' the opposite of Soviet drones, who would grow up to use their creativity and ingenuity in the Cold War."[91] Victory Study Clubwomen certainly agreed. Working outside of the local PTA, club members approached the superintendent of San Angelo's Board of Education, and after the meeting, they heard that "promising results" were made and that a new art teacher would be hired shortly.[92]

Victory Study Clubwomen also worked with local officials to boost graduation rates in San Angelo's public schools. In 1950, a club program featured Russell E. Edwards, the director of San Angelo College's Basic Preparatory School, and members learned what the San Angelo College was doing to ensure that more West Texans graduated from high school. Edwards explained that he created a special class for "ninth grade adults who were unable to finish their education." After hearing this presentation, Victory Study Club members bought textbooks for the class, and at the end of that school year, thirty-six students graduated, one of the highest graduation rates of the preparatory school to date.[93] Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Victory Study Club members also actively supported school bond elections. As an example, in 1966, the club heard a presentation from school board member Tom Parrett, and

[91] Meredith May, "Building a Business in the Bayou City: Houston and Women's Entrepreneurship, 1945-1977" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 2017), 171-72.

[92] "Victory Study Club Yearbook 1949-1950" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[93] "SAC's Basic Prep School Is Discussed by Director," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 24, 1950 in in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

they unanimously voted to support and campaigned for a $2.96 million bond to improve San Angelo's schools.[94]

Victory Study Club members' educational activism extended outside of the schoolhouse as well. One of the most popular programs of the club occurred from 1952 to 1956 when members volunteered their time at Tom Green County Library. "Story Hour" was the brainchild of the Victory Study Club where "youngsters crowded into Tom Green County Library and hung on every word as volunteer story tellers relate[d] the adventures of characters such as Caddy Woodlawn, Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn."[95] In the beginning, about forty children per week attended these gatherings, but by early summer 1955, that number reached eighty-four per week. At summer's end in 1955, more than 176 came weekly to "Story Hour."[96] Over the course of two months, Tom Green County's Librarian Flora Reeves estimated total attendance to be more than fourteen hundred children who benefited from the program. And, children were not the only ones who enjoyed the stories The *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported, "In the rushing, busy adult world, leprechauns, fairy princesses and glass palaces are long-since forgotten . . . but mothers who bring their children

[94] "Talks Scheduled on School Issue," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* March 22, 1966 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1964 to 1966," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[95] "Once Upon A Time," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[96] "84 Children at Story Hour in County Library," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* June 25, 1955 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "176 Children At Story Hour," *San Angelo Evening Standard,* July 13, 1955 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "1,440 Children at Story Hour," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, August 17, 1955 in in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

to Story Hour are just as wide-eyed as the children sitting at their feet."[97] In 1956, those that could not make it to the library also had the opportunity to enjoy "Story Hour" when the local network broadcast "Story Hour," in which Victory Study Club member Florence Reilly read aloud, on Friday night television.[98]

The concern of Victory Club members extended beyond small children. In the years after World War II, professionals and civic/religious leaders increasingly sounded an alarm about rising juvenile delinquency rates in the United States. Since the experts could agree on no singular reason this might be the case, multiple theories arose as to why the nation's youth engaged in more petty crimes than before. Some pointed to medical explanations, which argued that boys and girls were entering puberty at an earlier age. "Even [adolescents'] feet appear to be larger," one medical statistician noted in 1955, and with children's hormones flowing earlier than normal, some experts reasoned that America's youth were more prone to irrational actions at an earlier age.[99] Other professionals argued the rise of juvenile delinquency was the result of "escalating gang activity" and "general criminality" seen nationwide in the postwar era.[100] Yet recent scholarship on rising juvenile delinquency rates in the postwar period argues that an unstable Cold War and racial environment led more

[97] "Once Upon A Time," no date, in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[98] "Rev. Barton Guest Speaker," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, December 11, 1955 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[99] C. Davenport Hughes, "Juvenile Delinquency," *The Incorporated Statistician* 6, no 2 (Oct 1955): 79-82, 80.

[100] O. W. Wilson, "Juvenile Delinquency" *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 41, no. 4 (Nov.-Dec. 1950): 436.

youths to rebel.[101] This was exactly the message that Victory Study Club members received from Dr. Everett L. Sutter, a member of the psychology department of San Angelo College, when he gave a program on juvenile delinquency. He explained that there was "a feeling of insecurity for today's youths," generated by "racial unrest and globalization," that created a precarious climate for young people and their expectations about their future.[102]

Whatever the cause, most experts espoused that the cure to juvenile delinquency was in the home, and this message resonated with the Victory Study Club members. As mothers, clubwomen believed that through their grassroots activism, they could do something about the problem. They read proof of the importance of their activism in University of Arizona sociologist Raymond A. Mulligan's 1958 study. He explained that "the factors involved in juvenile delinquency are encompassed in the social systems of the family, the primary group, and the community." For this reason, he contended that "parents are in the best possible position to do the teaching . . . where parental interest and love for the child is present we have perhaps one of the best family bulwarks against the development of juvenile delinquency."[103] Who better—then—to stop the tide of juvenile lawlessness than mothers?

As the primary nurturers of their children, San Angelo clubwomen fervently took up the cause of eradicating juvenile delinquency in the postwar period. The Victory Study Club

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[101] For example, historian Ronald D. Cohen contends that "the postwar years, through the 1950s, were marked by an uneven social, political, cultural, and economic mix of stability and fragility, complacency and apprehension, optimism and cynicism, looking backward as well as forward," and within this context, "fears of a youthful rebellion took on added dimensions. . . . whipped up by a combination of anticommunist hysteria and racial unrest, Ronald D. Cohen, "The Delinquents: Censorship and Youth Culture in Recent U. S. History," *History of Education Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (April 1997): 253-54.

[102] "Youth Problems Is Subject for Victory Study Club Program," San Angelo Standard Times, April 17, 1960 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1964 to 1966," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[103] Raymond A. Mulligan, "Family Relationships and Juvenile Delinquency," *The Pacific Sociological Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 40.

devoted several meetings learning how to nurture positive habits in their children. Originally from Albany, New York, Edith Calkin moved to San Angelo in 1945 with her husband, and she quickly joined the Victory Study Club.[104] As early as 1948, Calkin gave a special program to the women assembled about what they could do to encourage positive habits in their children, which would discourage them to engage in juvenile delinquency. She stressed "the importance of hobbies and pets for children and the effects of family living, tolerance, and respect for property" to Victory Study Club members.[105] It was also necessary to keep children busy. Calkin encouraged club mothers to put their children in "swimming programs, school recreational programs, church youth groups, and Vacation Bible School."[106] By enrolling their children in all these extracurricular activities, clubwomen hoped San Angeloan youths would have less opportunity to engage in damaging or destructive habits and conduct. Calkin directed this message solely to white, middle-class housewives who had the time and money to register their children in these various outside activities and then cart them around.

Aside from learning advice to nurture positive behaviors in their own children, the Victory Study Club also extended their concerns about juvenile delinquency to the larger community. One ongoing postwar project of the Victory Study Club was to support the West Texas Boys Ranch outside of San Angelo. The facility opened its doors in 1947 and provided care and education to boys throughout the state who ran away, had serious substance abuse

[104] "Loren Malcom Calking Obituary," *FindAGrave.com* (last accessed March 30, 2020) https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/66344234/loren-malcolm-calkin

[105] "What City Is Doing to fight Delinquency Topic at Club Meet," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 14, 1948.

[106] "What City Is Doing to fight Delinquency Topic at Club Meet," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 14, 1948.

issues, experienced a chronic history of self-harm or harming others, or had psychotic disorders.[107] In 1948, the Victory Study Club provided monetary contributions, clothing, and books to the Boys Ranch. They continued to do so for the next twenty years.[108]

While the West Texas Boys Ranch flourished (and still does to this day), the plans for a safe space for "troubled young girls" in San Angelo did not materialize until 1967 when the city's Federated Women's Clubs started gathering donations. Though a girls' home existed in Abilene in the 1960s, the *San Angelo Standard Times* reported that "at least one San Angeloan in every home believes such a home is needed," and it pointed out that "getting the project started is a difficult task. . . . Everyone will have to help."[109] Who was going to spearhead this campaign? Well, clubwomen, of course. The Victory Study Club joined with other city federated women's clubs and immediately offered help, donated money, and bought furniture for the Concho Valley Home for Girls. With a house donated by Drs. Bill and Blanche McCaw, the home opened its doors in 1973 to provide "girls from troubled homes an opportunity overcome the hurts of the past and prepare for a better future." The non-profit organization still exists today, and the Victory Study Club continued its donation to this organization until the club disbanded in 1993.[110]

Extending their maternal impulses to youth outside of the home, Victory Study Club

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[107] West Texas Boys Ranch, "About," Wtbr.org (accessed March 30, 2020), http://www.wtbr.org/#about.

[108] West Texas Boys Ranch, "About," Wtbr.org (accessed March 30, 2020), http://www.wtbr.org/#about.

[109] "Everyone Will Have to Help: Project Home For Girls," *San Angelo Standard Times*, April 20, 1967.

[110] Concho Valley Home for Girls, "About Us," Conchokids.org, (last accessed March 30, 2020), http://conchokids.org/about/

members actively sought to improve conditions for West Texan children by providing resources for safe places for troubled adolescents, but they did not stop there. Other programs throughout the 1950s and 1960s frequently addressed the problems of the San Angelo youth, and leaders often came to inform clubwomen of the work separate organizations were doing. For example, Victory Study Clubwomen heard programs from the San Angelo Recreational Department (a city agency tasked with improving recreational parks and facilities in San Angelo) and leaders from the Boy and Girl Scouts clubs. They also heard programs from San Angelo youth themselves. Programs featured presentations from the San Angelo Youth Council and the Interdenominational Youth Council, both of which were comprised of young San Angeloans and provided youths an opportunity to address concerns at the city and community level.[111]

Another grassroots project launched by the Victory Study Club that linked concerns for the youth and wider community promoted safer driving laws. In the postwar years, San Angeloans read constantly about automobile deaths in the local paper. For instance, it reported that more than 50,000 people in the United States died each year from automobile accidents, and in Texas more than 3,200 died each year.[112] This drew the attention of the Texas Senate, which passed a "Driver Responsibility" bill that mandated "all drivers are to be financially responsible for death and damage on Texas streets and highways." The local paper reported that this would most likely cost "Tom Green County drivers at least $360,000

[111] "Victory Study Club Yearbook 1956-57: Club Programs Feb. 14," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[112] "Seven Hurt in Two-Weekend Auto Accidents," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 4, 1948.

a year, and probably much more."[113] While some conservative officials may not have supported this increase in cost, most citizens supported it since it was presumed that it would make San Angelo drivers more careful on the city's roadways and highways.

The Victory Study Club members agreed for the need of more stringent driving laws, and rather than leaving it up to city or state officials to enforce them, they took matters into their own hands. In 1955, the City Federation of Women's Clubs launched a "Campaign for Safe Driving." Over two hundred clubwomen—including members of the Victory Study Club—developed a telephone tree where they "made four telephone calls and each asked to call four other persons" to "appeal to driving carefully." On June 30, "local churches were asked to ring their bells at the kick-off hour, 10:30 a.m., as a signal for members to start making the calls." Evidently, the campaign was successful in increasing awareness for safer driving practices. A declaration appeared in the Victory Study Club 1955 Scrapbook from M. D. Bryant: "Therefore I, as Mayor of Angelo, do hereby designated the week of July 3rd, 1955 as Traffic Safety Week in San Angelo Texas and call upon all our citizens to join in these worthwhile endeavors sponsored by the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs."[114] Victory Study Clubwoman Mary Nell Mahon described another safe driving improvement


SAN ANGELO STANDARD-TIMES

Phones Ring As Women Begin Campaign For Safe Driving

MAKING THE FIRST CALL — Mrs. James A. Bennett, 2408 W. Ave. E, made the first local call at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday in the campaign for safe driving over the Fourth of July weekend. More than 200 women in San Angelo are participating in the safety drive. (Staff photo by McMahon)

Figure 7: "Phones Ring As Women Begin Campaign for San Driving," *San Angelo Standard Times*, June 30, 1955 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas

[113] "County Would Pay $360,000 For Driver Responsibility," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 22, 1949.

[114] "Phones Ring As Women Begin Campaign for Safe Driving," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, June 30, 1955 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

that she was intensely proud of: “There used to not be a white line on the outside edge of the highways . . . nothing showed the edge of the highway. We campaigned for that. I was really for that and worked for it.” “We finally did get it,” she recalled, “and they said it had saved a lot of lives. I thought that was a very good thing the women’s clubs did.”[115]

The Victory Study Club worked to alleviate poverty among San Angeloans, and they supported various federal government organizations in West Texas designed to help San Angeloan’s children living in poverty. One particularly important meeting occurred in 1967 when Victory Study Club members explored how widespread poverty in San Angelo adversely affected the city’s children. Clubwomen learned that “almost one third of the total population in San Angelo consists of families with an average income of under $3,000.” They found that “many children [had] never even seen a child’s book or heard a nursery rhyme, and many suffer from malnutrition.” This led several clubwomen of the Victory Study Club to join the Community Action Plan (CAP), an organization set up under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 that provided federal funds to address poverty at the local level. Victory Study Club members Kay Fleming, Helen Sutton, Mary Frances Vann, and Jean Warner immediately joined the local CAP board in San Angelo in order to find solutions for San Angeloans struggling with poverty. The Victory Study Club strongly supported CAP’s development of day care centers “for working parents who cannot provide day care for their children.” Using funds allocated by the federal government, these centers served children between the ages of two and six and allegedly provided two meals a day.

During a 1967 meeting, the Victory Study Club also voted to support the new Head Start program, launched by President Lyndon Baines Johnson in his “War on Poverty”

[115] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

campaign. Head Start came to San Angelo in 1964, and by 1967, 385 San Angeloan children were enrolled in the Head Start program where they received physical examinations, vaccinations, dental work, and early-childhood education. Rather than being skeptical of the Washington officials' overreach in local affairs, members instead reminded each other "we are the federal government," and they appreciated "the large role played by the federal government in its fight against poverty."[116] Clubwomen, however, remained silent on the issue of how different racial segments experienced poverty in San Angelo or had access to these federal programs.

When it came to minority school children in San Angelo, the Victory Study Club exercised limited activism, just as it did within its community health campaigns. During the late 1940s and 1950s, members of the Victory Study Club chose to work primarily within the segregated educational system on a volunteer basis rather than wage political battles or redistribute funds from white neighborhoods and schools in the region. There is little evidence that white clubwomen thought San Angelo schools should be integrated; instead, the Victory Study Club offered a variety of services to Mexican American children in the segregated Guadalupe and Sam Houston schools and did not reach out to the African American school in the immediate postwar period. Moreover, there is also no direct evidence that Victory Study Club members engaged with the Civil Rights Movement during the mid-twentieth century. There are clear limits to the Victory Study Club's local activism.

For the Latinx community in San Angelo, the segregated school system emerged in Tom Green County as early as 1877. A local farmer built a one-room schoolhouse that

[116] "Poverty Programs Topic for Meet," *San Angelo Standard Times*, December 4, 1967 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1967-68" in Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

provided children in Tom Green County an access to basic education; there was no official policy of segregation at the Blaze Subscription School. Evident from early photographs, Arnoldo De León explains, "Children of the first Mexican American families apparently also studied alongside Anglos in the subscription school," but this changed in the late nineteenth century.[117] County officials committed funds to build a new schoolhouse, the Knickerbocker School in San Angelo, which opened its doors in 1889. Shortly thereafter, calls for a new school specifically for Latinx students came at the insistence of local physician Dr. Boyd Cornick. Segregated education commenced in San Angelo when a small building opened its doors in 1895 for Mexican American students, but "the location of the separate school apparently moved around . . . though it was close to the downtown district," De León explains.[118]

By 1906, it became evident that the small building could no longer meet the needs of the growing population of Latinx students. It was far too crowded, and conditions were deteriorating. Parents rallied together and hired legal counsel in 1910, demanding that the all-white San Angelo school board integrate the Anglo and Mexican American schools. The school board rejected the proposal, but it did offer to build a new brick schoolhouse for the Mexican-origin community. The brick building officially opened its doors in 1923. By the 1930s, the Mexican American population in San Angelo continued to increase with more than two hundred students attending the school. The school board could no longer ignore the growing demands of the growing population and opened new schools.[119] The Guadalupe

[117] Arnoldo De León, *San Angeleños: Mexican Americans in San Angelo, Texas* (San Angelo, TX: Fort Concho Museum Press, 1985), 30-31.

[118] Texas Historical Commission, "Knickerbocker Schools Historical Marker" (accessed March 30, 2020), https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/Details/5451002964 ; Arnoldo De León, *San Angeleños*, 31.

[119] De León, *San Angeleños,* 40.

Elementary had four classrooms but no kitchen, and during the Depression, Josefa Camunez offered her grocery store as a cafeteria for the children. [120] By 1940, the Guadalupe school added two more classrooms, a clinic, an office, and a kitchen, and the federal Works Progress Administration funded the children's meals.[121] Within a few years, another two schools opened for Latinx children: the Sam Houston Elementary and the Rio Vista Elementary. While the opening of these additional schools "afforded Mexican Americans greater access to educational opportunities," historian Arnoldo De León argues that it still reflected the school board's effort to maintain "a system that practiced a 'separate but equal' policy and assumed Mexican American education should not go beyond the elementary levels" since no secondary schools for Latinx students were built during the postwar period.[122] Mexican Americans could attend San Angelo's white secondary schools, but not many of them did.[123] Offering only segregated primary schooling to Latinx students may also have been a way to ensure that young Latinx children learned English at an early age, and it was assumed that by the time Latinx students entered the secondary schooling system, they had basic English competency.

There is no evidence that the Victory Study Club members sought to end this "quasi-separate-but-equal" policy for Mexican American education, but they did make the

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[120] Texas Historical Commission, "Guadalupe Elementary School Historical Marker," (accessed March 30, 2020), https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/Details/5451012230

[121] Texas Historical Commission, "Guadalupe Elementary School Historical Marker," (accessed March 30, 2020), https://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/Details/5451012230

[122] De León, *San Angeleños*, 40, 78.

[123] Frank Morrow Pool, interviewed by Rebecca Sharpless, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 1998 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/oral-memoirs-of-frank-morrow-pool-transcript/1029278, 241.

Guadalupe Elementary one of their primary projects. After the Works Progress Administration ended its contributions to the school in 1943, the Victory Study Club donated money to fund the hot lunch program for students at the Guadalupe school. They also donated funds to the Rio Vista Milk Fund, which provided milk to Mexican-origin children attending the segregated school.[124] In 1948 and 1949, Victory clubwomen dedicated specific efforts to improve the landscape of the school. In celebration of Arbor Day, the Victory Study Club donated two cedar trees and held a special planting ceremony. An article and picture in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* featured Latinx students and Victory Study clubwomen, dressed in their finest in front of the recently planted trees. The article stated, "[A] Friendship tree, symbolizing relations between members of the Victory Study Club and the students at Guadalupe and Sam Houston schools, was planted yesterday in Arbor Day ceremonies" with the ceremony concluding as "each pupil, teacher, and club member threw in a hand full of dirt."[125]

[124] "Victory Study Club Yearbook 1948-1950," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[125] "Cedar Trees of Friendship Given to Two Schools" San Angelo Evening Standard, March 20, 1949 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

12 San Angelo, Tex., Evening Standard, Thurs., Mar. 31, 1949

FRIENDSHIP TREE, symbolizing relations between members of the Victory Study Club and students of Guadalupe and Sam Houston Schools, was planted in Arbor Day ceremonies Tuesday at each school. Club members pictured at the ceremony are, left to right, Mrs. Bill Olive, Mrs. L. M. Calkin, Mrs. P. E. Smith, and Mrs. R. A. Brymer. Miss Ruth Rich, principal of both schools, received the trees and responded in behalf of students and school. (Staff photo by W. White.)

Figure 8:"Cedar Trees of Friendship Given to Two Schools" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 20, 1949 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Beyond donating money, meals, and trees to the segregated schools, the Victory Study Club provided additional assistance to Latinx children within the community. In 1948, the club sponsored Latinx students to enter in San Angelo's Little Olympics competition. The Kiwanis Club—an all-men's club during the postwar period—brought the Little Olympics to San Angelo in October 1942 in order "let grade school-aged children prepare for and compete in an area track and field competition [that was] otherwise not available to them."[126] While other clubs in San Angelo sponsored students' entrance fees, it appears that only the Victory Study Club encouraged Latinx students to join in the competition. Another favorite program well into the 1940s and 1950s was to put on a Christmas party for Mexican-origin

[126] "Little Olympics Received Historical Marker," Sanangeloisd.org, April 26, 2018 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.saisd.org/4880

children at the Guadalupe school where members hosted, decorated, and provided refreshments and candy to the children. Later these parties moved to the Latin American Recreation Center—later renamed the Southside Recreation Center located on Ben Ficklin Road—that provided two "multi-use rooms" and one "junior size gym" for San Angelo youths.[127] In 1948 and 1949, clubwomen also "adopted" a local Latinx family in need at Christmas and provided food, clothes, and small gifts, and they bought a violin for a Latina student so she could practice at home.[128]

Victory Study Club members also extended their activism to the Latinx community at large in San Angelo. In 1949-1950, members campaigned for the development of a park for the Latinx community. The club formed a subcommittee for this purpose in September 1949, and committee members made plans to organize a meeting inviting "each civic and federated club, nurserymen, Mexican groups, and others" in San Angelo. [129] It is unclear if a coalition assembled, but in December, several members of the Victory Study Club attended a county commissioners' court meeting to advocate for the park. Records remain silent if members from the Latinx community spoke at the meeting, but the Victory Study Clubwomen did. The *San Angelo Evening Standard* reported on what Victory Study Club members told the commissioners: "The club has been studying Latin American affairs here for some time as a

[127] "Mexico Industrial Development Topic of Club Program" San Angelo Evening Standard, November 10, 1948 in in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Southside Recreation Center," CityofSanAngelo.com (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.cosatx.us/Home/Components/FacilityDirectory/FacilityDirectory/120/593

[128] "Victory Study Club Yearbook 1948-1949," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[129] "Victory Study Club Yearbook 1948-1949," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

project. The women reported that they had found the Latin American residents were eager for a park of their own." While the county had already set aside some land for the development of the park, member Verlie Schonrock told the commissioners court that "the site purchased by the county on Red Arroyo was undesirable and not suited to the needs."[130] It is unclear whose concerns made the park materialize, but in 2002 the land around Red Arroyo became a city-managed four-mile walking and bike trail where residents can enjoy an "Open Air Art Movement."[131]

The Victory Study Club's programs and projects with the Latinx community were unique among the clubs in the city's federation. For instance, the Women's Forum, the Woman Club of San Angelo, and the '32 Club did not volunteer time or money to similar projects. Even though no Pan American Round Table organization emerged in San Angelo, the Victory Study Club did advocate for a similar mission in the city. According to PART, the organization's official mission was "to promote mutual knowledge and understanding and friendship among the peoples of the Western Hemisphere, and to foster all movements affecting the women and children of the Americas."[132]

Due to the Victory Study Club's activism with the Latinx community, the club received national acclaim from the General Federation of Women's Clubs 1950 Annual Convention in Boston. The Victory Study Club won the coveted "best report on Pan

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[130] "Commission Considers Latin American Park" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, December 12, 1949 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[131] Red Arroyo Trail," CitofSanAngelo.com (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.cosatx.us/departments-services/parks-recreation/red-arroyo-trail

[132] Helen B. Frantz, "Pan American Round Table," *Handbook of Texas Online*, June 15, 2010 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vwp01

American activities of any club in the nation for the years of 1949 and 1950." Florence Johnson Scott, the chairman of the Pan American Relations division of the GFWC, was very impressed with the club's study of the history and contemporary issues facing Mexico, efforts to help children and teachers at the Sam Houston and Guadalupe schools, and the project to create a "Latin American recreational park" in San Angelo. In her letter congratulating the club, she wrote, "Please convey to your members my deep gratification for the practical application of good neighbor relations that your study has made to your community and to our great nation. Your program was indeed practical and realistic. It was far above any other that I received."[133] Though these were warm words by Scott, it is also evident that the club's activism did not go far enough to challenge the racial discrimination experienced by Mexican-origin populations in Texas.

By the late 1950s, Victory Study Club members witnessed conditions changing for Latinx youths in San Angelo as educational opportunities increased. Latinx communities comprised 8.5 percent of San Angelo's population in 1950, and the numbers of Mexican American students increased steadily at San Angelo High School during the 1950s.[134] Central High School, which was built during the decade, saw more and more "Latin Americans" enroll with little to no resistance from the white community. In fact, Arnoldo De León remarks, Wilma Figueroa achieved "what might have been unthinkable in San Angelo just a few years earlier" when she was elected queen of the 1958 homecoming football game.[135] As

[133] "San Angelo Club Receives Award" *San Angelo Evening Standard*, June 8, 1950 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[134] Arnoldo De León, *Tejano West Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2015), 65.

[135] De León, *San Angeleños*, 49.

Mexican Americans graduated from high school in increasing numbers, many enrolled in West Texas colleges, such as San Angelo College, Texas Tech University, and Sul Ross State College. To help Mexican American college students defray the cost, the Victory Study Club contributed to a "Latin American scholarship," and annual club donations to the scholarship ranged throughout the 1950s and 1960s from one to ten dollars.[136]

African Americans as well as Mexican Americans gained greater access to education in San Angelo during the 1950s. After the US Supreme Court handed down the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, San Angelo was one of the first West Texas cities to embrace the court's mandate that separate was not equal and immediately began to desegregate the city's white and black schools. As Gregory A. Doherty explains, desegregation moved with "startling speed" in San Angelo in 1955-1956 while other schools in the region had to be compelled by the federal government to honor the Supreme Court's order.[137] For example, the issue of integration in Abilene, Texas, ninety miles northeast of San Angelo, turned ugly after the *Brown* decision. Superintendent Charles W. Camp publicly denounced integration in 1955, stating "the whole desegregation issue [is a] pretty absurd communist conspiracy. . . This arrogant block of non-whites will be satisfied with nothing less than amalgamation of the white race into countless grades of Negroids."[138] White citizens of Abilene also expressed

[136] "San Angelo Club Receives Award" San Angelo Evening Standard, June 8, 1950 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[137] Gregory A. Doherty, "The Beginnings of Integration in San Angelo, I.S.D," in *Slavery to Integration: Black Americans in West Texas*, ed. by Bruce A. Glasrud and Paul H. Carson (Abilene, TX: State House Press, McMurry University, 2007), 132.

[138] Charles W. Camp quoted in Steven Kent Gallaway, "A History of the Desegregation of Public Schools in Abilene, Texas During the Wells Administration, 1954-1970" (PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1994), 73.

fear over what integration would mean. Mrs. L. L. Shults wrote to the local newspaper inquiring whether the public had seen the recent film *Blackboard Jungle*. She pronounced: "If you did, then you know what I am talking about and if you didn't you just may learn something. . . . Abilene is a dead place to what it will be if Negroes start school with the whites. Every child from 6 to 18 will carry knives and blackjacks and clubs and it will probably lead to a few killings."[139] Abilene would not integrate its schools until 1970, and in Odessa, one hundred miles to the west of San Angelo, the Ector County Independent School District dragged its heels until the 1980s before fully integrating. [140]

In a special session on July 5, 1955, the board of San Angelo Independent School District met to discuss one issue—integration—and they invited the principal of the Blackshear school as well as various leaders of the local chapter of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).[141] The superintendent of schools, G. B. Wadzek. also personally interviewed "each parent with a child enrolled in any of the top three grades at Blackshear Highschool," and he found that "only five of eighty-one students preferred continued segregation."[142] After receiving encouragement to move ahead with desegregation from the black community, the San Angelo School Board president, Frank M. Pool, asked the board to adopt the following resolution on that hot summer day: "In compliance with the ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States, May 17, 1954, and

[139] Gallaway, "A History of the Desegregation of Public Schools in Abilene, Texas During the Wells Administration, 1954-1970," 97.

[140] Gallaway, "A History of the Desegregation of Public Schools in Abilene, Texas During the Wells Administration, 1954-1970," 40; Smith, "Desegregation in West Texas: The United States v. Ector County I.S.D. Case," 141, 152.

[141] Doherty, "The Beginnings of Integration in San Angelo, I.S.D," 131.

[142] Doherty, "The Beginnings of Integration in San Angelo, I.S.D," 134.

following action by the State Board of Education, the San Angelo Board adopts a policy of eliminating segregation in San Angelo Independent School District. We ask the Administration to work up a three (3) year plan to effect this policy."[143]

After a three-hour debate, the resolution passed, and it did not take a three-year plan to integrate San Angelo's schools. By July 26, 1955, the School Board unanimously accepted a plan to immediately integrate San Angelo High School and to close Blackshear High School. During the 1955-56 academic year, sixty-two black students enrolled in the previously all-white school, making San Angelo among the first four school districts in Texas to adopt an official policy of school integration. When asked about his role in San Angelo's school integration thirty years later, Frank Pool acknowledged, "I frankly could not see why we had been waiting so long to remove some of the barriers." Still, he admits, "We made some mistakes that I saw, now when I look back" since "black students were not given the academic preparation that we had in our junior-high, white schools" and it was difficult to hire black teachers at the white high school. At the elementary level, San Angelo did not force integration, but instead of referring to the two Latinx elementary schools as "the Mexican schools," they became "neighborhood schools" where white, black, and Latinx students could attend.[144]

Once this decision was made, it appears that there was minimum white resistance to school integration within the larger community, and "popular opinion in town ranged from

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[143] "Minutes of the Board of Education San Angelo Independent School District," July 5, 1955 as quoted in Doherty, "The Beginnings of Integration in San Angelo, I.S.D," 134.

[144] "San Angelo Icon Frank Pool Dies," *San Angelo Standard Times*, January 13, 2017; Frank Marrow Pool, interviewed by Rebecca Sharpless, *Baylor University Institute for Oral History*, 1998 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/oral-memoirs-of-frank-morrow-pool-transcript/1029278, 248-250.

enthusiasm to resigned acceptance."[145] Texas Southern University master's student Carrie Etta Greene's 1955 study on San Angelo school integration found that the event occurred "peacefully. No negative incidents were reported."[146] Sandra Gray, Lake View High School's first African American teacher, agreed with this assessment. She remembered, "It felt like integration was fairly easy here compared to other cities. . . . People came together with little fuss."[147] When the news broke on the front page of the *San Angelo Standard Times* on July 27, 1955 of the school board's decision, many San Angloans agreed with Frank Pool that it was about time for desegregation. Marjorie Brown Lewis, a mother of two school-aged daughters, told the local newspaper, "I am impressed with the school board in working this thing out so rapidly. It will be good to have all this behind us. People I know with children seem ready for this."[148]

Others, however, remember integration differently, citing that there were in fact negative reactions to African Americans attending San Angelo High School. Ella Mae Johnson was part of the last graduating class at Blackshear before desegregation, and she knew many of the black students who became part of the first integrated class. She describes one incident that occurred when four of her friends tried to play football in a championship game in Bolger, Texas. She recalls, "And do you know that these white people decide[d]? That these black boys are not going to play football for Angelo High School. We would

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[145] Doherty, "The Beginnings of Integration in San Angelo, I.S.D," 137.

[146] C. E. Greene, "The History of Education Provided for Negroes in San Angelo, Texas from Inception to Integration," (master's thesis, Texas Southern University, 1955) as quoted in Galloway, 37.

[147] Mbulelo Maqungo and Ashely Rodriguez, "Living History Event Connects San Angelo's Past With Future," *Ram Page* (last accessed March 30, 2020), http://www.asurampage.com/news/view.php/1039694/Living-History-event-connects-San-Angelo

[148] *San Angelo Standard Times*, July 27, 1955.

rather not win champs before we let these boys play. . . . They took them with them, but didn't let them play!" Consequently, San Angelo lost that championship, and the reaction upset Johnson. Remembering the event, she exclaimed, "I can't believe people can be that evil because black and white ain't that important! God put everyone down here. And then they say they are Christians, in church all of them, in church."[149] Another incident occurred when the San Angelo High School choir went to a competition in Dallas. Upon seeing black students in the choir, Dallas officials refused the group entry. Some San Angeloans expressed disappointment after learning of the incident. Superintendent G. B. Wadzek pronounced, "We told them we wouldn't be back next year."[150]

Little direct evidence has been uncovered about Victory Study Club's involvement in desegregation in San Angelo; however, considering the clubwomen's silence in opposing integration and how quickly and relatively smoothly integration occurred in San Angelo, it may be safe to assume that they agreed with homemaker Marjorie Brown Lewis's assessment that "it was about time." Frank Pool, the San Angelo school board president, was the husband of Victory Study Club member Elizabeth Pool. Elizabeth was a West Texan herself, from Mertzon, Texas. Frank and Elizabeth married in 1946, and by 1948, the Pools moved to San Angelo where Frank operated the Pool Welling Service. The *San Angelo Standard Times* remembered the Pools as "strong advocates of integration" in the schools, and throughout their long lives in San Angelo, the couple was known for their "contributions to the community [which] have been nonstop for years and years." [151] It seems reasonable to

[149] Ella Mae Johnson, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 13, 2017.

[150] "San Angelo Icon Frank Pool Dies," *San Angelo Standard Times*, January 13, 2017.

[151] "San Angelo Icon Frank Pool Dies," *San Angelo Standard-Times*, January 13, 2017.

assume that Elizabeth supported her husband's efforts to integrate San Angelo High School, and perhaps she expressed these feelings at a Victory Study Club meeting. One simply does not know, but Nita Archer in her oral history remembered integration in San Angelo as a "good thing." "The Civil Rights Movement is wonderful," she explained. "I think it's grand that they now have rights, and they're not being so mistreated."[152] While she certainly expresses these opinions now, it is difficult to know if Victory Study Club members expressed those opinions then or if their opinions now represent the luxury of hindsight.

Victory Study Club members might have individually supported the Civil Rights movement, but little evidence exists to argue that they were strident supporters within club projects and programs. Clubwomen made few efforts to work with San Angelo's African American school-aged children. This oversight might be explained by the experiences many clubwomen had growing up in West Texas. Historically, African Americans made up a small percentage of the overall population in the region, as is true today. As late as 2014, black West Texans made up less than 10 percent of the entire region's population.[153] Victory Study Club member Joanne Beauchamp, who grew up in Pecos and later moved to San Angelo, expressed in an oral history that "I never did go with the blacks. There never were blacks in my high school."[154] Due to the small numbers of African Americans in West Texas, Victory Study Club members might have had minimal interactions with the black community in the postwar period, which may have put blinders on their racial activism.

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[152] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[153] James M. Smallwood, "African Americans in West Texas," in *West Texas: A History of the Giant Side of the State*, ed. By Paul H. Carson and Bruce Glasrud (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 131.

[154] Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019.

Another limit of the Victory Study Club was its unwillingness to bridge racial divides within the San Angelo postwar club movement. Overall, Victory Study Club members exerted little effort to create an interracial collaboration with minority women. When asked about the racial composition of the club, Nita Archer recalled, "I don't think we ever had a Hispanic woman. Nor a black."[155] Though one project outlined in the 1949-50 Yearbook called to "organize a Study Club with Latin American women as members," it appears no coordinated effort between Latinx and white mothers ever materialized in the Victory Study Club's programs.[156] The Victory Study Club was not alone in organizing club membership along racial lines. Research uncovered an African American women's club that was active in San Angelo during the postwar years. The Rosary Reading and Art Club originated in the home of Narcisse W. Stokes when twelve women met on October 4, 1929, and it continued to grow. It is still active today.[157] In short, racial solidarity rather than gender solidarity prevailed in the postwar San Angelo club movement.

While Victory Study Club members failed to foster an interracial coalition of womanhood in the postwar period, they did volunteer locally to address community health and education concerns. Not only did they help alleviate postwar health concerns by donating their money, but they also expanded educational opportunities for San Angelo's children by volunteering their time and resources. Through their work with the Planned Parenthood

[155] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[156] "Yearbook 1949-1950" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[157] "The Rosary Reading and Art Club of San Angelo, Texas Yearbook 1951-1952," Folder: Rosary Reading and Art Club, Box 8: General History & Local Club Files, Texas Association of Women's Clubs Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas; Ella Mae Johnson, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 13, 2017.

Clinic and the Community Action Plan, clubwomen sought to curb poverty in the city and to improve the standard of living for San Angelo families. Their impetus to get involved in these campaigns centered on their role as mothers, which they extended outside of their own homes and into their community. A focus on the Victory Study Club's programs and projects during the postwar period not only challenges popular perceptions of the 1950 white, middle-class housewife's confinement within the home, but it also reveals how clubwomen's volunteer work offered valuable services to San Angeloans and provided an avenue for clubwomen's personal fulfilment—a subject explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

V IS FOR VALIDATION:
THE PERSONAL BENEFITS OF JOINING THE VICTORY STUDY CLUB

> I wondered how many other elderly ladies roam the streets because of loneliness, hunting escape from boredom, and searching for excitement?
> -"A Clubwoman" in "Living in the Later Years," 1954[1]

"Out of the acorn, the great oak grows!" With this aphorism, Eleanor Roosevelt concluded her weekly syndicated column that appeared in the *San Angelo Evening Standard* on September 12, 1947. Evidently, one Victory Study Clubwoman found meaning in the newspaper clipping since it appeared in the club's 1947-48 Scrapbook. Roosevelt described in the column what she felt many American women faced in the United States in the years after World War II. She explained, "The vast majority of women in this country . . . are married and bringing up children, doing the housework physically and mentally all by themselves, sometimes also helping a man in his business, which may be anything from a profession to a store or farm." She lamented, "There are only 24 hours in a day and one individual has only so much physical endurance." Due to these conditions, Roosevelt rationalized that American housewives were susceptible to "mental myopia," a "nice little phrase" that could destroy "our freedoms on a community level" if women were not able to find the time necessary to expand their influence and interests. Women's clubs, however, could provide a cure to "mental myopia," she reasoned. "They [clubwomen] will understand democracy at the roots, and they will be one of the cells that build the health and strength of the nation." It is in "everyday living," she surmised, that "mental myopia springs up most easily, and it is here that women in particular can do a job of eliminating it" by engaging in

[1] "Living in Later Years" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

various club programs and projects.[2]

Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's concern of American women developing "mental myopia" bears a striking resemblance to what Betty Friedan identified as "The Problem That Has No Name" in her 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan was a journalist, wife, and mother when she coined the phrase in the opening lines of her iconic book. She writes, "The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States." According to Friedan, educators, psychoanalysts, and the media told American women "that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, [or] political rights"; they simply had one role—"occupation: housewife." Such messaging produced feelings of isolation, entrapment, and lack of personal and spiritual fulfillment in American housewives. This was a universal problem, Friedan contends, but no one talked about it. The "problem" became a resounding question as well as a cry for liberation in the 1960s when it "burst like a boil through the image of the happy housewife." The housewife began to ask herself more and more: "Is this all?" and craved "something more than my husband and my children and my home."[3]

While the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* launched Friedan into the national spotlight as one of the founders of the modern American women's rights movement, she was wrong when she declared that "there was no word for this yearning in the millions of words written about women" or that no viable solutions to solve the problem existed in the postwar

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[2] Eleanor Roosevelt, "Closed Minds Dangerous to Democratic Agenda," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, September 12, 1947 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1948 to 1954, 8.1," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[3] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co.,1963; rept. 1997), 1, 22, 5, 10.

period.[4] Eleanor Roosevelt described it nearly two decades prior to Friedan's publication. Moreover, while historian Joanne Meyerowitz agrees with Friedan that powerful postwar messaging encouraged American women to marry, stay at home, and raise children, she disagrees that American housewives "virtually accept[ed]" wholesale the "dominant ideology and the conservative promotion of domesticity." Meyerowitz argues that "domestic ideals coexisted in ongoing tension with an ethos of individual achievement that celebrated nondomestic activity, individual striving, public service and public success."[5] In the immediate decades after World War II, American housewives all over the nation discovered ways to stave off "mental myopia" or "The Problem That Has No Name," and the experiences of Victory Study Club members in local, state, national, and international affairs further attest to how white, married housewives found fulfillment within the "doldrums of domesticity." Perhaps if Friedan explored the widespread proliferation and activism of postwar women's clubs in *The Feminine Mystique,* she might have found evidence of how some American housewives were indeed finding solutions to the problem she identified.

Whereas previous chapters discuss how Victory Study Club members engaged in activism at the grassroots, state, national, and international level outside their home, this chapter addresses how club work eased the "mental myopia" of San Angelo's housewives on a more personal level. Victory Study Club members certainly found individual fulfillment in community and national projects, but just as importantly, they found fulfillment in the personal relationships that they fostered with one another. Victory clubwomen shared much

[4] Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1.

[5] Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1994), 230, 231.

in common: all members were white, middle-class, roughly the same age, married with children, and had similar educational backgrounds. The decades of playing, working, and learning with each other helped members develop a comradery of womanhood, which provided an opportunity to share personal advice as postwar women confronted new challenges. Particularly in the 1960s and early 1970s, club projects and programs reflected more intimate anxieties, especially when it came to aging, mental health, and the escalating women's movement. By examining the commonalities of club members' experiences as well as the club programs designed to address some of members' personal concerns, one can begin to understand how involvement in the Victory Study Club offered benefits to combat "mental myopia" or "The Problem That Has No Name" and provided strategies as a means to cope with and adapt to a changing world.

An individual's personal thoughts are difficult for historians to grasp even as they desperately try to get into the minds of the individuals they study; this too is difficult when examining the Victory Study Club. No evidence of clubwomen's personal letters or diaries have been uncovered, which leaves the official record restricted to newspapers, club yearbooks and scrapbooks, and a few oral history interviews. Reconstructing individual married women's lives is also troublesome since often the only record left is tied to their husbands and their husbands' professions. Moreover, the official club minutes of Victory Study Club meetings provide little information about the programs and discussions in which clubwomen engaged. Nevertheless, a careful reader can glean important insights as to why women joined, engaged in, and enjoyed the comradery of this outlet of "organized womanhood." Such an endeavor also provides readers an opportunity to get to know the protagonists of this dissertation a little more intimately to analyze their commonalities and

differences.

Personal reasons for joining the Victory Study Club without a doubt varied, but looking at a snapshot of just a few women's lives reveals much about why they joined the organization. To put it quite simply, the women who joined the Victory Study Club had much in common. First, they were of the same generation. Most had been born in the 1910s and 1920s, which meant that when the club organized, most members were in their twenties or early thirties. All had lived through the Great Depression and World War II, and in the immediate postwar period, all were recently married. All were also in the process of settling down, having children, and making a home in the postwar boom that San Angelo experienced. Another commonality was that most members were not originally from San Angelo; instead, many moved to this flourishing West Texas city in the immediate years after World War II. Each member had some level of higher education prior to marriage, but many had largely abandoned outside employment and professions. Instead, they identified primarily as housewives dedicated to raising their children. All belonged to local churches and synagogues, though denominations and religious convictions varied. Another experience that members shared was that they were "joiners." These women did not just stay in the home; they were *very* busy in the community. Every Victory Study Club member also belonged to or volunteered for other organizations in San Angelo. With members sharing all those things in common, the Victory Study Club created a safe space for like-minded women to address life's ever-changing challenges and to nurture their intellect.

Viewed more closely, the life story of Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock reveals this phenomenon. She was a charter member of the club in 1942 and remained an active member until it disbanded in 1993. Born in 1911 in Gilmer, Texas, Verlie Youngblood

graduated from East Texas Teachers College and served as the home demonstration agent in Victoria County before she met Edwin A. Schonrock. The couple married in 1939, and a year later, they moved to San Angelo, where Edwin established his own business, the Schonrock Manufacturing Company, which specialized in making sheet metal. Shortly thereafter, Edwin and Verlie had one daughter, and Verlie served as an active member and occupied almost every office—president, secretary, historian, and parliamentarian—in the Victory Study Club.[6] In 1964, Verlie's life in San Angelo took a dark turn when Edwin drove his car into the Concho River. Reports claim that he had a heart attack, but most alleged that he took his own life. Nita and Bill Archer remembered the Schonrocks dearly, and Bill admitted in an interview, "It was suicide, but we just didn't talk about that then." Verlie Schonrock was fifty-four at the time of her husband's death.[7]

Figure 9: "Verlie Opal Youngblood Shonrock Obituary," Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens, San Angelo, Tom Green County, digital image s. v. "Verlie Opal Youngblood Shonrock," FindaGrave.com.

Verlie never remarried; instead, she moved in and out of various social circles and organizations until her death in 2002 at age ninety-one. Her obituary mentioned two specific organizations with which she was proudly associated. One was the Joy Moon Sunday School Class at the First Baptist Church; the other was the Victory Study Club. The obituary announced that "Mrs. Schonrock was . . . a charter member and past president of the

[6] "Verlie Opal Youngblood Shonrock Obituary," Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens, San Angelo, Tom Green County, digital image s. v. "Verlie Opal Youngblood Shonrock," FindaGrave.com (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/173777478.

[7] "Verlie Opal Youngblood Shonrock Obituary," Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens, San Angelo, Tom Green County, digital image s. v. "Verlie Opal Youngblood Shonrock," FindaGrave.com (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/173777478; Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

Victory Study Club," and she took her fifty-one-year involvement in the club very seriously. When asked about Verlie's contribution to the Victory Study Club, club members Nita Archer and Mary Nell Mahon remember that she was "no fuss." She rarely missed a meeting and worked on a variety of committees and projects. Archer recalled, "I remember a lot about her. . . . You know she was very talented, and [she] had a lovely home that we visited from time-to-time. She was a very nice person. I remember going to her funeral."[8] Mahon also recalls Verlie warmly, though she laughed when remembering that "she had this bright red hair. I mean bright red."[9] Aside from putting Lucille Ball's hair color to shame, Verlie had a reputation for getting things done in the Victory Study Club, and working in the club for so many decades created lasting friendships that might have eased her loneliness after her husband's alleged suicide.

Another renowned personality in the Victory Study Club was Zula Marguerite Jones Hall, and while she was not originally a charter member, she stayed in the club for more than thirty years. Zula Marguerite Jones was born in 1918 in the small East Texas town of Golden, home to the annual Sweet Potato Festival. In 1940, she was also a newcomer to San Angelo, though it is not clear what brought her to West Texas. At the age of twenty-two, she met and married Marvin Hall, Jr., who worked for the San Angelo National Bank. For the next sixty-three years, the couple lived in San Angelo until Marvin died in 2004.[10]

Raising three daughters in postwar San Angelo did not keep Zula at home. Far from it. Zula was probably *the* most active Victory Study Club member when it came to

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[8] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[9] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

[10] "Obituary Zula Marguerite Jones Hall," Johnson Funeral Home, San Angelo, Texas (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/san-angelo-tx/zula-hall-4569702.

participating in other organizations. She joined several associations dedicated to her children, such as Santa Rita PTA and the Girl Scouts, but she also nurtured her own interests by participating in the San Angelo Civic Theater, the Great Books Society, the Poetry Society, the Tom Green County Historical Society, the San Angelo Art Museum, the SACC (San Angelo Country Club) Women's Golf Association, the Sierra Club, and many more! She was also a devoted member of the First United Methodist Church and attended regularly the Friendship Bible Class. Zula also was an active supporter of the fine arts in San Angelo. She received the San Angelo Symphony Guild Circle of Honor for her "exemplary dedication and service to the Symphony Guild and San Angelo Symphony Society" in 2006. When Zula died at the age of ninety-three in 2011, there was little doubt that she was one of the most "dedicated community volunteer[s]" in San Angelo during the mid-to-late twentieth century.[11]

Figure 10: "Obituary Zula Marguerite Jones Hall," Johnson Funeral Home, San Angelo, Texas, February 20, 2011.

[11] "Obituary Zula Marguerite Jones Hall," Johnson Funeral Home, San Angelo, Texas, (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/san-angelo-tx/zula-hall-4569702; "Circle of Honor," *The San Angelo Symphony Guild* (accessed April 10, 2020), http://sanangelosymphonyguild.org/circle-of-honor.

[11] Celestia 'Brat' Stockton Connell, grave maker, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Celestia Brat Stockton Connell," FindaGrave.com (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23828578/celestia-connell; Brooks Avery Connell, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Brooks Avery Connell," FindaGrave.com (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23793803/brooks-avery-connell.

[11] Espel Morris Coward, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Espel Morris Coward," FindaGrave.com (accessed April 10, 2010), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial /63755275/espel-morris-coward.

Serving as president, historian, treasurer, vice-president, and in numerous other officer positions in the Victory Study Club over three decades, Zula not only made sure the club ran efficiently but also that club meetings were entertaining. Club member Joann Beauchamp describes Zula as "a hoot. She had a wonderful personality. She was so funny. She could tell great stories and jokes."[12] One humorous account Beauchamp remembered occurred at a Christmas party in her home. After working all day, vigorously making food and decorating, Joann was mortified when Zula walked in and smugly remarked, "I don't do chicken; there's no way I can eat [that] chicken." Zula then smirked and gestured at the large spread of food Joann had dutifully prepared. "It's okay," Zula told her. "I can make do with what else you've got but [that] chicken I will not eat!"[13] A large smile spread across Joann's face when she remembered this account, though some might question whether her account with Zula was amusing or cruel.

Figure 11: Joann and Tommy Beauchamp, photograph by author, August 2, 2019.

Nita Archer also chuckled when asked about Zula. "Zula Hall? [Laughs heartedly.] Zula was a mess!" This was not necessarily a bad thing, she clarified. "She was just a cute, cute woman. Just darling! So much fun."[14] Mary Nell Mahon grinned too when remembering Zula. "Yeah, she was a character. Full of life. Everybody liked Zula."[15] Zula loved reading

[12] Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019.

[13] Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019.

[14] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[15] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

and writing poetry, and she applied these skills to become something of the Victory Study Club's poet laureate. A sample of her poems will be addressed later in this chapter, and readers will get to know her and her sense of humor well. Clearly personalities like Zula added a lightheartedness to Victory Study Club meetings, an important element in maintaining club morale and attendance.

Though their characters differed, Verlie Opal Youngblood Schonrock and Zula Marguerite Jones Hall shared much in common. Neither was from San Angelo; both hailed from East Texas originally. They came to San Angelo during World War II, and they married their husbands at roughly the same time and around the same age. Both of their husbands were successful white-collar businessmen, which provided them with the opportunity to stay at home and raise children. Their own children were not their only concern, however. Both were active in community organizations and churches. Amid all their community and religious activity, they remained loyal members of the Victory Study Club until the club disbanded. Their longtime commitment to the club provides evidence that the club offered opportunities for interaction and activism that other associations did not.

Figure 12: Celestia 'Brat' Stockton Connell, grave maker, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, FindaGrave.com.

Other Victory Study Club members who joined the club in the late 1940s and early 1950s were alike in their experiences, particularly in the immediate years after World War II. For instance, Celestia "Brat" Stockton was born in Desdemona, Texas, in 1920. She married

Avery Connell, a trained glider pilot from Alabama in World War II, at the Harvard Air Force Base Chapel in Harvard, Nebraska, in 1944. After the war, they moved to San Angelo, and Avery started working at Johnson Funeral Home. Years later, he became a partner.[16] Another clubwoman was Hattie "Mozelle" Owens Smith, who was born outside of Kingsville, Texas, in 1919. She married Earl Wesley Smith, a United States Air Force radio operator, during World War II, and after the war, the couple moved to Austin so that Earl could complete his law degree at the University of Texas. After graduating in 1947, Earl moved the family to San Angelo, and eventually, he became a district judge in San Angelo's 51st State Judicial District. Mozelle was very active in the community, working with the PTA, Lawyer's Wives Club, the Symphony Guild, the Democratic Party, the Church of Christ, and of course the Victory Study Club.[17] Born in 1914 in Winnsboro, Texas, Ida Faye Howard married Espel Morris Coward when he was serving in the United States Navy during World War II, and the couple relocated to San Angelo in the postwar period where Espel worked at the San Angelus Barber Shop. She quickly joined the

Figure 13: "Hattie Mozelle Owns Smith," Texas State Cemetery, Austin, Travis County, Texas, May 22, 2010.

Figure 14: "Geraldine 'Jerri' Bates Obituary," GoSanAngelo.com, November 11, 2005.

[16] Celestia 'Brat' Stockton Connell, grave maker, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Celestia Brat Stockton Connell," FindaGrave.com (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23828578/celestia-connell.

[17] "Hattie Mozelle Owns Smith," Texas State Cemetery, Austin, Travis County, Texas, May 22, 2010 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://cemetery.tspb.texas.gov/pub/user_form.asp?pers_id=3079.

Victory Study Club and served as a member for the next four decades.[18] Clubwoman Geraldine "Jerri" married Jack Ward Bates in California just prior to the outbreak of the war, and afterward, the couple relocated to San Angelo where Jack became a history professor at Angelo State University.[19]

As this small sample of Victory Study Club members indicates, World War II had a profound influence on clubwomen's lives. They had volunteered and rationed in order to meet the wartime emergency, and most of their husbands served in the war, and shortly after World War II ended, the couples moved to San Angelo. Arriving in this new city in the postwar period, these women were most likely looking for friendships and wanting to get to know their new community. What better way than to join a woman's club—founded during World War II—with like-minded women who had similar experiences? The Victory Study Club seemed like a good fit for these newcomers, who could enjoy fellowship, fun, and food with other World War II veterans' wives. Remember, one had to be invited to belong to the Victory Study Club, and clubwomen chose fellow members with which they had much in common.

While numerous Victory Study Clubwomen found themselves in a new environment in the postwar period, local West Texas women also joined the club. Born in San Angelo in 1923, Elizabeth Ellen Hughes grew up in Mertzon, Texas—just twenty-eight miles outside of

[18] Ida Faye Howard Coward, grave maker, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Ida Faye Howard Coward," FindaGrave.com (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.find agrave.com/memorial/63755273.

[19] Jack Ward Bates, grave maker, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Dr. Jack Ward Bates," FindaGrave.com (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com /memorial/46061978/jack-ward-bates.

Figure 15: Elizabeth Ellen Hughes Pool, grave maker, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, FindaGrave.com

San Angelo. She recalls that San Angelo was "the center for all the little towns around as far as coming to get what our basic needs were. . . . To do shopping particularly, why, you needed to come to San Angelo. And for medical reasons, really."[20] Nita Allen also grew up on a small farm in Silver, Texas, which was a little farther from San Angelo than Mertzon. She remembers, going to San Angelo regularly for shopping, supplies, and entertainment.[21] In West Texas terms, both Allen and Hughes considered themselves local San Angeloans.

Educationally, Allen and Hughes shared similar experiences as well. Both went to small West Texas high schools with a graduating class of no more than twenty students. After graduating valedictorian from Mertzon High School, Elizabeth Hughes enrolled in Baylor University and graduated in 1944 with a business degree. Similarly, after graduating valedictorian from Silver High School, Nita Allen enrolled in the San Angelo Junior College, majored in business, and graduated valedictorian of her college class in 1945. Clearly, these two local West Texans—who would eventually become members of the Victory Study Club—were very bright and well-educated. Their experiences in small town West Texas high schools did not stop them; in fact, they

[20] Elizabeth Pool, interviewed by Rebecca Sharpless, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 1999 (accessed April 8, 2020), https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/oral-memoirs-of-elizabeth-ellen-hughes-pool-transcript/1028901, 17.

[21] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

excelled.[22]

After finishing their college educations, Allen and Hughes knew that they wanted to spend the rest of their lives in San Angelo. Both loved West Texas, and they married men who loved it too (or at least tolerated it). Elizabeth Ellen Hughes met Frank Pool, her future husband of sixty-six years, in 1944 during World War II. Pool was born in Grandview, Texas, in 1918 and graduated from Texas A&M University in 1941 with a degree in petroleum engineering. After serving in the army, he married Elizabeth in 1946 and began work at the Humble Oil Company. The couple moved to the Texas Gulf Coast since most of the rigs were there. A native West Texan with a sinus condition, Elizabeth did not particularly care for the Gulf Coast; the humidity was too much for her. Frank also began wondering if he should go out on his own and start a new business. Elizabeth encouraged him and slightly prodded that they should move back to West Texas. In 1948, he did just that, and the Pools moved to San Angelo. Frank started Pool Welling Servicing, which became a successful business in San Angelo. Elizabeth loved returning home. She recalled, "I always wanted to live in San Angelo. . . . I think from a health standpoint I just felt better in West Texas." Frank agreed. "He loved West Texas as much as I did," she recalls. The couple raised three children—Frank Pool, Jr., Mary Ellen, and Martha—in San Angelo, and the couple lived in the city for sixty-four years before Elizabeth died at the age of eighty-nine in 2012.[23]

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[22] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; Elizabeth Pool, interviewed by Rebecca Sharpless, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 1999 (accessed April 8, 2020), https://digital collections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/oral-memoirs-of-elizabeth-ellen-hughes-pool-transcript/1028901, 26, 55, 138.

[23] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; Elizabeth Pool, interviewed by Rebecca Sharpless, Baylor University: Institute for Oral History, 1999 (accessed April 8, 2020), https://digital collections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/oral-memoirs-of-elizabeth-ellen-hughes-pool-transcript/1028901, 59, 107-108; "San Angelo Icon Frank Pool Dies," *San Angelo Standard Times*, January 13,

Nita Allen had a similar experience, but it took her a little more convincing to establish a permanent home in San Angelo. After graduating college, she took a job at the San Angelo National Bank as a secretary, and she met William "Bill" Archer, a first lieutenant pilot recently discharged from the bombardiers, in 1945. Originally from a small town just outside of Fort Worth, Texas, Bill was not exactly thrilled at the prospect of living in San Angelo after they married in 1946. The couple originally moved to Tyler, Texas, but Nita Archer recalled that they did not stay there long. She wanted to come home. "I love San Angelo, and I didn't like being away from my mother," she laughed. When a friend back home opened a new paint store, he asked Bill to come help him with the business. Nita heard the news and recalled, "And I was just so happy!" Bill reluctantly agreed to come back in the late 1940s, and upon arriving in the city, she exclaimed, "I decided I never wanted to leave San Angelo again!" After a few years, Bill opened his own business, the Floor Covering Shop. The couple lived in San Angelo from then on and raised four children, William, Junior, Rebecca, Tim, and Susan. In 2019, Nita and Bill Archer celebrated their seventy-third wedding anniversary, and in 2020, Nita died at the age of ninety-two.[24]

Figure 16: Nita Allen Archer Obituary, Johnson Funeral Home, San Angelo, Tom Green County, March 4, 2020

Above is a small sampling of the intimate lives of various members of the Victory

2017 (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.gosanangelo.com/story/news/2017/01/13/san-angelo-icon-frank-pool-dies/96558300/.

[24] William Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2020.

Study Club. While some arrived as transplants to San Angelo and joined the club, local women also found meaning in the friendships the club cultivated. Undoubtedly, the shared experiences of members helped foster these friendships, which was a real and a tangible benefit for these married housewives in San Angelo. When asked why she joined the club, Joann Beauchamp put it plain enough. "I think the biggest benefit is . . . I like people and I got a lot of enjoyment meeting these people and socializing with them. Everything was just pleasant and there was a lot of humor and lightheartedness."[25] Club meetings were not the only places that nurtured these friendships. Members frequently went out to lunch with one another, especially at local Mexican restaurants as a club, and on one occasion, members met at Luby's Village Cafeteria at 2215 West Beauregard Avenue and hosted a luncheon and meeting. The Victory Study Club also went on "excursions" together. One outing of the club was to Coleman, Texas, where members enjoyed "fishing, boating, cycling, and special tours."[26] Another outing included sixteen members, who took a daytrip to the Sonora Caverns and toured the caves.[27] They also planned overnight trips. Nita Archer recalls one of her favorite memories in the club was going to Lake Buchanan and staying at a member's lake house, though she did not remember to whom this house belonged, but this was an annual tradition for the club. "I didn't go every year, but she had us go just about every year," Archer explained. "We would go there in the spring, when the bluebonnets were

[25] Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019.

[26] "Minutes: March 10, 1966" in Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[27] "Minutes: March 15, 1973" in Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Gerron S. Hite, *Images of America: San Angelo 1950s and Beyond* (Charleston: South Carolina, 2013); "Minutes: March 25, 1976" in Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

blooming. . . . Of course the men didn't go," she chuckled. "It was not structured. . . . We stayed up till about ten, probably just talk[ing]. Then breakfast the next day and then came home."[28] As these accounts indicate, it was not just in meetings where club members enjoyed fellowship with one another. Clubwomen actively expanded their geographic horizons, moving in and out of each other's homes and clubhouse as well as in and out of San Angelo's public spaces as well.

Though Nita Archer made it clear that husbands did not often join clubwomen in their meetings, projects, or excursions, Victory Study Club members hosted annual events that husbands and wives both attended. The club annually hosted "husband banquets," particularly around Christmas, and planned "Husband picnics" in the spring. Sometimes after eating, couples played Bingo and bridge or danced.[29] One unusual party hosted by the club that husbands attended was a "Backward Dance" in 1952. "Husbands of members were honored guests at the dance, which was held at the Lion's Club," the local paper reported. Men came dressed as women and performed


Gene Spa
Wins Priz
Backward

THE GENTLEMEN WERE ALL LADIES, at a backward dance given by the Victory Study Club Monday evening at the Lions Club house. The dance honored husbands of members. Gene Sparman, wearing the grass skirt, was given a miniature loving cup for being the "best dressed woman" at the dance. Others are, top row, from left, V. H. (Red)

Figure 17: "Gene Sparman Wins Prize at Backward Dance," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 16, 1952 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948-1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[28] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[29] "Victory Study Club Has Christmas Party in D. L. Roach Home," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, December 14, 1945; "Family Notes," *San Angelo Standard Times*, February 8 , 1976; "Victory Study Club Program Study, 1964-65" in President Reports 1960 to 1972, File 33, Box 1, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

"a style show," and Victory Study Club member Eloise McKissack served as commentator and judge. Even though her husband was in the show, the coveted "miniature loving cup" went to another Victory Study Clubwomen's husband, Gene Sparman. Sparman dressed in a Hawaiian grass skirt with a coconut brassier, won the award for "the best dressed woman" at the event, and a picture of at least nine of the contestants appeared in the local paper.[30] Even though Bill Archer recalled that he was invited "to very few" functions—and perhaps he was grateful he missed out on the "Backward Dance"—the Victory Study Club did include husbands in their programs, albeit only briefly and for entertainment more than educational programs.

Besides fellowship and fun, Victory Study Clubwomen offered emotional support to one another. Norma Paula Lena Kuck was born in 1914 in the Germany community of Hoccheim, Texas. She did not learn to speak English until she started grade school since while World War I raged, "she did not want anyone to know she spoke German." Norma also lost many of her family members—including her father—to the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918, and after her mother remarried, the family moved to Wall, Texas. It is unclear how she met her husband, Harold Gibbs, who worked as a grocery store operator and later became the CEO of Town and Country stores, but the couple married in 1934 and lived in San Angelo ever since.[31] Norma was described as "a quiet, shy person who preferred to be in the background," so it is interesting that she joined the Victory Study Club and served in several

[30] "Gene Sparman Wins Prize at Backward Dance," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 16, 1952 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948-1956," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[31] "Norma Paula Lena Kuck Gibbs," *Brownwood Bulletin*, August 22, 2007 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.brownwoodtx.com/article/20070822/Obituaries/308229988; "Harold Cragg Gibbs Obituary," *San Angelo Standard Times*, August 29, 1997 (accessed May 30, 2020), http://files.usgwarchives.net/tx/tomgreen/obits/1997/082997.txt

officer positions and program leader for over ten years.

In her first year in the club, Norma Gibbs experienced a mother's worst nightmare in the early morning hours of April 12, 1959. Her firstborn—Harold "Buddy" Cragg Gibb, Jr.—was involved in an "automobile collision" where he was thrown from the car. His injuries were severe: he had "a crushed chest, punctured lung, severe shock, and broken left thigh," and at the age of twenty-two, he died three hours after the accident. [32] Since Norma was described as a "quiet person," it seems reasonable to assume that the fellowship offered by members of the Victory Study Club eased "the rigors of . . . the death of her son." By providing a supportive comradery of women, the Victory Study Club provided her with an opportunity to channel her grief into community projects and educational programs with others who offered her support.[33]

Victory Study Club minutes regularly indicate that members supported one another in times of illness, distress, or celebrations. For instance when club members Virginia Hart and Frances Lane reported ill, club members signed up for different days to deliver food to their families. Modell Shelby informed members that her husband, Claude who worked at the Tile Shop in San Angelo, was in the hospital recovering from illness, and the club sent flowers and financial support to the family while he recovered. While clubwoman Beatrice "Babe" Brooks was recovering from an operation in the hospital, the club sent her an "African violent plant," and after Elaine Olive lost her mother, the club sent cards and flowers in

[32] 1959 Texas Death Certificates, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Harold Cragg Gibbs, Jr.," Ancestry.com.

[33] "Norma Paula Lena Kuck Gibbs," *Brownwood Bulletin*, August 22, 2007 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.brownwoodtx.com/article/20070822/Obituaries/308229988

sympathy.[34] Another member, Evelyn Mayfield "was a presented a birthday cake" at a meeting as a "surprise gift," and regularly at meetings, clubwomen celebrated Victory Study Club couples on anniversaries.[35] In all these gestures, the Victory Study Club supported fellow members, offering encouragement in both happy and sad times.

In many ways, the Victory Study Club nurtured a "sisterhood" among members through fellowship and fun. Historian Kathleen Laughlin agrees about the personal benefits club work offered to women during the postwar period. She writes, "In some ways, sisterhood was powerful in the 1950s, as women developed meaningful and significant relationships with other women in the context of a backlash against women in public life." Referring to the renewed emphasis on postwar women's domestic containment, Laughlin explains that "when meaningful social change did not occur, meetings, social activities, and public protests organized by groups, clubs, and societies, facilitated [a] nascent gender solidarity" that served to elevate women in the public and private sphere.[36]

Outside of this "sisterhood," the Victory Study Club offered educational programs as a means to inoculate American housewives against "mental myopia." Almost all members had some level of education, and even if they primarily identified as homemakers, they did not stop cultivating and expanding their intellect. In remembering one of the primary reasons she joined the club, Mary Nell Mahon put it simply enough: "I joined for the fellowship and

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[34] "Minutes: March 10, 1966" in File 33, Box 1, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Minutes: January 12, 1977" in File 33, Box 1, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Minutes: Feburary 28, 1974" in File 33, Box 1, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[35] "Mrs. Swain Is Speaker at Victory Club Meeting," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 10 ,1952.

[36] Kathleen Laughlin, "Introduction: A Long History of Feminism" in *Breaking the Wave: Women, Their Organizations, and Feminism, 1945-1985*, ed. Kathleen Laughlin (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4.

for the good friends . . . and that it would be good for my mind to develop."[37] Developing their minds was an important personal benefit Victory Study Clubwomen received. Joann Beauchamp recalls, "I don't remember ever hearing a bad program. I really didn't. I think every one of them was interesting in their own way because each one of them brought something different, you know."[38] Nita Archer concurs. "Our programs were really good. . . . I would always feel I had learned something, and it made me aware of what's going on in the world."[39]

While members continued to host programs in individual members' homes, another venue opened to Victory Study Club women by the late 1940s and 1950s. In the 1940s, San Angelo City Federation of Women's Clubs received a donated building on 815 S. Abe Street in San Angelo that served as a clubhouse for the more than eight hundred women in twenty-six separate women's clubs.[40] The building still stands, even though now it houses the Western Shamrock Corporation that specializes in consumer installment loans. Nevertheless, a Texas Historical Marker sits on the site of the former Massie Clubhouse. Erected in 1968, the marker is dedicated to "Mrs. Robert [Mary Lee] Massie . . . a humanitarian who worked to further education throughout her life." After Mary Lee's death, her husband, a leader in the sheep and wool industry, donated the home to the San Angelo City Federation of Women's Clubs "to be used for the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social development of San

[37] Mary Nell, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

[38] Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019.

[39] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[40] "City Federation of Women's Clubs: Organized in 1937" in *The San Angelo Clubwomen Edition: San Angelo Standard Times*, October 13, 1963, 6.

Angelo and surrounding territory."[41]

By 1958, the Massie Clubhouse hosted more than two hundred meetings with an estimated fifteen thousand guests a year. Coordinating and keeping the clubhouse operational required a full-time, live-in hostess who received an annual salary with rent and utilities provided. Past childrearing years, the hostess was usually married, and her husband joined her in living in the adjoining guesthouse. Most hostesses were not from the area—for example, one was from California while another was from Vernon, Texas—and each served an average of six to seven years.[42] Given the popularity of the Massie Clubhouse by the late 1950s, the City Federation of Women's Clubs set a goal to raise forty thousand dollars for improvements; they fell short but raised an impressive thirty-two thousand dollars for renovations that featured a "contemporary-design."[43] Nita Archer expressed quite vocally her distain for the makeover, particularly since she and her husband had their wedding reception there before it was renovated. She chuckled, "Well, you know sometimes someone

Figure 18: William Fischer, Jr., "Homesite of Mrs. Robert Massie and Markers," February 10, 2014, *The Historical Marker Database* (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=72228

[41] "Mrs. Robert [Mary Lee] Massie Historical Marker," Texas Historical Commission, photograph taken by author, August 2019.

[42] "Massie Club House Rules and Regulations," File 27, Box 7, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Men, Women Set $40,000 Goal in Massie Clubhouse Fund Drive" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1958-1959," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[43] "Men, Women Set $40,000 Goal in Massie Clubhouse Fund Drive" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1958-1959," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Construction to Start Soon for New Massie Clubhouse," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 31, 1960, in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1959-1960," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

with a big voice can talk others into doing things that are pretty unwise. That beautiful [two-story home with a big front porch] was torn down, and the Massie Clubhouse is not just this kind of flat roofed place. . . . It was just a lovely old house, but not anymore."[44]

Despite Archer's reservations about the renovations, Victory Study Clubwomen used the clubhouse regularly, and the City Federation often rented out the clubhouse to the community to cover operational costs. In order to minimize wear and tear on the building, clubwomen instigated detailed regulations. For example, the twelve-list rules prohibited the use of screws, tacks, or nails on the walls, and they strictly enforced cleaning fees for use of clubhouse linen and dishes. Guests could bring in their own refreshments, but "drinks, including coffee, tea, bottled drinks, hot chocolate, or punch must be purchased from the hostess at ten cents per serving," an attempt to make sure that no alcohol was brought into the clubhouse. Moreover, if a caterer was used, guests had to pay a five-dollar fee, and no food was to be prepared in the clubhouse kitchen aside from that prepared by the hostess. Moreover, "nothing shall *ever* be placed on the piano," they strongly warned. Other than minimizing the wear and tear on the clubhouse, the Federation also wanted to ensure that the space would be a wholesome venue for the community. The rules stated, "Alcoholic beverages or illegal games are strictly forbidden." Moreover, "Any young people wishing to rent the space must be accompanied by chaperones," and "no tickets, except for the benefit of the community or charitable purposes, shall be sold in the Club House," indicating that gambling was strictly prohibited.[45] While the Victory Study Club regularly held meetings at

[44] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[45]"Massie Club House Rules and Regulations," File 27, Box 7, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

the Massie Clubhouse, the strict rules might have also been a reason that many club activities were still held in individual members' homes or in other venues in San Angelo, particularly when it came to banquets or dances.

While most of the educational programs in Victory Study Club focused on local, state, national, or international issues, the Victory Study Club also tackled topics that were very personal for women—problems that Victory Study Club members certainly gave a name to. In the 1950s, most members of the Victory Study Club were in their late thirties and forties, and even though they were in the busy life stage of raising children, they began to mentally prepare for the next life season: the inevitability of the empty nest syndrome and old age. The club theme for the year 1953-54 was "Begin Today to Enjoy Tomorrow," and on October 24, 1953, Victory Study Clubwomen put on a play entitled "Living in Later Years" to the City Federated Women's Clubs at the Massie Clubhouse. More than fifty clubwomen attended the show.[46] There were four characters: the Clubwoman (who is the narrator of the play), Old Lady #1 (who "is clinging and flighty"); Old Lady #2 (who is "very sweet and motherly"); and Old Lady #3 (who is "too youthfully over-dressed"). The Victory Study Club members who assumed these roles were Eloise McKissack, Francis Summers, Evelyn Mayfield, and Lucy Nixon.[47] The play begins with the Clubwoman addressing the audience.

> Clubwoman: "Later years, what are they? Nothing but old age, a time of life we all strive to reach and never acknowledge attaining. Old age is an inevitable fact . . . . But seriously though, Old Age is a state of mind, as well as the number of years lived.

[46]Letter from Mrs. E. Phillipen to the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, May 1953, Victory Study Club Folder Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Women's Clubs Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

[47] "Play is Given by Members at Study Club Meet," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 24, 1953 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

> We recently heard of a Junior Club President, in her twenties, refer to thirty-five as 'That Age.' Since sixty-five is the nationally recognized age of retirement, I will ask three to pretend that they are that, or older, as they assume the roles of our three old ladies.[48]

Old Lady #1 enters the stage: She is resentful that her single daughter had taken a job at the State Department. Her daughter also took up smoking and keeping company with a man. Old Lady #1 haughtily told the audience, "A daughter's first duty is to her mother, and I let that man know it." The mother was also distressed that her daughter would not allow her to join in a game of bridge with her younger friends. After hearing this account, the Clubwoman walks on the stage with a pen and paper. She tells the audience, "Right away I made notes. Fight mental staleness and boredom with a hobby. . . . Develop an unselfish attitude toward your children. Allow them to grow up. Cultivate and retain friends of your own vintage."[49]

Old Lady #2 then arrives on the scene. "All my family wants me," she explains. "They just kept after me until I sold my house. Said it wasn't safe, living all by myself, and they were afraid I'd be lonely." This was deeply troubling for Old Lady #2 who was experiencing a different kind of loneliness from Old Lady #1. She explains, "This going from house to house, sleeping in babies' rooms, or in the den. I seem to have nothing adult left in my life. I miss my books, friends of my generation and adult conversations." She expressed that she often goes to the park to be "alone, away from children." There she sits "to think of my husband, our life together, and our plans for the future together. . . . The children were all grown when he died. So I went back to teaching but had to resign because of failing

[48] "Living in Later Years" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[49] "Living in Later Years" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

eyesight." She further lamented, "I do wish I had the home back now, or even a room of my own, with my own things about me." After hearing these sad reminiscences, the Clubwoman softly remarks, "Here was a wonderful person being imposed on, stifled by a younger generation. . . . A family all dependent on a sweet tax-free babysitter."[50]

Finally, Old Lady #3 enters the stage. She is very stylish and starts thinking out loud of a way to pass the time. "I'll put on my new dress, take a taxi, and have tea" somewhere in town, she surmises. She has no children. Ben, her husband, and "I were having too much fun to think of children [in the 1920s]. We really lived in our day, big house, big parties, big cars, lots of people to entertain." Then the stock market crashed. "People said Ben wasn't honest, but I think he was." He tried to pay everyone back and did not declare bankruptcy, she explained. "He even established a trust fund for me before he killed himself." Everything changed after his suicide; now she regrets the past decisions she made. Old Lady #3 remarks, "I thought money was the only way to win friendship, but dresses and pretty things are lonely to live with." [51]

What is the moral of this play put on by the Victory Study Club? Each old lady attempted to cope with her situation, but none of them was content. Old Lady #1 was resentful that her only child did not want her around. Old Lady #2—while wanted by her children—found that she had no time for herself, and though financially secure, Old Lady #3 was plagued by loneliness without a husband or children to occupy her time. Could anything be done to help these aging women come to terms with "living in their later years"? The

[50] "Living in Later Years" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[51] "Living in Later Years" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Clubwoman reflects at the play's closing: "We need to change our attitude toward age. Let us realize, if we lack the vigor of youth, youth also lacks the mellowness of experience. The age between is the time to prepare, the time to regain our desire to paint, play a musical instrument, fashion a hat or pursue a hobby. Let's talk about the past but work for the future and thus make our 'later years' a pleasant, relaxed, contented period instead of a time of disappointment, frustration, and regret."[52] How could women prepare for a better future when old age hits? Why, by joining a federated club, of course. The Clubwoman concludes, "I only wish I had told them about a Federated Woman's Club—though no cure-all for the problems of the older woman, in its varied activities, some outlet for most, any latent talent and activity can be found."[53] An article in the local newspaper summarized the overall message of the Victory Study Club's play. "The characters illustrated fighting mental staleness and boredom with a hobby, being tolerant, developing an unselfish attitude toward one's children by allowing them to grow up, and cultivating and retaining friends."[54] These were some of the strategies proposed by the club

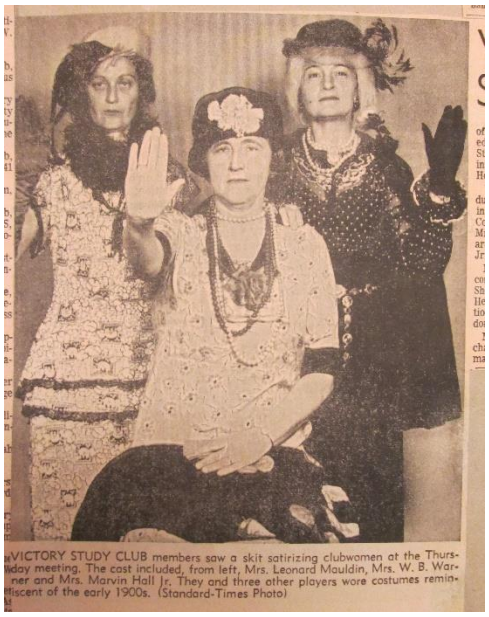
VICTORY STUDY CLUB members saw a skit satirizing clubwomen at the Thursday meeting. The cast included, from left, Mrs. Leonard Mauldin, Mrs. W. B. Warner and Mrs. Marvin Hall Jr. They and three other players wore costumes reminiscent of the early 1900s. (Standard-Times Photo)

Figure 19: "Not in Our Club," *San Angelo Standard Times* in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas. Note: this is not a photograph of the play "Living in the Later Years," but it is a photograph of another play put on by the Victory Study Club.

[52] "Living in Later Years" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[53] "Living in Later Years" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[54] "Play is Given by Members at Study Club Meet," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 24, 1953 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

to combat postwar women's "mental myopia."

Between the 1950s and the 1970s, the Victory Study Club hosted a variety of programs and projects that would help club members cultivate their "latent talent[s]" and develop hobbies, which might ease old age's loneliness. Several programs focused on hands-on learning. Clubwomen reasoned that keeping their hands busy as they created beautiful items would not only help pass the time but would also improve self-esteem. For example, in 1954, clubwomen learned to make silver jewelry, to crochet friendship bags, and the art of silk screening.[55] They also partnered with San Angelo's Garden Club in joint meetings in order to hone their green thumbs and gardening skills.[56] Travel also became an important hobby to cultivate. In 1962, Marguerite Randhawa, an employee from the Magic Carpet Travel Agency, gave a program entitled "Travel Is Fun" that provided "do and don't travel tips." Many members of the Victory Study Club loved to travel, and some of them went to quite exotic locations. For instance, Elizabeth Pool took trips with her husband to such faraway places as Hawaii, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and Peru; undoubtedly, she told her fellow clubwomen about these trips when she returned.[57] As middle-to-upper-class women, Victory Study Club members could afford the privilege of travel whereas many other San

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[55]"Hobbies Demonstrated at Club Meet," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, January 17, 1954 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[56] "Victory Club Views Home," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 13, 1963 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1963 to 1964," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[57] "Yearbook 1962-1963," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1963 to 1964," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Elizabeth Pool, interviewed by Rebecca Sharpless, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 1999 (accessed April 8, 2020), https://digital collections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/oral-memoirs-of-elizabeth-ellen-hughes-pool-transcript/1028901, 59, 107-108, 143-44.

Angeloans could not.

One of the favorite programs of the Victory Study Club designed to cultivate interests in the "later years" was arts appreciation. As early as the 1950s, Victory Study Club members were committed to learning about the arts. The theme of the 1952 Victory Study Club Yearbook was "Art As You Like It," and clubwomen discussed various techniques used by artists, including Mexican favorites Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.[58] By the early 1960s, Victory Study Club programs on arts appreciation became more prominent as the art scene in San Angelo began to thrive. Margaret Simpson, an art instructor at Central High School, gave a program in 1963 on the local artists in and around San Angelo. The 1960s art scene culminated in the 1971 establishment of an infamous artist collective called the Chicken Farm, which the Victory Study Club toured. In 1981, the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts opened its doors and remains one of the premiere art museums in the state.[59] Theater appreciation also drew clubwomen's interest. Don Irwin of the Fine Arts Department at San Angelo College brought students to perform a Shakespearian skit for members, and in a later program, he brought costumes and discussed "the manner of dress in the Elizabethan era."[60]

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[58] "Yearbook 1952-53" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Club Discusses Artist, Writer," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, November 14, 1952 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[59] "1962 to 1963 Yearbook" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1963 to 1964," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; See Spring Sault, "There Are No Chickens on This West Texas Chicken Farm…They Only Cultivate Art," *Texas Hill Country News* (accessed April 10, 2020), https://texashillcountry.com/there-are-no-chickens-on-this-west-texas-chicken-farmthey-only-cultivate-art/; "Our History," *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts* (accessed April 10, 2020), http://www.samfa.
org/our-history.

[60] "Victory Study Club Learns of Era of Elizabeth," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, April 17, 1963 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1948 to 1954," Box 2, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Music education was just as important. Meetings frequently included group songs with members crowded around the Massie Clubhouse piano. Several Victory Study Club members, including Nita Archer, Elizabeth Pool, and Zula Hall, also belonged to San Angelo Symphony Guild, an organization devoted to supporting a first-class symphony in West Texas. The San Angelo Symphony Society organized in 1949, but due to limited funding, it could only host one concert a year. In 1955, the San Angelo Symphony Guild emerged, and thanks to community volunteers, local sponsors, and loyal patrons, the Guild provides "quality symphonic music to our community and foster[s] continuing appreciation to future generations," and many Victory Study Clubwomen were members, including Nita Archer and Zula Jones Hall.[61]

In addition to cultivating a love of the arts, the Victory Study Club also encouraged members to develop a habit of reading. Members were required to "read at least 2 non-fiction books" a year independently and report back to the club about what they learned.[62] Victory Study Club members also selected books to read collectively. Nita Archer remembered that this was one of her favorite programs. "We would have book reports, and I would really enjoy that," she elucidated.[63] Regular reading was another strategy to help fight off intellectual staleness and boredom as a means to inoculate clubwomen against developing

[61] "About Us," *The San Angelo Symphony Guild* (accessed April 10, 2020), http://www.sanangelo symphonyguild.org/about-us; Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; Elizabeth Pool, interviewed by Rebecca Sharpless, Baylor University: Institute for Oral History, 1999 (accessed April 8, 2020), https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/oral-memoirs-of-elizabeth-ellen-hughes-pool-transcript/1028901, 59, 107-108.

[62] "1959-1960 Yearbook: The World In Your Family Room" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1959 to 1960," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[63] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

"mental myopia."

While book topics varied widely, at least two dealt with the concept of aging. Mary Nell Mahon still remembers one specific book that she was selected to review for the club. Written by homemaker Mary Bard and published in 1952, *Forty Odd* is a memoir and advice book that offered humorous coping strategies for women entering that "over-the-hill" decade. It begins, "You don't have to be fat, frustrated, foolish, forlorn AND forty. There are things you can do about it."[64] A *New York Times* reviewer at the time found the book "charming" since it "prompts serious discussion of a most serious American problem: the woman over 40, her health, her happiness, her dignity and prestige."[65] At first, Mahon wondered why the Yearbook Committee picked her to review F*orty Odd* since she was not forty at the time. She recalls, "I really don't know why they selected me to do [this] book review unless I had the bust for it [laughs] because we had two or three people . . . who [were] very busty. So I told them that my qualifications just included me having a big butt [laughs]."[66] Another book reviewed was *The Dynamics of Aging* by Ethel Sabin Smith.[67] Published in 1956, this book

Figure 20: Mary Nell Mahon, photograph by author, July 30, 2019.

[64] Mary Bard, *Forty Odd* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Press, 1952), 1.

[65] "Mary Bard Jensen, Author, Dies at 66," *The New York Times*, December 4, 1970.

[66] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

[67] "Guest Speaker Reviews Book for Study Club," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 22, 1959 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1959 to 1960," Box 3, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

discusses "the twenty 'extra years' which have been added to the average lifespan" and provided resources that can help individuals create "self-enrichment rather than any loss of self-esteem" in old age.[68] Reminiscent of the play put on by the Victory Study Club a few years earlier, the selection of *Forty Odd* and *The Dynamics of Aging* by the Victory Study Club provide additional evidence that while aging may have troubled members, clubwomen attempted to mentally prepare for the next life stage in the best way they could.

As the Victory Study Club members did their best to educate themselves, they also hosted programs from leading health care professionals in San Angelo regarding the twin problems of aging and mental health. Marguerite Gailey, who was the state president of Licensed Vocational Nurses, came to the club in 1965 and discussed the problems of "The Mature Years," but it is unclear from the records what advice she gave to clubwomen.[69] Another 1965 meeting featured a discussion on the importance of maintaining mental health by psychologist Dr. Louis J. Broussard. He told clubwomen, "The real problems of the majority are those involved with people finding out that their own individuality is their own." In other words, it was individuals who were ultimately in charge of keeping their mental health in check. He explained, "Because people feel you have to be crazy to go to a psychologist, problems go deeper and deeper," and individuals needed to take responsibility for seeking out the mental health care they needed. When it came to West Texans, however, Dr. Broussard expressed a special concern, and he put it in terms that late-nineteenth-century historian Fredrick Jackson Turner might appreciate. He told members, "The strange thing—

[68] "The Dynamics of Aging by Ethel Sabin Smith," *Kirkus Reviews* (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.
kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/a/ethel-sabin-smith/the-dynamics-of-aging/

[69] "Yearbook 1966-67" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1966-67," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

and I think it is unique to the West—is that everybody likes to think of himself as independent. This attitude complicates the job." In other words, Broussard argued that West Texans' "rugged individualism" prevented a good number of his patients to seek mental health care services and screenings. According to the *San Angelo Evening Standard*, when Dr. Broussard ended his comments, one Victory Study Club member suggested how San Angeloans might counteract this West Texas problem. The paper reported that "rather jokingly, [she] suggested a 'Friends Anonymous' club whose members, when depressed, could telephone a friend as Alcoholics Anonymous procedure." [70]This was hardly a joke for this Victory Study Club woman, who most likely offered this as a serious solution. Women knew that the friendships they developed in the club created a safe space where members could express their mental health concerns.

While encouraging positive mental health habits, Victory Study Clubwomen also were concerned with the physical changes women experienced as most members entered into their late forties and early fifties in the 1960s. For instance in June 1966, clubwomen watched a film entitled "Feminine for Life: A Changing View of the Change of Life." It addressed "such basic questions as: what causes menopause, whether women must suffer from the effects of the change of life, the physical and emotional problems they create and the new methods doctors are using today."[71] In addition to the hormonal changes clubwomen experienced during menopause, members also learned strategies on how to deal with hair loss and weight gain. In January 1969, Al Ricci of Ricci's Beauty Center came to a meeting and

[70] "Victory Clubwomen Hear Psychologist," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, October 29, 1965 "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1966-67," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[71] "Program Notes: June 1966" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1968-69;" Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

gave a program on "Instant Grooming: How to Use Wigs and Hair Pieces."[72] Clubwomen also heard about a new diet that had caught the attention of millions of Americans. Starting in New York in the 1960s, Weight Watchers was a "fairly simple list of restricted, limited, and unlimited foods," but it was "far stricter" in its earlier guidelines than the contemporary program.[73] Learning about this new diet fad at a club meeting prompted Zula Hall to write a wry poem, which was included in the Victory Study Club Scrapbook.

The weight watcher dutifully notes
Whatever she may eat
Fish and lettuce
Or other treat

I regret that I can't join
My friends in their dieting
But I haven't figured yet
How to eat when I'm louting

I really need someone
To follow me around
Listing quickly all my munching
Of the goodies that abound

Oh I could have been a member
Of that jubilant thinish land
If only I had the foresight
To learn to do shorthand![74]

Hall's sardonic poem suggests that Victory Study Club members probably took the advice of the Weight Watchers spokesman somewhat lightly, but nevertheless, they were attentive to

[72] "Yearbook: 1968-1969" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1968-69," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[73] "History & Philosophy," *WeightWatcher.Com* (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.weightwatchers.com/about/his/history.aspx; Chrissy Carroll, "What Is Weight Watchers?" *VeryWellFit.Com* (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.verywellfit.com/weight-watchers-overview-4691074

[74] Zula Hall, "Untitled" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1972-73," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

nurturing healthy eating habits.

While many of the Victory Study Club's programs in the 1960s and 1970s focused on the problems of aging and physical and mental health, others attempted to prepare members intellectually for the stark changes they experienced personally in American life. For instance, the Victory Study Club Yearbook's theme in 1971 and 1972 was "Collision With Tomorrow: Dedicated to Awareness," and the club devoted several programs to address what members thought personally about the changes occurring in American society. On the first page of the yearbook, a quotation from Charles Dickens greeted readers with an amended ending: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness—it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair—It was the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred seventy-two."[75] On the one hand, members expressed cautious optimism for the future, but on the other, they were wary of suspicion. To understand how each member personally thought about the changes occurring in American society required study.

To understand what the future might hold that year, clubwomen created a panel of Victory Study Club members to debate Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*.[76] Co-authored with Toffler's wife Heidi Toffler (though she did not get formal credit) and published in 1970, *Future Shock* discussed the swift scientific and economic changes occurring that were rapidly altering American society. What was occurring, Toffler explained, was an "information overload"—a term he coined—that had the effect of producing "shattering stress and disorientation" in the individual and created cultural upheavals. He argued that "the roaring

[75] "Yearbook 1971-1972" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1972-73," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

current of change" had "visible and measurable effects in individuals." It "had fractured marriages, overwhelmed families and caused 'confusional breakdowns' manifested in rising crime, drug use and social alienation." The book was extremely popular; Americans bought millions of copies. As late as 2016, the *New York Times* praised futurist Toffler in his obituary for his predictions regarding development of personal computers, the internet, cloning, and cable television. Keith Schneider writes, "His warnings could be bleak . . . but he was generally optimistic. He was among the first authors to recognize that knowledge, not labor and raw materials, would become the most important economic resource of advanced societies."[77] One wishes they could have been a fly on the wall during the Victory Study Club's panel discussion of *Future Shock.* Sadly, the records remain silent on how Milli Jones, Mary Nell Mahon, Lois Wright, Grace Gerhardt, and Frances Willis debated the issues found within it.

Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that Victory Study Club members took a few lessons from Toffler's *Future Shock*. One program in 1971-72 featured a talk on "Trip or Truth?" by a "guest speaker on drug authority," a topic covered in *Future Shock*. Members also heard a program on "Understanding Computers" given by a teacher from Central High School that same year. Another program in 1971-72 featured a NASA representative, and the discussion opened with a quotation from Toffler: "Knowledge is fuel, knowledge is power, and knowledge is change."[78] Victory Study Club members also learned about environmental issues. Gerald Raun, head of the Biology Department at Angelo State University, spoke to

[77] Keith Schneider, "Alvin Toffler, Author of 'Future Shock,' Dies at 87," *The New York Times,* June 26, 2016 (accessed April 10, 2020), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/30/books/alvin-toffler-author-of-future-shock-dies-at-87.html

[78] "Yearbook 1971 to 1972" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1972-73," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

the club on ecology and the importance of water conservation in West Texas. At the end of the meeting, clubwoman Lois Wright remarked, "All of us left the meeting with a greater understanding of recycling and the necessity for it."[79] As the 1971-72 Yearbook indicates, Victory Study Clubwomen did not shy away from the technological and environmental changes occurring, and they embraced the future by not burying their heads in the past. "Future with Friends," they declared in their yearbook, would make them "unafraid of tomorrow, for [we] have seen yesterday and [we] love today." [80]

In the late 1960s and 1970s, another event in America was shaking up old ways of thinking: a progressive movement scholars have named "second-wave feminism." The term *second wave feminism* came into wide use in 1968 after *New York Times* columnist Martha Weinman Lear wrote about a new movement spreading among American women: "Feminism, which one might have supposed as dead . . . is again an issue. . . . Proponents call it the Second Feminist Wave, the first having ebbed after the glorious victory of suffrage."[81] Since then, many feminist writers have employed the wave metaphor in order to map the trajectory of American women's activism. Under this model, the "first wave" of feminist activity focuses on late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century efforts to secure women the right to vote; after achieving this right, some argued that feminist activities lay dormant until a "second wave" hit in the mid-to-late 1960s. Influenced by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine*

[79] "Programs Given by the Victory study Club 71-72" in President's Reports, 1960-71, File 33, Box 1, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[80] "Yearbook 1971 to 1972" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1972-73," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[81] Constance Grady, "The Waves of Feminism, and Why People Keep Fighting Over Them, Explained," *Vox,* July 20, 2018 (accessed April 10, 2020) https://www.vox.com/2018/3/20/16955588/feminism-waves-explained-first-second-third-fourth

Mystique and creation of the National Organization for Women (NOW), a new group of feminists fought for better access to education and employment opportunities as well as the creation of new laws to protect women's reproductive rights and to enhance women's legal status.

The experiences of the women in Victory Study Club provide an opportunity to expand conceptions about the 1960s and 1970s feminist movement. Often, the movement focuses on members of the National Organization for Women (NOW) or the "radical" feminist activists who challenged the structural, economic, and cultural conditions that contributed to women's oppression, but as historian Susan M. Hartman explains, "Not all women affected by the postwar economic and demographic changes joined either the mainstream or radical wing of the women's movement."[82] Little attention has been paid to the activism of what some might call "nontraditional" feminists. Looking at some of the projects and programs of the Victory Study Club, clubwomen embraced some degree of basic feminist tenets, even if their activism was more conservative in nature than leading feminists.

For instance from the late 1950s to 1970s, the Victory Study Club became more progressive on the topic of married women's employment. When founded in 1942, the club did not consider employment a valid excuse to miss a meeting, and clubwomen could be fined if they missed too many meetings. Yet in the late 1950s, the Victory Study Club amended the "Standing Rules" to include employment as a legal excuse since more married women entered the work force.[83] Longtime Victory Study Club member Erlene Mills

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[82] Susan M. Hartman, *The Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1998), 4.

[83] "Yearbook 1963 to 1964," in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1963-64," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

received accolades when she became the new president of the Heart O' Texas District in 1964. On top of her club duties, she worked as a full-time registered nurse while "raising three daughters and assisting her husband with his ranching interests and motel businesses."[84] More examples of clubwomen engaged in outside employment can be found in the 1976 scrapbook, which featured a clipping from the *San Angelo Standard Times* that "Celebrate[d] Career Women" in the Victory Study Club. It highlighted Alyne Rogers, who became an associate manager at the retail store Hessee, and Bea Stasey, who managed her own real estate company, Stasey Real Estate.[85] Following national trends, more married housewives in San Angelo engaged in employment outside the home, particularly once their children were old enough to attend school, and the Victory Study Club celebrated these career women who not only raised families but contributed to the development of San Angelo professionally and served as activists within the Victory Study Club.

Yet even with this amendment to the "Standing Rules," most members of the Victory Study Club did not engage in employment outside the home. Meetings continued to occur on weekday afternoons, but they increasingly supported women's expanding professional opportunities. In 1966, guest speakers Lorraine Dudley and Dorothea Griffin presented to the club a program entitled "Female Roles Changing in the State." At the age of sixty-eight, Dudley "hammered away at the menfolks today that a woman must and can have a role as a business leader." "Too long in West Texas," she lamented, "the women's role has been

[84] "Mrs. J. Mills Lists Theme of New Term," *San Angelo Standard Times*, March 22, 1964 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1963-64," Box 4, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[85] "Celebrate Career Women" *San Angelo Standard Times*, July 29, 1976 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

visualized as decoration of the banquet for the annual chamber of commerce banquet." Instead, "Women should be full partners in the field of industrial development because there are many important jobs a woman can perform." Griffin, the owner and manager of the Griffin Ranch, also spoke to clubwomen and told of how she managed a large ranch all by herself by learning "to think like a man." Rather than viewing this information negatively, Griffin used the comparison to inspire women to engage in business activities by encouraging them to consider themselves as capable as men to perform the same tasks.[86]

West Texan clubwomen encouraged women to take advantage of expanding professional opportunities. The Heart O' Texas District Convention of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs received a special treat in May 1966 when Carolyn Lawrence Pearce, president of the national General Federation of Women's Clubs, delivered a message to seven hundred clubwomen in Lubbock. Pearce, who was from Miami, Florida, conceded that "a woman's basic role is homemaking and unique and God-given role of child bearing," but she just as eagerly pointed out "we are entering more and more into men's fields of professions, business and politics." This development was worth celebrating. She declared, "This is a time for great decisions and we as mothers, wives and responsible citizens should go into battle with the amour of our intelligence, courage, righteousness and determination."[87] Women's higher education, she stressed, was key in this "battle," and she strongly advocated for women to pursue college degrees. In fact, after her term as GFWC

[86] "Female Role Changing In State," *San Angelo Evening Standard*, March 18, 1966 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1966-67," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[87] "Challenges Ahead: Women Are Urged to Look Forward" *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, May 12, 1966 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1966-67," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

president, Pearce became the first woman appointed to the board of regents of the University System of Florida.[88]

Just as they had done since the club's founding, Victory Study Club members also advocated strongly for women's access to higher education during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1970, another Heart O' Texas District Convention in Ozona adopted "New Dimensions in Search of Women's Power" as the official theme, and the key speaker was Dr. Verna Mae Crutchfield, a professor of education at Angelo State University. Crutchfield discussed the opportunities for women in higher education, not just for teaching positions but also for careers in science and technology.[89] Victory Study Club members agreed that college educations for their children were necessary in this changing world. In their oral history interviews, Victory Study Clubwomen spoke proudly of their children's higher education. All of Mary Nell Mahon's children graduated from Abilene Christian University. All of Nita Archer's, Joann Beauchamp's, and Elizabeth Pool's children also graduated from college.[90] Moreover, when Nita Archer experienced the "empty nest syndrome," she returned to school herself. She expressed, "For my therapy, when my children had all left home, I went back to school and took an accounting course." Over the next few years, she took at least one course

[88] "Challenges Ahead: Women Are Urged to Look Forward" *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, May 12, 1966 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1966-67," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[89] "Heart of Texas District Meeting Set," *San Angelo Standard Times*, March 31, 1970 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1970-71," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; General Federated Women's Clubs, "Pearce, Carolyn Lawrence," *Women History and Resource Center* (accessed April 10, 2020), https://gfwc.pastperfectonline.com/byperson?keyword=Pearce%2C+Carolyn+Lawrence

[90] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019; Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019; Elizabeth Pool, interviewed by Rebecca Sharpless, Baylor University: Institute for Oral History, 1999 (accessed April 8, 2020), https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/oral-memoirs-of-elizabeth-ellen-hughes-pool-transcript/1028901, 59, 107-108.

a semester at Angelo State.[91]

Even during a time of widespread college unrest and protests, Victory Study Club members strongly supported academic institutions and did not join the "academic liberal hype" of contemporary critics, who disparaged the social protests occurring on college campuses in the 1960s and the 1970s.[92] One program in 1971 featured the husband of Victory Study Clubwoman Milli Jones. Dr. Edward Jones was a professor and chair of the Department of Government at Angelo State University, and he told members that they should disregard "the criticism of American [universities]" by individuals who "voiced [that] their colleges and universities are run by communists." Ignore rumors of "Thunder on Campus," he urged, and it appears that most Victory Study Club mothers did.[93] Clubwomen's children attended local Angelo State University, but others went to Abilene Christian University, Texas A&M, the University of Texas, and Texas Christian University (TCU).[94] While most of these universities were conservative in nature during the 1960s, campus unrest occurred while Victory Study Club children were in school. For example, at TCU, students in the Brite Divinity School organized anti-war demonstrations in the late 1960s, though they were

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[91] Sandra Lacy, "Mid-Life Changes Aren't Necessary Traumatic," *San Angelo Standard Times*, August 2, 1978 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1978-80," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[92] "America: Beyond the Rhetoric," *San Angelo Standard Times*, June 6, 1971 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1970-71," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas

[93] "America: Beyond the Rhetoric," *San Angelo Standard Times*, June 6, 1971 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1970-71," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Program Notes 1966" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1967-69," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[94] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019; Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019.

"more moderate and tame than what took place in other parts of the country."[95] A counterculture movement also came to TCU when an underground student magazine called *Spunk Comes Naked* appeared in 1969 to discuss the need for social change at the university. The first description highlighted the diversity of the magazine's staff: "Our staff comprises of an equitable balance of all facets of TCU society. We have Greeks, Catholics, Blacks, Athletes, Artists, Protestants, Whites, Conservatives, Scholars, Dunces, Liberals, Independents and VIRGINS."[96] As campus unrest spread to these conservative schools in the 1960s and 1970s, it appears that Victory Study Club mothers took the advice of Dr. Edward Jones. They expressed little reluctance in sending their children to college during the 1960s and 1970s and ignored the "thunder on campus" warning.[97]

Victory Study Club members also held programs celebrating prominent women in San Angelo and learned of women's achievements in United States history. For example, in 1975, Victory Study Club members asked US Air Force Colonel Norma Elaine Brown to deliver a program, and she agreed. After entering the Air Force during the Korean War and serving in several assignments around the world, Colonel Brown became the first woman wing commander at the Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo in 1974.[98] When the day

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[95] Andy Mills, "Anti-War Demonstrations at TCU," *Horned Frogs at War*, TCU Digital Exhibits, Fall 2017 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://frogsatwar.tcu.edu/exhibits/show/frogsatwar/vietnam/demonstrations.

[96] John A. Ortiz, "Counterculture at TCU," *Horned Frogs at War*, TCU Digital Exhibits, Fall 2017 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://frogsatwar.tcu.edu/exhibits/show/frogsatwar/vietnam/counterculture, capital original.

[97] "America: Beyond the Rhetoric," *San Angelo Standard Times*, June 6, 1971 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1970-71," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Program Notes 1966" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1968-69," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[98] U. S. Air Force, "Major General Norma E. Brown," *U. S. Air Force Archives*, February 1980 (accessed April 10, 2020), https://archive.is/20120716122231/http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=4818

finally arrived, a pressing matter precluded General Brown from attending the meeting, but she sent Air Force Command Chief Master Sergeant Robert Mehaffey to speak in her place. Master Sergeant Mehaffey gave a brief program highlighting women's military contributions. Zula Hall, the Victory Study Club's poet laureate, described the program heard that day:

Colonel Brown spoke not to us
As proclaimed in our year book.
She was sitting on a board,
A fact we'll overlook.

For to take her place with us
There came another chief;
Disappointed though we were,
We heard him with relief.

Bob Mehaffey is his name
Words from his tongue rolled,
Women's value to their country
Was the good news that he told.

Molly Pitcher at the cannon,
Deborah Sampson, bosom bound,
Incidents of feminine valor
In our history books are found.

Justly proud of Norma Brown,
Who is his Wing Commander,
He said it is a coveted post
That has her Administrator.

Her duty proper he gave thought
Women do serve well.
We were all inspired by the facts
Chief Mehaffey came to tell.

Twenty-five members of our club
Are victorious in their way
At this meeting we heard women

Lauded by a man today.[99]

As the program indicates, Victory Study Club members along with Mehaffey shared "second-wave" feminists' desires to underscore women's contributions—both past and present—to the nation's success.

While Victory Study Club members supported women's increasing employment opportunities and access to education, controversy swirled in the United States over ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Originally brought to Congress in the 1920s by Alice Paul, the ERA sought to federally mandate that women's rights be equal to men's by adding an amendment to the Constitution. Though the ERA had been introduced to Congress several times since the 1920s, only in the 1970s did activists successfully bring the amendment into the national spotlight. On March 22, 1972, Congress and President Richard Nixon enthusiastically endorsed the ERA, and the amendment, which stated that "equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," was sent to the states for ratification. Texas became the eighth state to ratify the ERA on March 30, 1972, and evidently, the Victory Study Club was paid close attention.[100]

In October 1972, the Victory Study Club watched a film at a meeting produced by the San Angelo Commission on the Status of Women. It appears that San Angelo was special in Texas in the city's establishment of a specific committee for women's rights in the 1970s. A

[99] Zula Hall, "The Colonel is a Lady," November 13, 1975 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[100] "Internat'l Women's Year Ends: Females Make News; Texans Participate," *San Angelo Standard Times*, November 4, 1975 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

US Department of Labor bulletin that listed "Commissions, Committees, and Councils on the Status of Women" named only seven established commissions in Texas: Cameron County, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Angelo, San Antonio, and Wichita Falls. [101] The San Angelo Commission on the Status of Women explained its purpose: "The Commission monitors women's issues and concerns. It offers workshops and seminars on older women, battered women, employment, credit, health, and the rights and responsibilities of women. The Commission recommends women for city government and community organization appointments."[102] Education was an important avenue in which to meet these objectives, and when it came to educating San Angeloans about the ERA, the commission distributed a film. The Victory Study Club watched the film, entitled "The Time Is Now: Equal Rights for Everyone," at a meeting in 1972, but sadly, the specific content of the film is unknown since a copy of this film has yet to be uncovered.[103] Nevertheless, it seems reasonable given the purpose of the commission to assume that Victory Study Clubwomen learned about the benefits that the ERA would offer to San Angelo women.

While support for the ERA spread and only five states remained to secure its

[101] "Commissions, Committees, and Councils on the Status of Women," U.S. Department of Labor: Office of the Secretary, Women's Bureau, 1979, 6-7 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://books.google.com/books?id=LYLzcJFrUk8C&pg=PA7&lpg=PA7&dq=San+Angelo+Commission+on+the+Status+of+Women&source=bl&ots=UBAf9rWT7f&sig=ACfU3U0sMLe33Pyw4yWPUN5gC8KRhcvRUw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwji2eSNyvLpAhXpJzQIHVweC0YQ6AEwAXoECAwQAQ#v=onepage&q=San%20Angelo%20Commission%20on%20the%20Status%20of%20Women&f=false.

[102] "San Angelo Commission on the Status of Women," Civil Rights Directory, 1981 (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: Clearinghouse Publication 15, revised January 1981), 272 (accessed May 30, 2020), https://books.google.com/books?id=rGhNAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA272&lpg=PA272&dq=San+Angelo+Commission+on+the+Status+of+Women&source=bl&ots=EM2J2IVzQ&sig=ACfU3U2WIhKjVyq0egiU_DG1k9ZYTRFKYA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwji2eSNyvLpAhXpJzQIHVweC0YQ6AEwAHoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=San%20Angelo%20Commission%20on%20the%20Status%20of%20Women&f=false.

[103] "Yearbook 1972-73" in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1972-73," Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

ratification in 1974, widespread, grassroots opposition to the ERA began to mount, and there is evidence that not all members of the Victory Study Club supported the amendment. Phyllis Schlafly became the national figurehead for the Stop-ERA movement, but equally important to the Texas Anti-ERA campaign was a West Texan native, Lottie Beth Hobbs. One of her anti-ERA pamphlets appears in the personal scrapbook of Victory Study Club member, Marian Neal Lavender. Lavender belonged to the club for more than twenty-five years and served in several officer positions until the club disbanded, and in her scrapbook, she kept various clippings and stories pertaining to her involvement in the Victory Study Club.[104]

As the ERA's ratification gained traction, Hobbs became one of the founders and leading mobilizers of Women Who Want to Be Women (WWWW), an organization devoted to stopping the ERA's ratification in remaining states as well as to rescind its ratification in Texas and elsewhere. Hobbs was born to a teacher and a rancher in Callahan County outside of Abilene in 1921, and after graduating from Abilene Christian College, she moved to Fort Worth to work in a defense plant during World War II. Hobbs was a devoted member of the Church of Christ throughout her long life and published numerous books about her faith. She never married. The WWWW created a massive publicity campaign and distributed an infamous flyer known as "The Pink Sheet" in order to discredit the ERA in 1974. The pamphlet, often distributed by Mary Kay Cosmetics representatives, "spread like wildfire across Texas, Oklahoma, and other southern states."[105] The pamphlet began: "LADIES! HAVE YOU HEARD? Do you know what is planning *your* future for you? Are you sure

[104] WWWW, "Ladies! Have You Heard," 1974 in 1992-4 Steven Conrad Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[105] Marjorie J. Spruill, *Divided We Stand: The Battle Over Women's Rights and Family Values That Polarized American Politics* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 31-35, 87.

they are planning what *you* really want? Are you sure *you* want to be 'liberated'? God created you and gave you a beautiful and exalted place to fill. No women in history have ever enjoyed such privileges, luxuries, and freedoms as American women. Yet, a tiny minority of dissatisfied, highly vocal, militant women insist that you are being exploited as a 'domestic drudge' and a 'pretty toy.'"[106] Though Hobbs was not a housewife herself, she was the same age as many of the Victory Study Club members and a devoted Christian, and her message resonated with at least one Victory Study clubwoman.[107]

Though not included in the official scrapbooks of the Victory Study Club, a 1975 pamphlet appeared in a miscellaneous Victory Study Club file in the collection. It is not clear why the pamphlet was included or who placed it in the collection, but it certainly raises eyebrows about how some Victory Study Club members might have interpreted the ERA. Produced by the "Citizens Forum," the pamphlet framed the debate over the ERA and the growing feminist movement as follows: "Our nation is not embroiled in a battle of the sexes, but a battle of philosophies between those who hold the pro-family biblical values upon which our nation was founded, and those who embrace the humanist/feminist philosophy. . . . Keep in mind that the word feminism is synonymous with women's liberation" that wished to "restructure—to completely change—the existing institutions . . . of home, church, school, and government." The pamphlet furthered explained, "Patriarchy is the women's lib term for the traditional or biblical family concept," and feminists used this term as a means to "abolish and reform the institution of marriage."[108] For some housewives, whose livelihood and self-

[106] WWWW, "Ladies! Have You Heard," 1974 in 1992-4 Steven Conrad Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas, italics original.

[107] Spruill, *Divided We Stand*, 72.

[108] "First Federal Festival for Female Radicals Financed With your Money," File 47, Box 11, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

worth rested on traditional marital arrangements, this was a terrifying prospect. Some feared that religion also was under attack by the feminist movement. As historian Marjorie J. Spruill notes, "98 percent [of those against the ERA] claimed membership in churches" whereas less than half of pro-ERA activists identified within a particular Christian denomination.[109] By framing their arguments this way, some housewives found it difficult to disagree that the feminist movement personally attacked them and wreaked havoc on traditional, religious American values. Opponents of the movement argued that "women libbers" exaggerated homemakers' discontent, encouraged rising divorce rates and juvenile delinquency, and forsook the tenets of evangelical and fundamentalist Protestantism. As part of a "pro-family" and "pro-religion" coalition against the ERA and feminism, many religious conservatives perceived the movement "as losses for women, families, and society," which attacked the foundation of what many believed it meant to be a patriotic and loyal American.[110]

What was even more appalling to conservative activists was that the federal government seemed to support this radical fringe movement. The WWWW shamed the Democratic National Convention since "the feminists (women's libbers) elected about 1000 delegates to the national convention. Approximately 400 pro-family delegates were elected." For this reason, the WWWW urged their fellow "co-workers" to write to the president and congressmen to "convince the lawmakers that Bella's bunch [a reference to US Congresswoman Bella Abzug] does not represent most people in the U.S." As part of the official Democratic party platform, they urged delegates to support a Human Life

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[109] Spruill, *Divided We Stand*, 90.

[110] Spruill, *Divided We Stand*, 72, 87.

Amendment, end federal early child development program, "respect the difference between men and women" by rescinding the ERA federal amendment, and stand resolved that "homosexuality, lesbianism, or prostitution shall not be taught, gloried, or otherwise promoted as acceptable through the laws of society."[111]

Another 1975 pamphlet appeared in a miscellaneous folder in the Victory Study Club collection from the "Citizens Forum" claimed that "this [the feminist movement] is the first federally financed revolution." They chastised President Gerald Ford, who had appointed a thirty-five-member National Commission on International Women's Year and provided federal funds for women to attend the World Conference for Women in Mexico City in June 1975. They described a few of the women who were on this commission: Bella Abzug, a "Congresswoman [who] introduced a bill to give 'civil rights' to homosexuals"; Gloria Steinem, a "leading feminist who openly proclaims . . . Overthrowing capitalism is too small for us. We must overthrow the whole +$?&* patriarchy"; Jean O'Leary, "an avowed lesbian"; and Eleanor Smeal, who advocated for "abortion, the ERA, lesbianism, federal child development programs, and all other feminist goals." Criticizing the United Nations International Women's Year, the pamphlet asked, "Do women's libbers, homosexuals, and abortionists speak for you?"[112] These two pamphlets indicate how polarizing the ERA and the International Women's Year was in the minds of some American citizens. Since this account appears in the Victory Study Club records in a miscellaneous file, it is unclear whether the Victory Study Club believed or endorsed these sentiments collectively as a group

[111] WWWW, "Dear Co-Workers," in 1992-4 Steven Conrad Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas,

[112] "First Federal Festival for Female Radicals Financed With your Money," File 47, Box 11, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

or if it was the belief of certain individual clubwomen themselves.

Official Victory Study Club scrapbooks do provide evidence, however, that clubwomen struggled to make sense of the United Nation's International Women's Year. One *San Angelo Standard Times* article appeared in the scrapbook entitled "Internat'l Women's Year: Females Make News; Texans Participate" celebrated the United Nations' proclamation of 1975 as "a year of awakening and acceptance for some women and men across the country." While the Victory Study Club had strongly supported the UN since the organization's founding, they read in the paper that such a declaration appeared to be "the United Nations' token recognition of the feminist movement [that] was a meaningless gesture." True, the body "unanimously adopted [a] world plan of action for the advancement of women, calling for equality for women legally, educationally, politically and culturally," but "nationwide," the paper reported, "the women's movement sputtered sporadically," particularly in Texas.[113] The Victory Study Club had always advocated for the UN, but with such contradictory reporting, how were Victory Study Club women supposed to make sense of what was happening at the state, national, and international level?

In the 1970s, public perceptions about women working in government service appeared to be changing, but Victory Study Clubwomen noted that there was still much work to be done. According to a 1975 Gallup Poll cited in "Internat'l Women's Year," 73 percent of the American voting public said they would vote for a qualified woman for president. On the state and local level, however, the visibility of women politicians was minimal. The article explained, "Only 4.4 per cent of Texas legislators are women. Statewide, only 8.3 per

[113] "Internat'l Women's Year Ends: Females Make News; Texans Participate," *San Angelo Standard Times*, November 4, 1975 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

cent of all elected officials are female." What accounted for the low percentage of women in government? The article concluded, "The most serious barrier to women in politics continues to be the persistence of the belief, held both by men and women, that politics and public affairs are by nature exclusively male domains."[114] From the moment of the club's inception, the Victory Study Club clubwomen worked hard to amend this belief, and they had a history of encouraging women's political activism at the local, state, national, and international level.

The "Internat'l Women's Year: Females Make News; Texans Participate" article ended by bringing the movement back home to West Texas and providing some optimism for International Women's Year supporters. It highlighted "long-time feminist and political activist Juanita Camfield of San Angelo," who wanted "women [to play] a large role in grass roots political movements." Camfield was not a member of the club, but perhaps the inclusion of this article suggests that clubwomen knew Camfield personally and supported her cause. In the article, Camfield explained the potential of the women's movement. "There's been a big difference in politics since 1972, [a change] effected by women . . . . If we can get a big enough group of people to participate in politics, there's no way we won't have a better government."[115] Victory Study Clubwomen worked hard to encourage women's engagement in politics, and perhaps this is another the reason why they kept the "Internat'l Women's Year: Females Make News; Texans Participate" article in their scrapbook.

The 1975-76 Victory Study Club Scrapbook also features several articles about the

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[114] "Internat'l Women's Year Ends: Females Make News; Texans Participate," *San Angelo Standard Times*, November 4, 1975 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[115] "Internat'l Women's Year Ends: Females Make News; Texans Participate," *San Angelo Standard Times*, November 4, 1975 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Juanita F. Camfield, grave maker, Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, Tom Green County, Texas, digital image s. v. "Juanita Camfield," FindaGrave.com (accessed May 30, 2020), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/38813880.

women's liberation movement and presents a complicated story about how San Angeloan clubwomen received the news. One clipping from the *San Angelo Standard Times* in the scrapbook provides more specific evidence of how local women interpreted the Equal Rights Amendment. Shirley Jinkins, a staff writer for the paper, took to the streets of downtown San Angelo to get a pulse on how everyday women responded to the "Women's Liberation Movement" and found that most West Texas women waffled in their responses. Barbara Head, who had an eighteen-year-old daughter at home, told Jinkins "part of it [the women's movement] is good, but I don't believe in all of it." Sister Rosa and Sister Angelus "found some aspects of it good, but some not so good." Rhonda Dean concurred. She expressed, "Some of the women's movement is okay, but like anything else it gets out of hand." Not all women dithered in their responses, however. Some came out very strongly against the movement. Jinkins reported that Mrs. Kenny Blanek, "whose razzing tongue and thumbs-down sign expressed her views eloquently. 'YUK'! she exclaimed. 'I don't like the women's movement.'" Billy Joe Blair laughed, "I think women should be more interested in being women. I don't think they should try to be equal with men, because they are already superior to men in many ways!" Mrs. E. T. Hurley exclaimed, "I've been liberated all my life" but also admitted smilingly "I'd rather be a clinging vine than a climbing vine."[116] While Texas had already ratified the ERA, Jinkins found that what individual women understood or thought about the women's movement was anything but uniform. None of the women interviewed above were connected to the Victory Study Club, so perhaps the article provided context for a program that the club put on in February of 1976.

[116] Shirley Jinkins, "Women's Opinions Vary on Liberation Movement," *San Angelo Standard Times*, November 4, 1975 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

As debates about the merits of the ERA intensified, Victory Study Clubwomen approached understanding the issue in the same way they had always done: by having an educational program to learn about the "Pros and Cons of the ERA." Leading feminists, however, did not give the program to the Victory Study Club on February 12, 1976.[117] Instead, local attorney Gregg Gossett delivered an address to the thirty-five clubwomen assembled. In his discussion, Gossett presented a brief history of women's legal rights in the United States, and the club's laureate poet, Zula Hall, described what the club learned that day in a poem entitled "E.R.A. & Gregg Gossett."

He spoke to us of equal rights
And answered questions from the floor.
We saw he was a comely lad
When he walked through the door.

Quite erudite of manner,
He knew his subject well.
Of Legalities mighty force
We had said, "Please show and tell."

How the Colonists took from England
The pattern for their law
That deemed a woman servile
To her husband or her Pa.

Then with wagons moving westward,
They began to see the light.
Women made good pardners,
All must have an equal right.

They took a look at the Spanish
And from them gained a clue.
The Spaniards had already thought
Of giving womanhood its due.

We live in times enlightened

[117] "Minutes: ERA Pros and Cons," February 12, 1976, Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

For everytime we look
Some brand-new law or other
Has been added to the book.[118]

This quick snapshot of how women's rights in the United States changed over the course of two centuries provided Victory Study Club members with clear evidence that women's legal rights had advanced. So the question remained: what would the ERA do to either further women's rights or diminish them? Hall continued her poem:

The distaff side has come to know
Equal Rights as a blessing
Mixed jobs for many claim
Already has us guessing.

Today air-"stewardesses" are mister
And telephone operators, him.
With women paying alimony
Equality runs over the brim.

Of the cup of understanding
And construction sites now know
The hand that rocks the cradle
Is not the head that will kowtow.

We learned today that E. R. A.
Squared another necessity
No longer must the lady
When divorced take custody.

Or the children in the courtroom
Now for the lucky dad
May get all the kids
But just part of what he had.

Garnered while in harness
And yet as time goes on
Change turns into change
Change has already shown.

[118] Zula Hall, "E.R.A. Gregg Gossett" February 12, 1976 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

And we may profit from it,
Our sisters and our brothers,
Although there always seems to be
Some more equal than others.

Ernestine came back to the club;
She has been out awhile.
Verlie wants to be more active;
We hailed her high style.

Millie read Charlice's letter
Asking for an associate roll.
With Justine back she cannot come
Each time to save her soul.

That Bonnie will be our president
Again next year delights.
Twice blessed we are lucky,
No one asked for equal rights.[119]

With an ironic mixture of optimism and sarcasm, Hall captured the mixed emotions that the women's movement conjured in the minds of Victory Study Club members. On the one hand, "equal rights were a blessing," but the ERA certainly left clubwomen guessing. How would gender relations change in the workplace and in the home? What might be the cost? What might it mean for divorce, alimony, and child custody? While Hall surmised that society "may profit from it," she wondered if the effects would be worth it since "some [will always be] more equal than others." Given the poem's ending, Victory Study Club members may not have actively supported the ERA, but it is equally evident that the club did not embrace the conservative anti-ERA radicalism of the WWWW either.

An examination of the Victory Study Club during the years labeled as the "second-wave" feminist movement provides insights into what many American housewives thought

[119] Zula Hall, "E.R.A. Gregg Gossett," February 12, 1976 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

about women's liberation during the 1970s. Most found the issues within the movement complicated, and in truth, they were, even for activists within the movement itself. While the Victory Study Club did not directly advocate for the ERA, clubwomen did not collectively rally against it. An explanation for why the club did not attack the ERA with the same fervor as the WWWW or Stop-ERA campaigns might be found in looking at the history of the club's programs and projects from the 1940s to the 1970s. By supporting women's education, greater opportunities for women's employment, and an increase in women's political participation, the Victory Study Club shared some of the intrinsic values of the "second-wave" feminist movement, though through more conservative means. In many instances, the Victory Study Club and the women's movement shared the similar goals: to "make American society more equal and open to women."[120]

This begs the question: were Victory Study Clubwomen second-wave feminists? Most definitely not. As white, middle-aged housewives settling into "living in the later years," Victory Study Clubwomen most likely saw little personal benefits in supporting the women's liberation movement, which was largely driven by women the ages of their daughters. Mary Nell Mahon summarized her thoughts regarding the movement: "It wasn't all that important to me."[121] But even if Victory Study Club members were not hardcore advocates of women's movement at the time, they recognized its benefits and embraced change just as they had always done. When asked about how she felt about the ERA fifty years later, Nita Archer explained, "I would have been for that. Women weren't supposed to work; they were supposed to stay at home. The husband was supposed to be able to—and so,

[120] Spruill, *Divided We Stand*, 54.

[121] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

I think the standard of living [and opportunities for women] have certainly improved since then."[122] Archer has the luxury of hindsight in her comments, but she retrospectively believed that the benefits of the women's rights movement far outweighed its potential costs.

As their educational programs indicate, the Victory Study Club embraced change. Archer's sentiments echo what historian Ruth Rosen writes about the legacy of the 1960s and the 1970s women's movement. Rosen explains that the movement "subvert[ed] authority and transform[ed] society in dramatic and irrevocable ways; so much so that young women who came of age in the twenty-first century would not even recognize the America that existed before."[123] It was difficult to gauge changes that the women's movement was ushering in during the 1970s, but this is exactly what the Victory Study Club was trying to understand in 1976. Zula Jones Hall eloquently penned, "Change turns into change [as] change has already shown," and Victory Study Clubwomen studied these changes the same way they always had: through education and friendship. [124] This was how they understood and acted within the women's rights movement.

While there were various reasons that San Angelo women joined the Victory Study Club in the postwar period, probably the most salient personal benefit that clubwomen received was the friendships they cultivated with a group of women whose life experiences mirrored much of their own. The club offered an opportunity to understand the vast transformations that were occurring within a comradery of "organized womanhood."

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[122] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

[123] Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), xi.

[124] Zula Hall, "E.R.A. Gregg Gossett," February 12, 1976 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1975-76," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Belonging to the club provided members of the Victory Study Club with various resources to fight "mental myopia" in their lives as they learned and transitioned through different life cycles with one another. By the late 1960s and 1970s, members entered middle to old age, and club programs reflected common concerns by providing constructive and positive solutions for clubwomen to meet the challenges. As Nita Archer expressed, "As each of our four children left, it was traumatic. . . . I think that the secret of living is staying involved and having interest."[125] The Victory Study Club provided that for her.

Though this chapter ends in 1976, the friendship, programs, and projects of the Victory Study Club did not. The club continued to thrive, outliving many of the other women's clubs in San Angelo. For instance, though founded roughly at the same time as the Victory Study Club, both the Philia and '32 Club disbanded in 1981. In 1988, the Literary Review Club dispersed. The once-thriving City Federation of Women's Clubs during the postwar years in San Angelo largely disappeared by the late 1980s. Only three out of sixteen federated clubs remained in the 1990s, the Victory Study Club being one of them. In 1993, the Victory Study Club officially left the Federation, but they continued to be informally active until 1999. After working to improve San Angelo, the world, and themselves for over fifty years, the Victory Study Club officially disbanded at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Why the club dispersed and an assessment of its legacy are addressed in the conclusion.

[125] Sandra Lacy, "Mid-Life Changes Aren't Necessary Traumatic," *San Angelo Standard Times*, August 2, 1978 in "Victory Study Club Scrapbook, 1978-80," Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collections, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

CONCLUSION:

"CLAIM THE FULLNESS OF LIFE TODAY"

> We are—each one of us—intended to contribute worthily in some way as we pass through this world. It is not meant that we should sit back and receive without at the same time giving. Successful living implies effort.
> -The Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1961-62[1]

Though this dissertation ends in 1975, the Victory Study Club remained active for the next eighteen years, and its projects and programs mirrored similar concerns as those of the postwar era. Ranging from thirty-three to forty-one members over the period, between 1975 and 1993, the Victory Study Club donated money to the Red Cross, the Concho Valley Home for Girls, the Boys Ranch, the Tom Green Friends of the Library, the San Angelo Crime Stoppers, the Battered Spouse Center, and various medical organizations dedicated to helping people with cancer, blindness, and mental disabilities. Clubwomen also volunteered at the San Angelo Center to organize Christmas parties for children, worked scheduled days at the Baptist Memorial Geriatric Center, and assisted in San Angelo's Meals on Wheels. Giving provided meaning to Victory Study Clubwomen, who "intended to contribute worthily" as they passed through this world.[2]

Always a cornerstone of the organization, educational programs encouraged clubwomen to learn about international and community health issues as well as technological changes occurring in the late twentieth century. For instance, a professor of Angelo State University, Dr. M. B. Inman, discussed "Life among the Arabs" at a club meeting in 1983; J.

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[1] "Victory Study Club Yearbook, 1961-62" in Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1960-63, Box 5, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[2] "The Victory Study Club," Folder Three, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1978-1980, Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

P. Darby, M.D., also came to the club and discussed his experiences as "the only American doctor to venture to the frontline between Russia and Afghanistan." Another 1984 program entitled "Housewifery via Computers" explained to clubwomen "what we might expect in the future with computers in our lives and in our homes." Other programs focused on the environment, in which clubwomen learned about recent developments in solar energy, wind energy, and recycling as well as heard energy-saving tips for their homes, and in one meeting, clubwomen toured Angelo State University's Planetarium led by Dr. Mark Sonntag, director and professor of astronomy. Of course, programs also featured women's topics. A 1981 program by a local investment firm talked about the importance of "Women as Investors" and the "crucial role women play in the economy of our country." Another program given by the owner of Merle Norman Cosmetic Studios in San Angelo demonstrated a customized skin care program with "creative makeup" tips; she told clubwomen, "If a woman is meant to have wrinkles, they should be at least be on the soles of her feet."[3]

While the emphasis on certain projects and programs remained the same, there was something very different about the Victory Study Club in the 1980s: its members were considerably older. In 1980, the national General Federation of Women's Clubs sent out a questionnaire to gauge the make-up of individual clubs and asked the age range of clubwomen in 1980. Longtime Victory Study Club member Helen Sutton completed the form for the Victory Study Club, and she reported: the club had three members between the ages of forty-six and fifty-five, two members between fifty-six and sixty-six, and thirty-three

[3] "The Victory Study Club," Folder Two, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1978-1980, Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

members between sixty-six and seventy-five.[4] Given the age demographics of the Victory Study Club, programs and projects shifted to address members' concerns. Clubwomen volunteered at Hospice of San Angelo and Meals for the Elderly. Local lawyer Marilyn Aboussie presented information on wills and estate planning. Another program featured Edwin Draughon, assistant district manager of the Social Security Administration office in San Angelo, who presented "About the New Medicare Laws" and "Senior Citizens and the State Government." One of the last club programs featured local lawyer Glen Lewis, who spoke on "Long Term Health Care," and he gave clubwomen "information on the ways to be in charge of our life if we face a long term illness." Just as the club had always done, the Victory Study Club studied in order to navigate these new waters, and clubwomen's work on the subject won the club first place in the category of "Family Living and Age" at the TFWC District Six Convention.[5]

In addition to organizing and hearing these programs, the Victory Study Club also urged members to make the most out of the time they had left. A poem appeared in a club yearbook entitled "A Daily Miracle."

The supply of time is a daily miracle.
You wake up in the morning and lo!
Your purse is magnificently filled with twenty-four hours of the

[4] Helen Sutton, "GFWC President's Citation for Excellence Form," February 1, 1980 in The Victory Study Club," Folder Two, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

[5] "Legal Rights of Texas Women," September 25, 1980, Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1978-1980, Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Yearbook 1992-1993" in Folder Three, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1978-1980, Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; "Yearbook 1986-87" in Folder Two, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas; Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1978-1980, Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas; Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1980-1981, Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Unmanufactured tissue of the universe of life.
It is yours!
The most precious of your possessions.[6]

Stressing the uniqueness and importance of the present moment, the theme of the Victory Study Club's last official yearbook reminded members to "Claim the Fullness of Life Today."[7]

With few young women joining the club and most members failing in health, Victory Study Clubwomen made a tough decision in 1992-93. They held a vote on whether to continue as a federated women's club in San Angelo. Clubwoman Nita Archer recalled, "There were [arguments] about disbanding . . . getting out of the Federated Clubs," but arguments aside, the thirty-three members of the Victory Study Club voted to formally resign from the TFWC at the end of the meeting.[8] After more than fifty years of working, playing, and organizing in San Angelo, the Victory Study Club dispersed. Nita Archer reflected, "I was sad when we disbanded. I didn't want to disband," but she knew that it was necessary.[9]

Remembering the decision more than twenty years later, former members of the Victory Study Club agreed that clubwomen's age was the primary reason why the club disbanded, but it was not the only explanation they offered. While Mary Nell Mahon bluntly expressed, "It just faded out. Everyone got too old," Nita Archer offered a more nuanced

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[6] Victory Study Club Scrapbook 1978-1980, Box 6, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

[7] "Yearbook 1992-1993" in Folder Three, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

[8] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019; Letter from Marion Gamertsfedder to Club Presidents, March 15, 1994, Folder One, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

[9] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

explanation.[10] "We finally disbanded because nobody wanted to be president, so someone said we have to disband if nobody will be president. . . . I didn't want to be . . . it was not the great thing in my life. My children and my family were the great things in my life. And being president was a big job! The presidents planned the programs and that was a lot of work." Archer also commented that sending annual reports to the TFWC was laborious. "And—those reports! It's because of those reports" that Victory Study Clubwomen no longer wished to belong to the state organization.[11] As clubwomen grew older, holding officer positions—with all their varied responsibilities—became less appealing to Victory Study Club members, many of whom, like Archer and Mahon, had served in various officer positions for more than thirty years.

Compared to Archer and Mahon, Joann Beauchamp was a "newcomer" to the Victory Study Club, belonging to the club only a little more than ten years. She offered a different reason as to why the club disbanded in 1993. When asked, Beauchamp laughed, "Well, what'd she [Archer] say about it?" Pressed further for her own account, Beauchamp did not specifically implicate the Victory Study Club, but she discussed the issues that the larger San Angelo City of Federated Women's Clubs faced. "Well, I think you know, maintaining the building [Massie Clubhouse] up, they got in trouble . . . financially keeping the building up and paying the utilities and repairs and things. We got to the point that we just could not afford it anymore." While the federation rented out the clubhouse, Beauchamp remarked, "There was no alcohol allowed in that building at all, so that cut down some of the functions

[10] Mary Nell Mahon, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 30, 2019.

[11] Nita Archer, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, July 29, 2019.

that could've been held there if alcohol was permitted, which it wasn't."[12]

As Beauchamp's remarks indicate, financial complications might have also contributed to the Victory Study Club's decision to disband and leave the TFWC. Victory Study Club treasurer, Bonnie Story, wrote to the TFWC that the club had overpaid its dues. She asked, "I would appreciate a refund in the amount [$8] as soon as possible. Sorry for any inconvenience this may cause, but our club needs the money. Thank you very much."[13] Though the TFWC refunded the money, the TFWC continued to raise the annual dues on local clubs throughout the state. Records indicate that in 1974, the Victory Study Club paid $117 to the TFWC for its forty members; by 1993, the Victory Study Club paid $204 for its thirty-four members.[14] Living on fixed incomes in old age, some members may have thought paying annual dues to the state organization was an unnecessary financial burden, which might have influenced their vote to leave the TFWC.

Other groups resigned from the San Angelo City Federation of Women's Clubs in the 1990s. Most of San Angelo's prominent postwar women's clubs ceased meeting in the late twentieth century. For instance, the '32 club disbanded in 1981. After fifty-eight years, the Literary Review Club ended in 1988. Only Las Hermanas and the San Angelo Women's Forum remained active after the Victory Study Club disbanded. Las Hermanas closed its club in 1997. The Women's Forum outlived all the federated women's clubs in San Angelo. The last Women's Forum Yearbook sent to the TFWC explained, "When organized in 1937, it

[12] Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019.

[13] Letter from Bonnie Story to Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, June 6, 1978, Folder One, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas.

[14] "Victory Study Club Dues Paid," Folder One, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

[the club] was among 17 clubs in San Angelo. . . . Now it is the only remaining federated club. Today, the club has 12 members who are valiantly struggling to keep it alive."[15] Though determined and offering programs such as "Women's Health Care in the 21st Century," members of the Women's Forum could not keep the club alive, and it disbanded in 2006.[16]

Why did a once-thriving postwar women's club movement cease to exist by the beginning of the twenty-first century? Age certainly was a significant factor, but larger transformations in American culture, education, and politics also played a part. When the Victory Study Club organized during World War II, limited employment and educational opportunities existed for women. After the war ended, the number of married women increased, and many white, middle-class housewives increasingly sought something more than the security promised within postwar domesticity. Some of these housewives embraced women's clubs as a means to move outside their homes, continue their education, and participate in local, state, national, and international activism. By the late twentieth century, however, postwar clubwomen's daughters had access to greater opportunities than those of their mothers' generation. Due in large part to the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, young American women had more control over their education, professions, politics, and bodies, and they did not need to participate within the women's club movement to move into the public sphere.

The national General Federation of Women's Clubs recognized this trend in the late

[15] "Yearbook 2005-2006," Women's Forum Folder, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

[16] "Yearbook 2005-2006," Women's Forum Folder, Box 6.147, Texas Federation of Woman's Clubs, Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

twentieth century. One pamphlet found in the Victory Study Club Collection entitled "How to Recruit the Working Woman" advised clubwomen that "if we are to survive," "we need to reduce the average age of our GFWC volunteers" by trying to "hook working women" to join federated clubs. Appeal to their "children in education, playschools, day care centers, [and] athletic programs" and offer "transportation and babysitting for young mothers," the GFWC advised. Clubwomen should also highlight the professional opportunities that club work offered to working women. "The working woman, in many cases, is using her volunteer affiliations to better her curriculum vitae or in other words her job security and/or position," and belonging to a woman's club offered "visibility, recognition, and friendship," which working women could underscore on their resume. Belonging to a federated club also offered personal self-fulfillment: it fostered a "sense of being a part of something, a feeling of being wanted, an opportunity to work with others, a chance to give one's self, [and] a chance to use skills and talents."[17] Several working women in the late twentieth century, however, did not need a woman's club to nurture this self-fulfillment and worth.

Yet during an era of renewed emphasis on domesticity, Victory Study Club members found self-fulfillment and worth through their work and engagement in a federated women's club outside their homes. Belonging to the club not only expanded clubwomen's interests and education, but it also offered programs that highlighted clubwomen's contributions and provided avenues in which clubwomen could improve themselves, communities, states, nation, and world. In the process of working, studying, and playing with one another, clubwomen changed each other's lives, and these friendships lasted decades.

[17] "How to Recruit the Working Woman," Folder 28, Box 11, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, 1994-8 Victory Study Club Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

In 2019, I handed Joann Beauchamp a copy of the last Victory Study Club Yearbook during our oral history. It contained a roster of the names of fellow clubwomen, most of which were deceased. Beauchamp ran her fingers over the page, and a smile spread across her face. She said quietly, "These are amazing women right here. . . . I learned so much from them. They were real good friends who taught me a lot."[18] The members of the Victory Study Club might have been ordinary San Angeloans, but they were extraordinary women who studied, worked, and contributed to the development of the "Queen City of the Concho." Like millions of housewives all over the nation, Victory Study Club members did not stay cloistered within their homes after World War II; they engaged in various activist projects and programs designed to improve their city, state, nation, and world and provided avenues to enhance women's opportunities in the postwar period.

[18] Joann Beauchamp, interview by author, San Angelo, Texas, August 2, 2019.

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VITA

Kendra Kay DeHart was born in Alpine, Texas to Kenneth Daly DeHart and Karen Kay Edmondson DeHart. She attended Alpine Montessori School and graduated from Alpine High School in 2003. After graduating from Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas with a Bachelor of Arts in history in 2007, Kendra moved to Austin, Texas, where she worked as an internet content editor. In 2010, Kendra enrolled in Texas State University's Master of Arts in History program and specialized in Public History. During her coursework, she served as a teaching assistant and contributed to the development of local community projects in Central Texas. She defended her master's thesis, "Making the Best Better": Home Demonstration Work on the Llano Estacado, 1914 to 1950, with distinction and received the Outstanding Graduate Student in History Award from Texas State University in 2013.

A recipient of the Provost Fellowship at TCU, Kendra enrolled in TCU's Department of History for her doctoral coursework in the fall of 2013. She held various research assistantships and obtained a graduate teaching certificate in Women's and Gender Studies. She also won the Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr. Award for Best Article in *The Sound Historian: Journal of the Texas Oral History Association* in 2014. Kendra has presented at various academic conferences for a variety of associations, such as the Western Historical Association, the Texas State Historical Association, the American Association for State and Local History, the Texas Oral History Association, and more.

In the fall of 2016, Kendra accepted an assistant professor of history position at Sul Ross State University—Alpine, Texas. Currently, she teaches courses on US history, the American West, women's history, and Texas history and directs several undergraduate capstone projects. She lives in Alpine, Texas with her sweet dog, Arrow.

ABSTRACT

FROM VICTORY TO VALIDATION: THE VICTORY STUDY CLUB AND WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN SAN ANGELO, TEXAS, 1942 TO 1975

by Kendra Kay DeHart, Ph.D., 2020
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The stereotype of the middle-class, white postwar suburban housewife is alive and well in the twenty-first century. Popularized by advertisements, magazines, television shows, and Hollywood films, the quintessential stereotypical characterization of the postwar white, middle-class American housewife was that of the devoted, quiescent, and dolled-up suburban woman contained within the home who methodically cleaned, carefully prepared nutritious meals, and unselfishly fulfilled the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of her husband and children at her own expense. Yet how true is this depiction of postwar American housewives? This dissertation argues that many housewives did not stay sequestered in their homes during the postwar period. Instead, they joined federated women's clubs, which allowed clubwomen to engage in meaningful local, state, national, and international activism that instigated substantial reforms. Focusing on the activism and evolution of one women's club in San Angelo, Texas, the Victory Study Club from 1942 and 1975, this dissertation argues that women found personal fulfillment by joining an "assembly of organized womanhood" in West Texas. Using tactics similar to Progressive-era clubwomen, Victory Study Clubwomen developed programs and projects that resisted postwar domestic confinement without threatening traditional gender roles. Taken collectively, studying

Victory Study Club programs and projects thus offer an opportunity to learn what local, national, and international issues mattered most to this "assembly of organized womanhood" and, perhaps, to postwar clubwomen throughout the nation, and it makes making substantial historiographical contributions to the history of Texas, Texas women's, and women's twentieth-century activism.