

The Lady Birds Democratic Club founded by Lorine Lucinda Krebs

Lorine L. (Fisher) Krebs

b: August 1, 1917, Independence, MO

d: July 25, 2015, Lowry City, MO

A discussion between Arthur S. Krebs, III and Heather Krebs, October 26, 2022

Heather Krebs

I talked to Artie, and he told me that Grandma started the first women's Democratic club in Missouri. I didn't know anything about that, and he didn't have details, but I would love to hear some details about it.

Art Krebs

Well, I'm sure it wasn't the first women's Democratic club. It was the first women's Democratic club in the 7th Congressional District of southwest Missouri. And that was a big deal in that part of the state because there weren't any Democrats down there. There were very few Democrats, and the ones that... politics, if you were from the Kansas City area, a Democrat in southern Missouri was almost like a Republican compared to a St. Louis or Kansas City Democrat. It's kind of a funny comparison. But she was very active in it, and she kind of started writing a few articles for the newspaper, and she got out my old English books and used them as a guide because she never had that kind of training before, but she was very good at it. And she got these...when these candidates started running, like Senator Symington, I don't think Symington ever carried Southern Missouri, ever. There were no Democrats that could ever carry 7th District, southwest Missouri. That was a big feat. And they kept wanting to know, why is the Democratic vote in that area increasing? Well, it was because Mom was started that women's club, and then she would go to the regular Democratic clubs of all the counties in the 7th District, and they kind of traveled around together and it made a pretty good sizable group, and they got the message out a little bit. And that was during Senators Long and Symington and then [Senator Thomas] Eagleton when he was our vice-presidential candidate.

Mom toured a little bit with those folks in that area and did real good. Senator Symington come by our house one day, and that was very unusual. That's just about all I really know about it.

Heather Krebs

She named her group the Lady Birds?

Art Krebs

The Lady Birds. It was at the time, not long after John Kennedy was assassinated, and everything was named after him. And they were picking out a name for the group, and so Mom came up with The Lady

Birds, since Lyndon Johnson's wife's nickname was Lady Bird. And then I believe that she [Lady Bird Johnson] heard about the club and wrote Mom a letter. Mom had that letter for a long time, thanking her for naming it after her.

Heather Krebs

We have to find the letter.

Art Krebs

Yeah, we do. I think if I were to guess, it would be in one of the books that your Uncle Paul has.

Heather Krebs

Okay.

Art Krebs

And I'll give Annie a call and ask her to look through them.

Heather Krebs

Okay, that would be great. I recently brought home from the studio a large plate that has a portrait of Grandma on it that my Dad painted. It's from the 1960s.

Art Krebs

Yeah, I remember Rockne painting that plate, and it was fired. Mom had a kiln down there, she made some potteries and stuff like that, and they put that plate in the kiln and fired it with the drawing that was on the plate.

Heather Krebs

It's beautiful. She looks beautiful.

Art Krebs

And it looks exactly like her. It's extremely well done. A lot of those things don't come out very well when you kiln to fire, so this was unusual that it did. She was in her 40s at the time, she didn't like the portrait, she said it made her look old, but really it looked exactly how she looked. When she was in her 50s, then she said she liked the portrait.

Heather Krebs

It does, it came out perfect. He drew us with a heavy hand.

Art Krebs

That's a good way to put it.

Heather Krebs

I'm surprised he didn't keep painting more pottery.

Art Krebs

Well, it really kind of wasn't his interest, I guess you might say. He was kind of in for the unusual things.

Heather Krebs

How did Grandma know who to recruit to her Democratic Club since everyone was a Republican down there?

Art Krebs

Well, they were either Republicans or they wouldn't admit to being a Democrat. But she had me ask around at school, I was a junior in high school. Not ask around, but she asked me if I thought anybody's family might be a Democrat just by knowing their kids. And there were two or three people I mentioned. And then after she got going with them... one was a pharmacist from Reed Springs, and he was one of the key people in that area as far as Democrats go, and he got things rolling. She was also a member of the Democratic Club, but then they started the Lady Birds, and that was a pretty successful thing.

I'd go to several of those meetings with her, and in those days, down in those windy roads, you would not believe the roads in those days. I'd drive her sometimes to those meetings, and it was quite a distance and things and always late at night. Mail was still being delivered by donkey on some of those roads back then.

Heather Krebs

Did people show up?

Art Krebs

Oh, yeah, there was always some, quite a few people, sometimes hundreds of people went to her meetings, people from several counties would come. She traveled around southwest Missouri and gave speeches, and she went campaigning with senators when they came to the 7th District. She was getting Democratic votes in republican areas of the state. And so that's kind of how she got things rolling.

Heather Krebs

That's amazing.

Art Krebs

Yeah, she was an amazing lady. She really was.

Heather Krebs

I would like to read the letter. Do you think any of the articles that she wrote are in any [Krebs family] papers?

Art Krebs

I'm trying to think of the name of the paper. It was headquartered in Galena, and that was the county seat. And the newspaper, it had to have been the Stone County something rather Newspaper from the 1960s and 1970s. She did other articles, too. It was, I think, cooking and stuff.

Heather Krebs

Really?

Art Krebs

She was a very good cook.

Heather Krebs

Yeah, she was a really good cook. She was so busy.

Art Krebs

Yeah, I know it [laughs]. And here I can't hardly get out of this easy chair [laughing].

Heather Krebs

It's incredible. She had the pottery studio, she was a political activist, and she ran the Krebs Lighthouse Lodge. She was busy! [And raised three sons, also a painter, potter, ceramist, and a seamstress.]

Art Krebs

Yeah, that's for sure. She did the work of many people.

Heather Krebs

Yes, she did.

Art Krebs

And did it well.

Heather Krebs

She really did well. I'm very excited to know about the Lady Birds Club.

Art Krebs

There should be a better way to find out, maybe at Lyndon Johnson's Library. I'm trying to think of what part of Texas that would be in, because we'll be down in Texas. We're going to go in a few weeks or in a few days, really. And that might be a good trip to go up there and go through that library.

Heather Krebs

If Anne can find the letter and take pictures of it and send them to me, I can send them to your phone, and you can show them the letter at the library.

Art Krebs

Ok, that'd be good.

Heather Krebs

And maybe they have some information about the Lady Birds.

Art Krebs

There's bound to be. And since everything was named Kennedy this and Kennedy that, then, this was the first thing out that was named for his wife, for Lyndon Johnson's wife.

Heather Krebs

Did Southwest Missouri carry any of the Democratic candidates that she was supporting?

Art Krebs

I think they did in some cases. I know it's all Republican now, but it had a little spike in the voting for Democrats in that area because they didn't have any Democrats in office anywhere. I think they did get some elected.

Heather Krebs

Okay. That's amazing.

Art Krebs

If you could look up Stone County records from Galena, Missouri, it should be in there.

Heather Krebs

Was Granddad a member of the Democratic Club?

Art Krebs

Well, I'm sure he was, but he wasn't as active in that kind of thing, because he was always working. He was always on the job, he was a pretty industrious individual.

Heather Krebs

This is wonderful. And I love that the plate is a portrait of her at the same time this was happening.

Art Krebs

Yes. That is unusual.

Heather Krebs

It's interesting, it's a good find. Thank you, Uncle Art!