

Who is Your Kindred Spirit?

A Founders' Day Program for the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
Written by Jerrie Dooley, Beta Zeta Chapter, Texas State Organization
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Purpose: To remember the founders for accomplishments and to highlight their personal side.

Speakers needed: Up to 13: the narrator and 12 founders. **Time:** 15 minutes

Speaker instructions: Speakers may present in vintage clothes and hold an 8x10 picture of the founder with their speaking part attached to the back of the picture. Pictures could be arranged on a table in front of the speakers or on a PowerPoint. Founders' parts may be presented in first or third person, but speaking as the founder gives a more personal touch. Encourage speakers to speak with expression and add a little drama.

Staging: Narrator starts at the podium to present the introduction. Founders stand behind the podium in a random pattern, such as

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      X   X   X   X   X   X
      X   X   X   X   X
      X
      Podium/table
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Narrator: *What vision Annie Webb Blanton had to recognize in the 1920's that something was missing in the experience of women educators. Many started teaching in rural schools as teenagers and earned degrees on summer break. Some even went on to teach in universities, but they were always excluded from academic societies where intellectual discussion and collaboration was held. At the University of Texas, where she taught, this was certainly true.*

So, Annie Webb Blanton planned to close that gap and establish a society for key women educators. She reached out to outstanding women educators across Texas to join her in this plan. They used Greek letters for their name to appear to be a sorority and not a society for fear of being prevented from organizing. Today Delta Kappa Gamma is 95 years old. There are chapters in every state and 16 foreign countries. Never forget, it all started in Austin, TX.

(Replace underlined words in the following sentence with facts about your own chapter.)

Beta Zeta was the 54th chapter and was chartered by founders Annie Webb Blanton and Lalla Odom in 1935 at the Nimitz Hotel in Fredericksburg, making Beta Zeta 89 years old.

Today, we honor our 12 founders with a brief look at their accomplishments and personal side. What were they like? Were they like you and me? If we could step back in time, who would be your kindred spirit, the special person you would most enjoy having as best friends and treasured colleagues? So, let's meet our founders and learn a little more about them.

Stage directions: Narrator may present Blanton, or another speaker may walk to the podium and narrator return to that person's place. Continue plan with other speakers.

Annie Webb Blanton: *I am Annie Webb Blanton, and I was born in Houston, grew up in LaGrange, and lived much of my life in Austin. You might say I had a challenging childhood. My twin sister, Fannie, died when we were just 12 and several years later, I lost both my mother and my father. I was barely out of my teens and raising five younger brothers and sisters. Thankfully, perseverance and determination were in my nature. I went from teaching in a one-room school to being a leader in my field at the University of Texas. I turned motivation into action and had patience to see my projects, including starting DKG, through to completion. I helped remove barriers limiting the advancement of women.*

I had another side, though. When I was installed as State Superintendent of Schools in Texas, I wore a beautiful blue taffeta dress and a flower-covered hat, and I wore earrings! I loved wearing earrings. I thought they showed the frivolous side of me since most people thought I was rather serious. Some of my dignified friends thought my earrings were scandalous!

Oh, and do you want to know another secret about me? I loved reading mystery novels. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Mamie Sue Bastian: *I am Mary Susan Bastian, but most people called me Mamie Sue. Someone once said that when Mamie Sue entered a room, laughter came in, too. I was always optimistic, cheerful, friendly, and popular. I considered everyone to be my dear friend.*

Some might say I was an influencer. In fact, Annie Blanton once called me up, and said, "Mamie, put on your prettiest dress and go up to the capital. Those men are deadlocked, and our bill is going nowhere." So off I went. I would not say I flirted with them, but I was kind and friendly. My secret weapon was that I was smart, too. I explained the need for the bill in a way they could not possibly ignore and stayed there to see it pass and signed into law. Together, Annie Webb Blanton and I fought discrimination in education, and often, we won.

On a personal note, did you know I was the one who insisted on music at meetings to brighten our lives? I also brought the birthday luncheon to our conventions. You might say, I was a success in life because I laughed often and loved much. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Ruby Cole: *I am Ruby Cole, and I come from San Antonio. I spent a lifetime in community involvement in my city. I must have been on every committee—from restoring the missions and historical buildings, establishing parks, and creating a public library to planning the famous San Antonio festivals.*

I was a perfectionist in every way—anything less was not acceptable. I also knew how to be diplomatic so that people followed my lead. I continued this as a teacher, administrator, and activist for better school funding and teacher welfare. I was also the first founder to start a chapter in her hometown. Beta Chapter is still going strong today in San Antonio.

Sadly, my life was not to be long. When I died of a heart condition, one of my founder sisters said, "She was such a vivid, youthful person, it is inconceivable that her energies could be stilled." But, of course, they were not stilled as my will and determination lives on in Beta Chapter and Delta Kappa Gamma. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Mabel Grizzard: *I am Mabel Grizzard, and my town is Waxahachie. I was always called Miss Mabel at the elementary school where I taught, and the name stuck in the community. Service to others and my community was most important to me. I was in high demand to be president of this and chairman of that. You might say I had my finger in every pie! I was so humbled that Waxahachie honored me in many ways and even as their First Lady of the Year.*

As a founder of Delta Kappa Gamma, a world of opportunity came my way, and I worked hard at every level, not just my chapter. I brought enthusiasm, sympathetic understanding, and humor to my work. I was honored to be Annie Webb Blanton's student in college and later, her assistant when she was state superintendent. I loved reading and research and wrote English workbooks for elementary schools. I also found time for playing bridge and canasta. My life was full, and I am happy with my legacy. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Anna Hiss: *Annie Webb Blanton was looking for a diverse group of women to start Delta Kappa Gamma, and I guess that is why she wanted me. I am Anna Hiss, and I spent my early life in Baltimore, Maryland. I made my way to the University of Texas and was shocked at the lack of women's sports and physical activity in schools and colleges. I was a front-runner in getting meaningful physical education courses for women beyond the single pep squad class offered at schools.*

I was an organizer and determined to build this department at UT, but it was not easy to get past discrimination toward women in sports. I persevered, and my legacy lives on in all the sports programs offered for girls and women today. My proudest accomplishment was the first UT women's gym that opened in 1931.

On a personal note, I was a great conversationalist and sometimes thought to be the life of the party! I sang and played piano at many DKG events. My philosophy in team sports and as a college administrator was the same: Know what you can do best and be where you are needed at the right time so as not to let the team down. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Ray King: *I am Ray Holden King, and I came from Pilot Point in north Texas. I had the unique distinction of being the first treasurer of both Delta Kappa Gamma and Alpha Chapter at the same time. Some might have run away from a double job like that, but I loved "figuring" as I called it --with my pencil and paper. Some might have called me studious and serious, and it is true that when I wasn't teaching history in North Texas schools, I was reading and taking classes somewhere. But I also learned from traveling from coast to coast and from Canada to Mexico. I brought wonderful stories of my travels to enrich my classroom.*

My family was truly important to me, too. We were so close that when my sister Sue and I went to college in Denton, the whole family moved there so we could be together. Our house was a haven for all the girls away from home for the first time. My modesty and devotion to duty was recognized by my peers. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Sue King: *I am Sue King and the big sister to Ray King, whom you just met. I also grew up in Pilot Point and studied at North Texas State. I excelled in the study of history and languages,*

and though my life was short, I loved teaching and helping other women become better teachers. One of my students once wrote: "Miss King is the teacher who made history come alive for me." Many students said that reading biographies became their life-long pleasure as I had encouraged them to read beyond the history books.

As my health began to fail, I spent much time in confinement, but I was so honored to be a founder of Delta Kappa Gamma in 1929. Barely a year after the founding, I passed away. I was only 44 years old, but my life had been rich and full and my legacy lives on in Delta Kappa Gamma. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Helen Koch: *I am Helen Koch, and I spent most of my life in Illinois where my grandparents settled after coming from Germany. I studied piano for 14 years and might have been a concert pianist, except for the arthritis that set in early. So, I focused on child psychology as a professor and researcher. I even worked in Germany to help children who were orphaned by the war. I was a perfectionist in all I did. One of my greatest achievements in the U.S. was establishing government nursery schools when mothers went back to work in the war effort.*

I met Annie Webb Blanton when I was teaching at the University of Texas. We shared an interest in a society for women where no racial, religious, or class considerations would bar someone from membership. I had a vision of a society that would also improve international relations with chapters around the world. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Ruby Terrill Lomax: *I was born in Missouri, but Texas was home most of my life. As a child, I was known to be a bit precocious. My uncle was president of North Texas Normal College, and I spent time on campus. When I was about ten, a math professor discovered my talent in solving math problems. He would take me to his class to show his students how to solve the problems that had stumped them—and to motivate them to try a little harder.*

I spent most of my career as Dean of Women at colleges including UT. It is said that my relationships with the women students was warm and understanding, but I held them to the highest standards in their studies and college life.

Maybe you noticed that all the founders you have met today were never married. That was common of women teachers who often were forced to resign when they married.

My husband, John Avery Lomax and I traveled the southern United States to transcribe the old folk songs, ballads, and spirituals that were passed down, but never recorded. These were important to tell the story of our country. So, I carefully wrote down every word and these records remain in the Library of Congress today. My creativity and steadfastness of purpose made me an asset in the beginnings of Delta Kappa Gamma. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Cora M. Martin: *I am Cora Merriman Martin, and I was born in the tiny town of Chico, northwest of Fort Worth. I was married right after high school to Francis Martin. We were happy on our ranch in north Texas, but, alas, he died after just a year. I never married again. Instead, I taught in rural schools while also earning education degrees up to a PhD. While teaching at UT, became good friends and house mates with Annie Webb Blanton.*

Elementary education was always my passion. I believed that beginning readers needed books with meaningful stories, so I wrote a series of readers with lively pictures much like the Dick and Jane books, but my characters were Bob and Nancy. I was so proud when they were adopted by Texas, Louisiana, and Alabama.

I was called friendly and gracious and creative in the arts of music and poetry. I used these talents to add words to the music of our Delta Kappa Gamma Song. Perhaps you have sung it at meetings: "Women Teachers to the calling." I once said, "Our purposes are but means to an end to render a greater service in the job of building America." Could I be your kindred spirit?

Lalla M. Odom: *I am Lalla Odom, and Annie Webb Blanton and I were grade school friends in La Grange and later at UT. You will not believe this, but I had my bachelor's degree by the age of 17. I was married not long after that and raised two fine sons.*

Mathematics and music were my specialties, and I provided the junior High perspective to the founders' discussions. I personally experienced the discrimination toward married teachers in Austin at the time. I was hired to teach junior high math in an emergency, but when contract time came up, the Board said it was against policy to give a married women a contract. Can you imagine? They said I could be a substitute. I protested this discrimination, and, in the end, I won! I was one of the very first married women teachers in Austin, TX.

I guess you would not be surprised if I told you I was active on the political scene, too. I participated in the League of Women Voters, Texas State Teachers Association and Texas Retired Teachers Association when it was in its infancy. My tenacity was also just what Delta Kappa Gamma needed during that time. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Lela Lee Williams: *I am Lela Lee Williams, and I was also a small-town girl born in Willis Point, east of Dallas. As a teacher, I was known for my constant quest for new techniques for helping children learn. So, I was never bored when teaching the same subjects or grades for years. In addition to teaching, I also took civic responsibilities very seriously.*

At that time, so much more was expected of teachers---more college education, research, and study to make teaching more efficient. But pay for teachers, who were mainly women, had stagnated. As the first president of the Texas Grade School Teachers Association, I led the charge to raise teachers' pay in Dallas and across the state. We worked tirelessly to get our message out to the public. It was said that my tenacity and resourcefulness made this pay increase pass. I became the first classroom teacher to be president of the Texas State Teachers Association. How honored I felt for this recognition of my work. Could I be your kindred spirit?

Narrator: *So, which of these esteemed founders sounds a bit like you? Who would have been your friend and confidant- your kindred spirit? These gifted ladies were indeed just like us-women teachers to the calling. Facing challenges in our personal and professional lives—we are made stronger when bonded by a sisterhood of support in Delta Kappa Gamma.*

Source: Holden, Eunah Temple (1960). *Our Heritage in The Delta Kappa Gamma Society*. Stech Company