

**Southwesterner In Focus
AN ORGANIZER OF NIGHT
WRITERS, SHE DELIGHTS
IN HELPING OTHERS**

By Tulia Winton
Written Especially for Sundial
EPT 12/7/69

Lenore Dils, formerly an editor, a TV personality, radio and continuity chief, contest-er and club organizer, has been a resident of El Paso since 1933. She came to El Paso from Albuquerque, N. M., after having lived variously in Kentucky, Oklahoma and many New Mexico locations.

She is a natural born organizer. Her first club was formed when she was six, at which time she banded together with five other little neighborhood girls in Belen, N.M., to form a club designed to secretly help anything, or anybody in need. Little bows of blue ribbon were their badges and they called themselves "The Blue Bows." Sometimes the little girls made ticklish decisions, like the time a farm owner accused some Belen boys of raiding his watermelon patch. The little girls descended on the farmer and told him he was accusing the wrong children. They had seen his own son making the raid.

In the club there was one English girl, two girls from the deep South, two Mexican children, and Lenore. Their ambition was to make everybody in the whole world happy. A rather large order for six small children. However, Lenore has tried to do her share of making the whole world better. Mrs. Dils admits happily that her two sons, Wesley and Mickey, their wives and her nine grandchildren contribute much to her happiness. "And, friends-how great and understanding they are."



LENORE DILS

ORGANIZE WRITERS

About 1935 Lenore, together with five other writers, organized the Night Writers . . . a group of busy women who only had time at night to write and to attend meetings. Later the name of the group was changed to the El Paso Writers' League, and from this group have come many successful writers. Three of the original members still live in El Paso. The other two are Jessie Peterson and Etna Kline.

Mrs. Dils not only writes, but she has helped many other beginning writers to leap over some editorial hurdle and get their first story published. She is a member of Texas Press and National Press Women.

She admits that next to getting a publisher's check for herself, helping someone else make a first sale is one of her greatest thrills. "There's never anything quite like that first check." Her first one was for a Weird Story. She began her career by writing "literary tripe" for little, obscure literary magazines.

They paid off mostly with free copies of their magazines.

“I couldn’t buy the children shoes with copies of magazines,” she chuckled. She has written for many true detective magazines, for various pulp magazines, Farm Life, Country Gentlemen, Adventure, children’s stories and others. Presently she is writing grassroots history of the southwest for true western magazines. She recently had a story, “The Molly Maguires in the Southwest” in True West.

Mrs. Dils’ recent book, “Horny Toad Man” has contributed much to the railroad lore of the Southwest. She is now engaged in writing a companion piece, “The Horny Toad Woman.” She is uniquely qualified to write about the early steam-engine railroads, having grown up in a railroading family. She says, “Grass roots history never fails to stimulate me, and it’s such fun digging out little-known bits of history about the Southwest.” Her favorite Southwestern writer is C.L. Sonnichsen, and her favorite artist is Tom Lea, “than whom there is no greater.”

Mrs. Dils has collaborated with the late Anna Brand, the Southwest’s most noted short story writer, whose stories have been reprinted in school books and magazines, and included in anthologies around the world. Mrs. Brand also wrote Thunder Before Seven, a magnificent historical novel about Texas.

Mrs. Dils has also collaborated with Jessie Peterson, well-known El Paso writer, and with Amy Passmore Hurt, noted writer of Albuquerque. Mrs. Hurt wrote: “Lenore Dils has contributed her full share of interesting and exciting experiences over the years to the Saga of the winning of the Southwest.”

ON THE AIR

Lenore Dils did not write for several years, due to the fact that in 1951 she went to work at a local radio station. There she became continuity chief and Women’s Program director. When television came to the station, she was given her own TV show, Adventures in Homemaking, an hour long show which was aired five days a week. Chefs and bakers from local eating places frequently were her guests.

“When I first started my show,” she laughed, “I prepared steaks, rolled roasts, turkeys and other expensive entrees. Then the letters started to pour in. The ladies listening at 2:30 in the afternoon wrote that they had not been able to afford a steak for months. After a session with the program director, Bernie Bracher, I did an about-face. I guess I cooked hamburger and stews in more different ways than any other cook who ever appeared before a television camera. Stews turned into meat pies, and hamburger into “moulded steaks.”

“I had not thought about the type of television viewer that was interested in making ends meet. The more affluent ladies were either playing bridge, attending a committee meeting, getting prettied up for a cocktail dinner party, or taking a nap before the children got home from school.”

CHILDREN INTERESTED

“Children, in particular, were interested, I often showed them how to make instant puddings to surprise Mommy and Daddy when they would come home from work. I never suggested that they use a stove to really cook. I was afraid they might get burned. Some of them wrote letters to me, put them in an envelope often addressed to just “Lenore” and some had trading stamps in the stamp corner of the envelope. The remarkable thing was that the Post Office got these notes through to me.”

Mrs. Dils became interested in contesting during World War Two, when her two sons were in the U.S. Army, one in Burma. The ladies met once a month, and they are still meeting. "I think the total amount won is over \$150,000."

Mrs. Dils' biggest win was a \$300 washing machine. "The most amazing win in our group was made by one of our most active members. She won a trip to the moon, and each and every member of the group is suggesting ideas for her wardrobe on the moon voyage."

One small group of writers meets with Mrs. Dils once a month to read stories and get constructive criticism. "Markets are most important. One must learn to not waste postage sending love stories to Science Fiction Magazines . . . or sending children's stories to adult magazines."

Lenore was editor of Sponsor Magazine during World War II. The magazine was discontinued after eleven months because of the scarcity of paper. In addition to writing short stories, children's stories and historical articles, Mrs. Dils is working on Horny Toad Woman, which will be partly biographical, and hopefully humorous. In the book will be set forth the trials and tribulations, and scenes from the world of women in the early Southwest.

Advice to new writers? Perhaps it is to be found in these few lines from a poem, which Mrs. Dils recently wrote:

Empty your inkwells of shame, slime and defeat,
Refill with hope and truth, love and dreams.
Then write—your inspired pen dipped in decency,
Fill pages that will reawaken steadfast faith,
And lift up the heavy, hungry hearts of humanity.

Mrs. Dils has brown hair, blue eyes and a pleasant, friendly smile. She says of her hair, "brown this week—perhaps gray next week, and who knows . . . I might even choose red one of these days."

Lenore Dils has trod the paths of many of our Southwestern greats. In her book, Horny Toad Man, she tells of many of these: Conrad Hilton who learned telegraphy from a Horny Toad Man at San Antonio, N.M., before starting his career as America's foremost hotel man. A letter from Hilton, thanking Lenore for her book, is carefully kept by her. Walter P. Chrysler, another great, was once in El Paso in the Santa Fe shops, learning mechanics and dreaming of the famous Chrysler Corporation, no doubt.

In writing her own book, Lenore says: "I decided to forget all the rules about writing, when I started to record the tales of the Horny Toad Man. I took a look at the track ahead, heard the plaintive sound of the locomotive whistle—two long ones—and as the brakes were released, I proceeded."

All of Lenore's writings have a good, happy philosophy, a way of life. They and she are truly inspiring.

She toasted the Horny Toad Man, who never aspired to be a big frog. A man who was never poor in thought or spirit. He knew the precepts of Henry Ward Beecher, who wrote, "No man can tell whether he is rich or poor by turning to his ledger. It is the soul that makes a man rich. He is rich or poor, according to what he is, and not according to what he has."

Lenore Dils' riches can be measured by her many friends today.

* * *

Southwesterner In Focus

An Organizer Of Night Writers, She Delights In Helping Others

By TULIA WINTON

Written Especially for Sundial

Lenore Dils, formerly an editor, a TV personality, radio and continuity chief, contesteer and club organizer, has been a resident of El Paso since 1933. She came to El Paso from Albuquerque, N. M., after having lived variously in Kentucky, Oklahoma and many New Mexico locations.

She is a natural born organizer. Her first club was formed when she was six, at which time she banded together with five other little neighborhood girls in Belen, N. M., to form a club designed to secretly help anything, or anybody in need. Little bows of blue ribbon were their badges and they called themselves "The Blue Bows." Sometimes the little girls made ticklish decisions, like the time a farm owner accused some Belen boys of raiding his watermelon patch. The little girls descended on the farmer and told him he was accusing the wrong children. They had seen his own son making the raid.

In the club there was one English girl, two girls from the deep South, two Mexican children, and Lenore. Their



LENORE DILS

won a trip to the moon, and each and every member of the group is suggesting ideas for her wardrobe on the moon voyage."

One small group of writers meets with Mrs. Dils once a month to read stories and get constructive criticism. "Markets are most important. One must learn to not waste postage sending love stories to Science Fiction Magazines . . . or sending children's stories to adult magazines."

Lenore was editor of Sponsor Magazine during World War II. The magazine was discontinued after eleven months because of the scarcity of paper. In addition to writing short stories, children's stories and historical articles, Mrs. Dils is working on Horny Toad Woman, which will be partly biographical, and hopefully humorous. In the book will be set forth the trials and tribulations, and scenes from the world of women in the early Southwest.

Advice to new writers? Perhaps it is to be found in these few lines from a poem, which Mrs. Dils recently wrote:

Empty your inkwells of shame, slime and defeat,

Refill with hope and truth,

the deep South, two Mexican children, and Lenore. Their ambition was to make everybody in the whole world happy. A rather large order for six small children. However, Lenore has tried to do her share of making the whole world better. Mrs. Dils admits happily that her two sons, Wesley and Mickey, their wives and her nine grandchildren contribute much to her happiness. "And, friends—how great and understanding they are."

ORGANIZE WRITERS

About 1935 Lenore, together with five other writers, organized the Night Writers . . . a group of busy women who only had time at night to write and to attend meetings. Later the name of the group was changed to the El Paso Writers' League, and from this group have come many successful writers. Three of the original members still live in El Paso. The other two are Jessie Peterson and Etna Kline.

Mrs. Dils not only writes, but she has helped many other beginning writers to leap over some editorial hurdle and get their first story published. She is a member of Texas Press and National Press Women.

She admits that next to getting a publisher's check for herself, helping someone else make a first sale is one of her greatest thrills. "There's never anything quite like that first check." Her first one was for a Weird Story. She began her career by writing "literary tripe" for little, obscure literary magazines. They paid off mostly with free copies of their magazines.

"I couldn't buy the children shoes with copies of magazines," she chuckled. She has written for many true detective magazines, for various pulp magazines, Farm Life, Country Gentlemen, Adventure, children's stories and others. Presently she is writing grassroots history of the southwest for true western

LENORE DILS

magazines. She recently had a story, "The Molly Maguires in the Southwest" in True West.

Mrs. Dils' recent book, "Horny Toad Man" has contributed much to the railroad lore of the Southwest. She is now engaged in writing a companion piece, "The Horny Toad Woman." She is uniquely qualified to write about the early steam-engine railroads, having grown up in a railroading family. She says, "Grass roots history never fails to stimulate me, and it's such fun digging out little-known bits of history about the Southwest." Her favorite Southwestern writer is C. L. Sonnichsen, and her favorite artist is Tom Lea, "than whom there is no greater."

Mrs. Dils has collaborated with the late Anna Brand, the Southwest's most noted short story writer, whose stories have been reprinted in school books and magazines, and included in anthologies around the world. Mrs. Brand also wrote Thunder Before Seven, a magnificent historical novel about Texas.

Mrs. Dils has also collaborated with Jessie Peterson, well-known El Paso writer, and with Amy Passmore Hurt, noted writer of Albuquerque. Mrs. Hurt wrote: "Lenore Dils has contributed her full share of interesting and exciting experiences over the years to the Saga of the winning of the Southwest."

ON THE AIR

Lenore Dils did not write for several years, due to the fact that in 1951 she went to work at a local radio station. There she became continuity chief and Womens' Program director. When television came to the station, she was given her own TV show, Adventures in Homemaking, an hour long show which was aired five days a week. Chefs and bakers from local eating places frequently were her guests.

"When I first started my show," she laughed, "I prepared steaks, rolled roasts, turkeys and other expensive entrees. Then the letters started to pour in. The ladies listening at 2:30 in the afternoon wrote that they had not been able to afford a steak for months. After a session with the program director, Bernie Bracher, I did an about-face. I guess I cooked hamburger and stews in more different ways than any other cook who ever appeared before a television camera. Stews turned into meat pies, and hamburger into "moulded steaks."

"I had not thought about the type of television viewer that was interested in making ends meet. The more affluent ladies were either playing bridge, attending a committee meeting, getting prettied up for a cocktail dinner party, or taking a nap before the children got home from school."

CHILDREN INTERESTED

"Children, in particular, were interested, I often showed them how to make instant puddings to surprise Mommy and Daddy when they would come home from work. I never suggested that they use a stove to really cook. I was afraid they might get burned. Some of them wrote letters to me, put them in an envelope often addressed to just "Lenor—" and some had trading stamps in the stamp corner of the envelope. The remarkable thing was that the Post Office got these notes through to me."

in contesting during World War Two, when her two sons were in the U.S. Army, one in Burma. The ladies met once a month, and they are still meeting. "I think the total amount won is over \$150,000."

Mrs. Dils' biggest win was a \$300 washing machine. "The most amazing win in our group was made by one of our most active members. She

shame, slime and defeat,

Refill with hope and truth, love and dreams.

Then write — your inspired pen dipped in decency,

Fill pages that will reawaken steadfast faith,

And lift up the heavy, hungry hearts of humanity.

Mrs. Dils has brown hair, blue eyes and a pleasant, friendly smile. She says of her hair, "brown this week - perhaps gray next week, and who knows . . . I might even choose red one of these days."

Lenore Dils has trod the paths of many of our Southwestern greats. In her book, Horny Toad Man, she tells of many of these: Conrad Hilton who learned telegraphy from a Horny Toad Man at San Antonio, N.M., before starting his career as America's foremost hotel man. A letter from Hilton, thanking Lenore for her book, is carefully kept by her. Walter P. Chrysler, another great, was once in El Paso in the Santa Fe shops, learning mechanics and dreaming of the famous Chrysler Corporation, no doubt.

In writing her own book, Lenore says: "I decided to forget all the rules about writing, when I started to record the tales of the Horny Toad Man. I took a look at the track ahead, heard the plaintive sound of the locomotive whistle — two long ones — and as the brakes were released, I proceeded."

All of Lenore's writings have a good, happy philosophy, a way of life. They and she are truly inspiring.

She toasted the Horny Toad Man, who never aspired to be a big frog. A man who was never poor in thought or spirit. He knew the precepts of Henry Ward Beecher, who wrote, "No man can tell whether he is rich or poor by turning to his ledger. It is the soul that makes a man rich. He is rich or poor, according to what he is, and not according to what he has."

Lenore Dils' riches can be measured by her many friends today.