

“Ann Richards”
(Excerpt)

by Sally Diamond Verrando

When Waco High School student Ann Willis attended Texas Girls State and later Girls Nation in 1949, little did she realize that one day, forty-two years later, she would become an actual Texas governor, the second woman ever to be elected to that office. Destined for the political arena but born to a time when female focus was supposed to be more domestic than worldly, she cleared a way for women’s equality. That path was often figuratively and literally obstructed by piles of laundry, dirty dishes, screaming children, and a husband’s demanding schedule. She had lived that life without choice and wanted better—for her children, for her grandchildren, for women everywhere, and also for herself. Her early and continued commitment to opportunities and civil rights paved the way for those advancements. But where did that steely drive come from? Events, dropped like breadcrumbs all throughout her life, shaped her social and political education that led not only to the Texas governor’s office but to the status as a nationally-recognized figure of unique strength, humor, and compassion.