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## Guide to MS605 Anita Lee Blair papers

Joseph Longo  
*The University of Texas at El Paso*

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MS 604 Anita Lee Blair Papers

Guide to

MS 604

## Anita Lee Blair papers

Span Dates, 1944-2011

Bulk Dates, 1946-1953

4 feet, 2 inches (linear)



Processed by Joseph Longo  
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Donated by David McKenney.

Citation: Anita Lee Blair papers, MS604, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections  
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C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department  
University of Texas at El Paso

## Biographical Sketch

An educator, lecturer, political activist, and state legislator, Anita Lee Blair (1916-2011) advocated for safety and accident prevention, disability and women's rights, and transparency and accessibility in government. Blair was a freelance safety lecturer and spoke to various schools, factories, and civic groups all around the country from 1946-1950. Blair directed and wrote three safety films including *A Day with Fawn*. Blair was the only woman member of President Truman's Presidential Safety Advisory Council. Blair also helped reform the National Safety Council and advocated for safety legislation in Congress.

In 1952, Blair was elected to the Texas State House of Representatives (1953-1955). Blair was the first woman elected to the Texas State House of Representatives from El Paso. She was also the first blind woman to hold elected office in the United States. Blair was the second blind person elected from El Paso to the Texas State House of Representatives, after Dann Kirby who served from 1943-1947. Blair fought to improve conditions at the State School for the Deaf, co-sponsored an unsuccessful bill to allow women to serve on juries, and supported legislation to make jail time mandatory for drunk drivers. Blair opposed income and sales taxes, toll roads, and some anti-communist hunting legislation. Blair also supported increasing teachers' salaries. In 1954, Blair was joined by Maud Isaacks in the Texas House – the first time in the history of the Texas that two women represented the same district.

Blair was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, but was raised for most of her early years in El Paso, Texas. Blair was the oldest child of Clarence Morgan Blair and Jessie Hendricks. Blair's parental grandfather, Hartwell S. Blair, was an early member of the Oklahoma State Legislature. Blair's mother was a cousin of Thomas Hendricks who served as Vice-President of the United States under President Grover Cleveland. Blair graduated from Austin High School in 1933. Blair also attended Lamar School in El Paso and Alamogordo Junior High School. Blair earned a Bachelor's of Arts at UTEP in 1944 and a Master's degree in Political Science at UTEP in 1951. Blair lost her sight in a car accident in 1936. She was the first El Pasoan to have a seeing-eye dog, a German Shepard named Fawn who accompanied her in her travels. Blair, in her later years, was a frequent speaker in front of the El Paso City Council, the County Commissioner's Court and the School Board. Blair's last run for political office was in 2002 for the position of El Paso County Judge. On November 8, 2008, the El Paso City Council declared November 8 "Anita Blair Day".

## **Series Description or Arrangement**

Series I: Biographical Information

Series II: Safety Lecturer Career

Series III. Legislative and Political Career

## **Scope and Content Notes**

The Anita Lee Blair papers date 1944-2011, bulk 1946-1953. Types of records include photographs, correspondence, clippings, publications, scrapbooks, books, and other printed materials. Arranged in three series (Biographical Information, Safety Lecturer Career, and Legislative and Political Career), these papers document Blair's life and career as a Texas state legislator and as a freelance safety lecturer. The papers also document her involvement in political causes, such as transparency and accountability in local government and the annexation of Lower Valley El Paso. The Biographical Information series covers Blair's life and includes correspondence, photographs, articles about her and her family, and other materials. The Safety Lecturer Career series documents her time as a freelance national safety lecturer who traveled around the country speaking about accident prevention to different groups, including schoolchildren. This series contains correspondence, photographs, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, personnel records, financial records, and other materials. The Legislative and Political Career series covers Blair's time as a member of the Texas State House of Representatives in the 1950s. This series includes correspondence, books, photographs, and other materials.

## **Provenance Statement**

Donated by David McKenney.

## **Restrictions**

No restrictions.

## Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish material from the Anita Lee Blair papers must be obtained from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library. Citation should read, Anita Lee Blair Papers, MS 604, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, and the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

## Notes to the Researcher

Please handle materials with care. Photocopying of materials in poor condition might be restricted.

Researchers should also see:

El Paso Herald-Post records, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library

Eva Ross collection on Women's History, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library

Dann Kirby collection, El Paso County Historical Society Archives

Maud Isaacks papers, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library

Longo, Joseph "El Paso's First Female State Legislator: The Story of Anita Lee Blair", *Password* Volume LIX No.3, Fall 2015, El Paso Historical Society.

Longo, Joseph "Early El Paso Women Political Pioneers 1912-1952", *Password* Volume LX No.1, Spring 2016, El Paso County Historical Society.

Winegarten, Ruthe and Nancy Baker Jones. *Capital Women: Texas Female State Legislators 1923-1999*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.

Vertical File on Anita Blair at the El Paso Public Library's Border Heritage Center

## Container List

### Series I. Biographical Information

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
1	1	Newspapers clippings and other materials	1949-1985
1	2	Photographs-Anita Blair, her sister Jean, and her mother on front porch of house [probably in downtown El Paso; Blair is believed be on the right wearing a ribbon in her hair]	about 1920s
1	3	Certificate signed UTEP President, Diana Natalicio - extending congratulations to Anita Blair upon the Golden Anniversary of her graduation from the Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy; issue of <i>The Prospector</i> containing an article that announced Blair's master's degree from Texas Western College [later renamed UTEP]	undated; August 21, 1951
1	4	Correspondence and other materials	1940s-2010
1	5	Photographs- prints and a negative	about 1940s – 1970s
1	6	Photographs- Anita Blair campaigning for El Paso County Judge; Anita Blair with Richard Telles; Anita Blair birthday party	March 12, 2002; 2002; 1999
1	7	State of Texas Commendation for Service, Resolution 1539, passed by the Texas State Legislature (authored by State Representatives Norma Chavez and Joe Moody)	2009
1	8	Seeing Eye Inc. identification card for Anita and Carmen, third seeing eye dog	February 1991

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1	9	Anita Blair and Fawn in a demonstration lecture and musical program at Liberty Hall	undated
1	10	Proclamation, City of El Paso, Texas "Anita Blair Day"	November 8, 2008

**Series II.** Safety Lecturer Career

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
1	11	Correspondence and Photographs-Anita Blair and Fawn Safety Campaigns [5 Photographs]	about 1940s
1	12	Correspondence and Photographs-Anita Blair and Fawn safety campaigns [6 photographs]	about 1940s
1	13	Newspapers Clippings	1940s-1950s
1	14	Scrapbook- Safety campaign in Georgia	1948
1	15	Correspondence- safety legislation	1950
2	1	Correspondence and Photographs-Anita Blair and Fawn Safety Campaign at McKinley High School	April 29-30, 1947; May 1, 1947
2	2	Correspondence and Photographs-Anita Blair and Fawn Safety Programs in Kentucky	about 1940s
2	3	Awards/Certificates of Appreciation and Recognitions: Award of Merit- Louisville Automobile Club: Award of Merit; Louisville Safety Council, Louisville Public School Lifetime Membership Card	April 12, 1948; April 13, 1949; undated
2	4	Correspondence and Photographs-Anita Blair and Fawn at a public safety meeting; Western Pennsylvania Council Inc. Penn McKee Hotel [1 photograph]	November 26, 1946
2	5	Correspondence and Photographs-Anita Blair and	May 5,

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		Fawn Safety Program in Manitowac, Wisconsin [2 photographs]	1947
2	6	Correspondence and Photographs-Anita Blair and Fawn Safety Program for the Gas Light and Coke Company in Chicago, Illinois [4 photographs]	June 28, 1946
2	7	Safety Bill proofs	undated
2	8	Reproductions of newspaper articles regarding her safety lectures	1948-1949
2	9	Correspondence and Photographs-Anita Blair and Fawn safety campaign in Knoxville, Tennessee [1 photograph]	Jan 9, 1948
2	10	Newspaper clippings and photographs, envelope with braille in back, photo sent by <i>Utica Observer Dispatch</i> [2 photographs]	March 14, 1948
2	11	Photographs- Anita Blair and Fawn safety lectures	about 1940s
2	12	Photographs- Anita Blair and Fawn safety lectures	about 1940s
2	13	Photographs- Anita Blair and Fawn safety campaigns	about 1940s
2	14	Anita Blair and Fawn Print proof	about 1940s
2	15	Scrapbooks – Pictorial Tour on Safety by Anita Blair and Fawn through Plant in Carnegie, Illinois	1946
2	16	Scrapbook – Anita Blair and Fawn in Columbus, Ohio [photographs]	October 10-21, 1949
2	17	Scrapbook – Anita Blair and Fawn safety campaigns [no photographs]	1949
3	1	Correspondence-A-Visits	1940s
3	2	Correspondence-C-Visitors	1947-1950
3	3	Correspondence-D-Visitors	1947-1948
3	4	Correspondence-E/F-Visitors	1940s



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3	5	Correspondence-G-Visits Gary, Indiana	October 8, 1948
3	6	H-Visitors and Correspondence Huntington, West Virginia	December 30, 1947
3	7	Correspondence-I-Visits	1947-1948
3	8	Correspondence-J/K Visits and Kimberly, Wisconsin	October 7, 1948
3	9	Correspondence-L Visits	1940s
3	10	Correspondence-M-Visits	1940s
3	11	Correspondence-N- Visits	1940s
3	12	Correspondence-O-Visits	1940s
3	13	Correspondence-R-Visitors	1940s
3	14	Correspondence-T/U Visits	1940s
3	15	Correspondence-V/W Visits	1940s
3	16	Safety Campaign Pamphlet	about 1940s
3	17	Correspondence: Publishing in <i>Occupational Magazine</i>	August 17, 1948
3	18	Correspondence- Praise Letters for Anita Blair Program	1949
3	19	Personal Records including receipts	1947-1948
7	o/s	Photographs and other materials relating to Anita Blair and Fawn Safety Lectures	about 1940s

Series III. Legislative and Political Career

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
3	20	Correspondence-Drunk Driving Legislation	1953

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3	21	Correspondence-Cosmetology Legislation	1953
3	22	Correspondence-Anti-Communism Legislation	1952-1953
3	23	Correspondence-Advertising Legislation	Undated
3	24	Correspondence-Automobile Legislation	1952-1953
3	25	Correspondence-Fingerprinting Legislation for Teachers and state employees	1953
3	26	Correspondence-Firefighter and Policeman Legislation	1953
3	27	Correspondence-Fishing Legislation	March 1953
3	28	Correspondence and other related material-Education Legislation	March 1953
3	29	Correspondence-House Racing Legislation	February 3, 1953
3	30	Correspondence-Hospital and Medical Legislation	1953
4		Books- <i>Texas Legislative Manual 52nd Legislature</i> , engraved with Anita Blair's name; <i>Texas Legislative Manual for the 51st Legislature</i> ; <i>Manual of Texas State Government by the Texas Legislative Council</i> ; <i>Texas State House of Representatives and Senate Journal</i>	1949, 1951, 1953
5	1	Correspondence-Discharge of Woodrow Bean as legislative aide	May 1953
5	2	Correspondence-Insurance Legislation and Correspondence	1953
5	3	Correspondence-Judicial Legislation and Correspondence	1953
5	4	Correspondence-Land Rights and Correspondence-Cattleman Legislation	April 8, 1953

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5	5	Correspondence-Liquor Advertising Legislation	1953
5	6	Correspondence-Parking Legislation	1953
5	7	Correspondence-Animal and Humane Legislation and Correspondence	February 1953
5	8	Correspondence-Nursing Program at TWC [UTEP] Legislation	1953
5	9	Correspondence-Optometry Legislation	1953
5	10	Correspondence-Parks and Parking Legislation	1953
5	11	Correspondence-Various Legislation education, safety, etc.	1953
5	12	Correspondence-Pensions and other related correspondence	1953
5	13	Pornography and Newsstand Legislation and Correspondence	April-May 1953
5	14	Correspondence-Real Estate Legislation including licensing, taxes, etc.	March-May 1953
5	15	Correspondence-Small Loans Legislation and including pay day loans	1953
5	16	Correspondence-Special state-run schools legislation	1953
5	17	Correspondence-State College Legislation Including proposed merger of TSCW and UNT	
5	18	Correspondence-Student Activities Fee and "Blanket Taxes Legislation"	1953
5	19	Correspondence – Surveying and Land Legislation	1953
5	20	Correspondence-Taxes Legislation	1953
5	21	Correspondence-Texas Western College Appropriation Legislation	January 1953

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5	22	Correspondence-Transportation Legislation	April 1953
5	23	Correspondence – Unemployment Compensation Legislation	February 14, 1953
5	24	Correspondence – Urban Redevelopment Law	February 11, 1953
5	25	Correspondence – Women on juries legislation	1953
5	26	Correspondence – Workers Compensation legislation and correspondence	1953
5	27	Correspondence – Water Conservation legislation and correspondence	1953
6	1	Austin State School for the Deaf Correspondence	February 4, 1953
6	2	Correspondence Pearl Rose Johnson and Payoff investigation in El Paso	1953-1955
6	3	Correspondence-Personal Records including receipts	1947-1948
6	4	Correspondence relating to Blair Legislative career	1953
6	5	Materials relating to legislative career; drafting of legislative documents by State Attorney General; Legislative office stationary; Membership roster of Fifty-Third Legislature	January 9, 1953; 1953; 1953-1954
6	6	Election and Campaign Materials for legislature including cards, flyers, etc.	1950-1952
6	7	Correspondence with William J. Hooten, <i>El Paso Times</i> editor	1953
6	8	Economic indexes	1952-1953
6	9	Correspondence-Marie Roberts Parole Case Correspondence with letter from	June 1953

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		sister, Catherine Robert appearing for her release. Marie Roberts found guilty of murder.	
6	10	Correspondence and Legislation on State Dental School	March 5, 1953
6	11	Correspondence and Publication relating to legislative career	about 1953
6	12	Certificate of appreciation for Outstanding- Mayor Council of Aging	May 21, 1997
6	13	Correspondence relating to Anita Blair's time as Manager of the Headquarters for Fight Annexation, an anti-incorporation organization	1955
6	14	Correspondence- other political issues	1948-1993
6	15	Newspaper clippings relating to legislative career	about 1950s
6	16	Correspondence - <i>El Paso Herald-Post</i> editor and other staff members	1953
7	o/s	Photographs- Anita Blair with Texas governor Ann Willis Richards	1991
7	o/s	Photographs- Anita Blair with Texas State House of Representatives Speaker Gib Lewis in House Chamber [photos signed by Lewis]	1989