

ANN

BY

HOLLAND TAYLOR



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ANN was originally produced on Broadway by Bob Boyett; Harriet Newman Leve; Jane Dubin; Jack Thomas/Mark Johannes and Amy Danis; Sarahbeth Grossman; Jon Cryer/Lisa Joyner; Minerva Productions; Lary Brandt/Brian Dorsey; Kate Hathaway/Allison Thomas; Jennifer Isaacson; Kevin Bailey; in association with Lincoln Center Theatre. The Associate Producers were Colleen Barrett; Francesca Zambello and Faith Gay; Nancy T. Beren/Patrick Terry; Marcy Adelman/Paula Kaminsky Davis; Campbell Spencer/Gasparian Suisman; and Bonnie Levinson. Opening night was March 7th, 2013, at Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theater. The play was directed by Benjamin Endsley Klein; the scenic design was by Michael Fagin; the costume design was by Julie Weiss; the lighting design was by Matthew Richards; the sound design was by Ken Huncovsky; the projection design was by Zachary Borovay; and the wig design was by Paul Huntley. The cast was as follows:

ANN RICHARDS Holland Taylor
Voice of NANCY KOHLER Julie White

FORWARD

My mother, Ann Richards, was larger than life—passionate, funny, complicated, and determined to make her mark on the world. Her journey, from an only child born to hard-scrabble parents in Lakeview, Texas, to being the first woman elected in her own right as governor of Texas, had more than its share of ups and downs. Her personal story, along with her uncanny humor and plain-spoken truisms, captured the imagination of the public—those who knew her and many more who felt like they did.

In ANN, Holland has mastered what many comedians, politicians, and writers have attempted for years—she found the voice of Ann Richards. Holland researched every word, speech, and interview that Ann Richards ever wrote or spoke. She became a living archive of Mom's life. Holland's writing and performance tells her story brilliantly—as Mother would say, warts and all. There's not a single word out of place. Books have been written, documentaries made, but nothing truly captures the life of my mother like ANN.

Mom loved sitting in a dark theater and being entertained and inspired. I'm grateful that Holland Taylor has done both with ANN. Through Holland's work, Mom can continue to inspire young women and men, and as a result some may devote their lives to public service. She believed there was no higher calling, and nothing would have pleased her more.

—Cecile Richards

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Other sources simply too numerous to mention.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There is no way to convey my love and appreciation for the hundred or so friends, associates, and members of Ann Richards' family who helped me understand her in a way that would have been utterly impossible without them.

I was compelled to write this play... the notion to do it at all, the idea for how to write it—its shape and style—came all in a rush, leaving me wide-eyed with surprise. And in I plunged. During the darkest hours of trying to shape a tumultuous mountain of material, in a daydream I would see Ann in the fifth row, beaming happily and elbowing our mutual old friend, Liz Smith. Six years of work later, I made a journey I could never have imagined. But I went in whole hog, and stayed in—working hard and doing the best I could—which gave me a hint of how I'll bet Ann Richards felt every single day.

I hope Ann would like this. People loved to please her... one of her children said to please her was to get hit with a million suns. So, of course, now I want to please her, too.

Texans have welcomed me in my endeavor, which I find incredibly generous (Yankee that I am), and I will always be grateful for their affection and fun and open hearts.

As this is a piece of writing based on research, I should say something about the text itself. I had intended by now to annotate it, to say who told the story something was based on, what chunk was cobbled from this, what sliver was taken from that, and what large sections were stitched up out of whole cloth, though based on sure and certain knowledge of my subject. But, of course, the tide sweeps me along, and I haven't done that yet. (I never did master footnotes in school.)

Most of the play is based on years of overlapping stories told to me in significant detail, including fragments of fabulous dialogue, by the players themselves.

The office scenes in the play have been created based on many, many anecdotes and, in some areas, profound and lengthy study—though the play's ending, for obvious reasons, is purely a dream—about someone I do think of now as a friend I know pretty well, and love.

—Holland Taylor

CHARACTERS

ANN RICHARDS

NANCY KOHLER

ANN

ACT ONE

At first glance the setting is a modest 1930s college auditorium prepared for a graduation. Flags hang in the shadows. On the right side of the stage, in golden light, is an old-fashioned, carved wood podium. The rich red curtain backdrop across the proscenium is festooned with handsome school banners flanking an old pull-down movie screen, which hangs a man's height above the stage. Projected on the screen is an old bordered school banner that reads, "The Graduating Class Welcomes Governor Ann Richards."

COLLEGE PRESIDENT. *(Voiceover.)* Welcome, welcome everybody... Before we introduce our distinguished visitor, we're going to show some film many of you will certainly remember.

The lights have dimmed halfway. As the actual audience quiets down, the imaginary college's audience is heard—an expectant murmur. The projection of the school banner is replaced with the TV news footage of the 1988 Convention: crowd noises, the blue background, the huge DNC logo, the high blue podium, and Ann Richards is opening her keynote speech. A long shot shows the deep volume of the hall. She repeats "Thank you," smiling broadly, as the excited audience settles down.

ANN. Thank you! Thank you!
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Buenas Noches, Mis Amigos.

Huge roar from the crowd. From several angles we see bouncing signs, smiling faces.

Twelve years ago, Barbara Jordan—another Texas woman—

Applause. She rides it.

Barbara made the keynote address to this convention—and two women in a hundred and sixty years is about par for the course. But if you give us a chance, we can perform. After all, Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did, she just did it backwards and in hi-i-gh heels!

The “tape” escapes the confines of the screen, music associated with Ann Richards’ campaign, such as the theme music from Chariots of Fire, sounds, the confetti illusion over the convention image spreads out over the entire proscenium and red curtain, through the center of which Ann will enter. The “tape’s” applause continues as the curtain lifts. Music up full, as if played by the college. Ann walks on unceremoniously, with her blue speech box.

COLLEGE PRESIDENT. (*Voiceover.*) Will the graduating class, and all here, please welcome Governor Ann Richards!

ANN. Thank you. Thank you very much. (*Looking up to the follow spot.*) Well, how great you guys put on that music! You know, we used that in every campaign of mine! I never tired of it—I would even play it on a little tape recorder and earphones on the Hike-and-Bike Trail, and it always chuffed me up! And my Lord, but it does take me back to see a bit of that keynote speech that changed my life forever...

Well, look at you, y’all clean up pretty well.

(*To the seniors.*) I thank the senior class for inviting me to speak at your graduation... (*To the hall.*) I bet some of you jus’ remember ME ’cause of my *hair*. You know, I notice most of the guys who tease me about my hair don’t have any. I am glad to be here—to help swing the doors wide as you take wing to a new time in your life— But I don’t know if this class has any idea what happens when they invite someone who could also be their grandmother to come speak, because I have a lot of opinions. Can you imagine if I were your mother-in-law? I could fix you.

Now, before I go any further, I probably should mention, since you could be from all over the country, you might think I was the first female Governor of Texas, so I want to rush to disabuse you of that notion. Texas elected its first female governor way back in the 1920s. Her name was Ma Ferguson. Ma was called Ma ’cause she was married to a man named...

Audience responds—“Pa!”

This is a pretty sharp crowd.

And Pa was Governor of Texas. He was impeached for selling pardons to people in the penitentiary, and when they carted Pa off to the pen himself, Ma was elected in his stead. Her campaign slogan?—was “two Governors for the price of one!”

Now, there was a driving issue in Texas at the time that will sound somewhat familiar, even today—about whether or not children were to be punished if they spoke Spanish in the public schools. They asked Ma what she thought about it, and Ma said—this is true—Ma said, “If the English language was good enough for Jesus Christ, it is good enough for the school children of Texas.”

And I’ll bet you also don’t know that the Father of Our Country was born in Texas. And when he was just a slip of a boy, he took his li’l hatchet, and walked out into the backyard, and chopped down the family mesquite tree. And when his father walk’ out into the yard and saw the only shade for fifty miles lying dead on the ground, he called him out, and he says, “George. Did you cut down this mesquite tree?” And George says, “Well, yes... I cannot tell a lie, I took my li’l hatchet and I cut the tree down.” And his father says, “Well, Son, we are going to have to move to Virginia.” And George says, “Oh, Father, do we have to move ’cause I cut down the tree?!” And his father says, “No, Son—it’s because if you can’t tell a lie, you ain’t never gonna amount to anything in Texas.”

She shoots her cuffs conceitedly.

President and members of the Board of Trustees, esteemed faculty, proud graduates—and relieved parents. It isn’t just you pink-cheeked youngsters who face the unknown today... Our nation is in the throes of a “commencement,” if you will, more dramatic than I have seen in my lifetime. We now move forward from our Industrial Age into the new Information Age—and this enormous shift puts the burden on your generation. Now, earlier in the century, the simple move from the Agrarian Age into our industrial economy—from the farm to the factory floor—asked nothing new of America’s workforce. You understand? Work still meant having a strong back and putting in the hours to do well. But this no longer holds true. For the computer consoles, which now run the world... a strong back, and sweat of the brow, are

not what is required. We face a daunting change. So, look—we're all nervously twirling our mortarboard tassels this day.

Oh, my goodness, it just got so quiet in here! Come on, y'all know every commencement speech has to have a gloom and doom part. That was it.

Now, what I *must* do is congratulate your girls' basketball team on landing in the top three of the Southwest Conference!

I loved basketball when I was at Baylor, and I am a big Lady Longhorns fan!—When I first started going to their games, I was so staggered to see Barbara Jordan there. Here was I, this awe-struck li'l housewife, and *there* was this great American patriot, her chair drug up to the scorekeeper's table—and on a bad night for the team, she would pound that table with the flat of her hand, and say in the voice of God, “Can we not, I say, can we not shoot any better than this?” Oh, man—There was simply something about Barbara Jordan that made you proud to be part of the country that produced her. I still get a catch in my throat to *think* that, fifteen years later, she would chair my campaign for Governor.

Well, y'all, I just love being in this part of Texas! My Daddy was born just up the road from here. 'N' when I was growing up in the early 1930s, it had to be unusual that a father—a simple man, didn't go past eighth grade—would tell his little girl, his only child, that she could do anything she wanted to in life. But he said it a lot—and he told me that I was really smart so often that I believed him. Wadn't till I got to college, th't I wondered if he might be wrong.

I suppose I owe my natural confidence to my Daddy. But y'all—confidence for what? When I was young—back in the Bronze Age—little girls did not envision *careers*. Even nursing and teaching, so desperately important—they weren't thought of as careers back then. Truth is, they were basically jus' extensions of what was expected of women *anyway*.

Man, had I had a crystal ball—back there when I was a kid in Lakeview, that wide spot in the road where I grew up near Waco—where there was no lake to view—and had I seen that I would become Governor of the great State of Texas, the ninth largest economy in the world, I would have fallen backwards off the porch laughing!

My childhood was as simple as a crayon drawing. My Mama, who was called Ona, was one tough bird. My Daddy, Cecil, was pure sunlight—'n' I see both of them in me like a swirl dip cone.

I was Daddy's pride and joy, but my Mama looked at me with a narrowed eye, and she jus' pulled me through a knothole my entire childhood.

I suppose we were poor—this was the middle of the Depression—but I don't like the word, I prefer "hardworking." My Daddy worked for the same pharmaceutical company all his life—first as a driver, and then a salesman—and he left the house early and he came home late.

And I don't believe I ever once saw my mother idle.

We lived in a little clapboard house she basically raised up herself—drew it out with a builder, bought the materials, hired laborers in town. Mama was as hard as the nails that held that house together.

The day I was born in that house—you see, there was no star in the east—on that day, a neighbor came by to help make dinner for Mama and Daddy. But the woman didn't know that a chicken needed killing, and she just couldn't do it. So my Mama, right there in the birthing bed, hunched herself up on an elbow and wrung that chicken's neck for her.

Mama said!—when she taught me to sew—that if the seam was not straight, or if the stripes did not match on the seam, that I'se gonna have to pull every one of those stitches *out* with my *teeth*, on Judgment Day!

One day I began to understand that I would never, ever, ever please my mother—and that's when it sorta got funny! When I gave that big keynote speech in Atlanta, the TV station back home in Waco, KWTX, set up this big ol' watch party, where my parents crowded in with a whole lot of people to see the thing on a live feed. After the speech, I was kinda dazed, but I knew it had been a big deal, so I call 'em up on the telephone! And Mama says, "Ann! Ann!... You'll never guess what happened... something really wonderful!" And I get all warm, and I say, "What, Mama, what?" And she says, "Oh, Ann!... I got to meet the Channel Ten Weatherman!"

(Coming out of laughter.) Oh, God...

I tell these stories on my Mama... but no, I do owe her gratitude. I got her grit. She taught me that you move on. *You don't cry over spilt milk*. In fact, if my Mama is your Mama, you better not cry at all.

Now, my father was a *darling* man. He usta take me by the hand—now I was this little bitty thing, and he is six foot four... and he'd say, "Let's go, Puss!"—and he'd take me fishing, which I thought

ANN

by Holland Taylor

1W

ANN is an intimate, no-holds-barred portrait of Ann Richards, the legendary late Governor of Texas. This inspiring and hilarious play brings us face to face with a complex, colorful, and captivating character bigger than the state from which she hailed. Written and originally performed by Emmy Award-winner Holland Taylor, ANN takes a revealing look at the impassioned woman who enriched the lives of her followers, friends, and family.

"... fiery, salty and brash!"

—The New York Times

"... fun and engaging... marinated in Texas wryness. ... ANN wants you to savor the wit of this up-by-the-bootstraps politico, who began... as an adoring wife and mother and reinvented herself by entering politics and ascending the ladder. ... Taylor's Richards gives us a tantalizing taste of what drew her to the public arena."

—The Washington Post

"ANN is blisteringly funny. Taylor vividly captures the spirit of her icon. It's hard not to feel the tenderness radiating from the stage. ... Feel the power and presence of a truly unforgettable character."

—Washingtonian Magazine

"[Taylor] has crafted a passionate love letter to Richards... [a] witty script... a poignant reminder of what was lost when Richards died of cancer."

—NBC New York

"A highly entertaining and lovable depiction of a woman with energy to burn and purpose to fill."

—The Huffington Post

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