



Gussie Nell Davis, posthumously
Southwestern Bell Cotton Bowl Hall of Fame Class of 1999
Acceptance Speech presented by Deanna Bolton Covin,
past director of the Kilgore Rangerettes

Thanks, Craig (James), for that nice introduction, and thanks to the Cotton Bowl Association for having us here. I would also like to thank Southwestern Bell for keeping the many Cotton Bowl traditions, and for expanding these traditions by adding this Cotton Bowl Hall of Fame. And I would be remiss if I didn't thank the selection committee for choosing Miss Davis to be inducted into this Class of '99. It is indeed an honor for me to accept this award on behalf of Miss Davis. Of the many honors and awards she has received, this one would have been her favorite—for she loved the Cotton Bowl. She was always here—in the rain—in the sleet—in the ice—in the snow. she had her girls here and ready to perform. But, each time before entering the stadium, she would say, "Let's go get a corny dog!" We did this every year.

She loved the Cotton Bowl Ball—where she would see such wonderful people as Field and Mary Scovell, Wilbur Evans, Lindsey Nelson, Felix McKnight, Lamar Hunt and Mr. Bradley, the photographer who always took our picture. Miss Davis enjoyed working with halftime director, Harry Barton, who had us perform during the half—sandwiched between the two participating university bands. For example, Notre Dame vs. Texas. We had 5 minutes. They each had 6 1/2 minutes. But, Notre Dame complained that they wanted more time so we were moved to pre-game. That was fine with Miss Davis, for now we had 7 1/2 minutes and we could do our complete Kilgore College football field performance.

And now, once again, we are featured at halftime with our own special routine. And, during the finale, we are center stage. I am certain that Miss Davis is smiling down on Mike Miller, the present pageantry director. He has given the Cotton Bowl pageantry a new and unique concept and the Rangerettes are proud to be a part of it.

Miss Davis was a living legend, and in death, she leaves behind a lasting legacy. When she created the Rangerettes, she gave America a new art form – the dancing drill team. She made a difference in the lives of thousands of young women. She made a difference to the world of entertainment, and obviously, she made a difference to the Cotton Bowl. The Rangerettes first performed here in 1949. They skipped 1950, but returned in 1951, and they will celebrate their 50th consecutive appearance on January 1, 2000.

Miss Davis died on December 20, 1993. It was a shock to everyone. the papers throughout the state carried the news of her death—many times on the front page. Editorials were written – the Texas Monthly printed her picture in the *State of the Art* section. During the visitation time of her funeral, Judy Hale, her first captain, was overheard to say, "One night we will look into the sky and see 48 stars all lined up in a row, with 5 brighter stars out front, for Gussie Nell was there, and she would see to it!"

I haven't seen the stars lined up yet, and I'm still looking. But I never see the red, white and blue flags nor hear the Battle Hymn of the Republic being played, or come to the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Day, that I don't think about this extraordinary individual – Gussie Nell Davis.

So, as I accept her handsome trophy, I would like for those representing Kilgore College and for all her Rangerettes past and present to stand.... I shall place this statue in the Rangerettes Museum in honor of Kilgore College and in honor of all the Rangerettes and all of the Rangerette Forever's who have been a part of this great Cotton Bowl Classic. I do this for Miss Davis. And to everyone in the audience, thanks for being here today. Your presence has made this special occasion even more special.