

## *Texas Bluebonnet Award Promotional Video by Kathy Wendling*

Since its inception in 1979, the TBA reading program's primary goal has been reading promotion. The Master List suggests books to encourage students to read a diverse selection of literature which reflects and expands their world.

To support libraries that are promoting these books, the TBA committee has annually produced a video highlighting the books from the Master List since 1991. Here's the background on that promotional video that's been introducing kids to Bluebonnets for fifteen years.

For the first ten years the videos were produced with the help of local library systems or Education Service Centers. One or two of the TBA committee members were assigned video production responsibilities. The early film-makers include Molly Krukewitt, Beth Thames, Rose Trevino, Debbie Whitbeck, Patrick Mullin, and Jane Claes. Kudos to these trail blazers!

In 2001, video subcommittee members Jane Claes and Dana Davis Avants enlisted the help of professional producer, Ray Merchant. With Disney promotional videos and commercials for Ed McMahon's Star Search to his credit, Ray brought experience and talent to the production. Because Ray offices in Dallas, the two TBA committee members from District 5 (Dallas) and District 7 (Ft. Worth) have been charged with video production. While using a professional director, as well as a professional sound and light crew, increases the cost of production significantly, the end result is well worth the expense!

Before the Master List has even been selected, the video subcommittee secures a venue for that year's video. Once the books have been selected in late October, they write a script and submit it to TLA's Publications Committee. This script takes 20 diverse books and weaves them into a loose story that fits the setting. Recent settings have included the Reunion Arena with the Dallas Mavericks, the Fort Worth Stock Show, the Dallas Zoo, the Texas Motor Speedway and this year's location, the Frontiers of Flight Museum. Of course, research about the setting is a must. I have learned more about zoos, race tracks, and airplanes than I ever thought possible.

Once the script is approved by the TLA Executive Board, child actors must be found. Ray always warns us about the "ABC" fears of film directors (animals, boats, and children, because they are all so unpredictable!), but we've discovered the students to be hard-working, focused, and a great deal of fun. Plus, they work for nothing more than a free lunch and a completed video! Try-outs and rehearsals are in December and January. Filming must be completed in January to complete post-production work and copy the videos before the TLA conference in April.

Now, you all know Texas weather in January is unpredictable. I'd add a "W" to Ray's list of filming nightmares! The day we filmed at the Texas Motor Speedway was cold (high of 42), damp, foggy, and windy. Holding cue cards without gloves in this cold wind made me very determined to find an indoor setting for the next year.

In summer 2004, the Frontiers of Flight Museum moved from their Love Field location to a beautiful new building adjacent to the airport. Museum directors Dan Hamilton and Sharon Spalding were accommodating in every way. The video for 2005-2006 looked like it was going to be the easiest shoot ever!

Ten days before filming, I called to confirm our times and received a recorded message that the museum was closed due to flooding. Yikes! However, the museum quickly replaced the damaged carpet and made other repairs. Smooth sailing ahead... Three days before filming our lighting director's wife gave birth to their baby-two months prematurely. (Both baby and mom are doing well now!) Ray scurried to find another talented lighting guy, who would work for the meager amount we can afford to pay. And it's a wrap for another year! Check out this year's video, *Soaring into the Wild Bluebonnet Yonder*.

I feel lucky to have worked with so many talented, generous people during my three years on the TBA committee. I have learned so much about filmmaking, books, and human nature!

In the next article one of the student actors details the thrill, fears, and work involved in the production of this year's video.

## *Bluebonnet Video Review: An Actor's Point of View By Ashley*

*(Ashley is a sixth grader in Richardson ISD)*



Although being in this video was a lot of hard work, I will never regret the wonderful time I had making it!

At first it seems thrilling to be cast in a video, and you want to tell all of your friends, but then you almost want to take it all back when you find out that you have to memorize the entire script! But by then, it's too late. You can't turn back!

Wherever you are part of a filmmaking adventure, be prepared for any kind of weather! I know that two years ago, the Bluebonnet video was filmed outdoors when the temperature was just above freezing. This year we were very fortunate to have our "shoot" (that's what the pros call it) indoors at the Frontiers of Flight Museum in Dallas. We were out of the weather, so we didn't get cold. Instead, we were very hot - because we were under all of the lights!

Memorizing the script takes the majority of the time, but I've learned that if you are under too much pressure memorizing your lines, just relax and take it easy. But don't leave the lines until the last minute because that will just cause trouble for you. Once you've memorized your lines, you can work on facial expressions and movements. Memorizing the script is one of the biggest parts of being in the video.



The filming process is always very long, but always very worthwhile! This year, the filming took about ten hours to shoot, even though the finished video is only 30 minutes long. The day is fun if you just relax and enjoy yourself. At first I thought that I might throw up before I filmed my first scene, but my friends helped me through it. As long as there is someone there to reassure you and help you relax, it will be just fine!

Kids from all over Texas get to see the video, and it is something that you will not regret! All of your friends get to see it, and they will wish that they were you. As a former Bluebonnet video "star", this was a chance of a lifetime, and one I will remember my whole life!