



THE DELAWARE STATE BUG STORY

The following is an account written by Lulu Ross Elementary School Teacher Mollie Brown in 1974:

“Move over state bird. Move over state flower. Now Maryland has a state ‘bug’. The bug is a butterfly. All states have a state flower and bird, but Maryland may be the first state to have a state bug.” It was just a short article of six sentences that started the whole idea of a State Bug for Delaware. Last fall my Social Studies plans for the day included the Weekly Reader—a children’s newspaper. As we read the article entitled, “Butterfly is State Bug”, little did I dream that this would be one that would motivate my children to such a great extent.

This article led to a lengthy class discussion about a State Bug for Delaware, suggestions of what our bug could be, and a vote by the class. The final vote was for one of three bugs--the cricket, the mosquito and the ladybug. The children talked about the three bugs and after deciding that the cricket ate their clothes, and the mosquito bit them, the ladybug was selected. Mark Mullen, one of my students, brought in a ladybug.

A series of events followed, which I would like to briefly summarize for you. First, the children composed a letter to our Honorable Governor Tribbitt asking him to help us get a State Bug. Shortly following this, Governor and Mrs. Tribbitt were the guests of my class to have lunch at our school during National School Lunch Week. He spent time talking to the children about a State Bug and what steps they should take to accomplish this. Representative Lewis Harrington also visited us and agreed to help us.

Mr. Glenn Moyer, our district Director of Instruction, who had been informed of our plans asked if a High School Social Studies class could be responsible for doing research and setting up the groundwork for getting the bill introduced into legislature. Mr. James Brooks’ class was selected. As a part of their research, letters were written to all school districts in the State, asking for their support for a State Bug. They received very favorable response. Other leaning activities included visits to Mr. Brooks’ class by my children and visits to my class by his. These visits gave us the chance for good communication about the program of our idea.

During the months that followed, we were given much publicity by the news media. Articles and pictures appeared in the Milford Chronicle, the Dover State News, Wilmington papers, and the Philadelphia Inquirer.

On March 9, 1974, House Bill #667 was introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Lewis B. Harrington. This bill was co-sponsored by Representatives Harrington and George Robbins and Senators Thurman Adams, Jr. and Nancy Cook. Articles appeared in the newspapers. The Philadelphia Inquirer did a lengthy story telling how it came about. The Evening Journal had a lovely cartoon and the Delaware State News, another article.

The class wrote letters to all the co-sponsors of the bill to thank them for sponsoring the bill and for all the help they had given us. We also made enough badges (a circle with a ladybug in the middle and written on the top— We Want a State Bug!) for every representative and senator and sent them in our letters. We received a very nice letter from each one of them. The children learned the poem, “Ladybird, Ladybird”.

We had an opportunity to do a little campaigning at the Democratic Dinner that was held on April 9, 1974 in our school. Ann Postles, our cafeteria manager, was in charge of the dinner. She asked us to help with the table and room decorations. The teachers and children all helped. We made big bug posters to put on the walls, badges for all the waitresses to wear, individual place cards with a ladybug and an American Flag on each one. Mrs. Donovan went to the dinner and did a little lobbying. Mrs. Brown gave Ladybug pins to all the honored guests. The honorable Senator Joseph Biden was the speaker. We won a lot of support for the Ladybug that night.

Easter came, the legislators recessed and we kept working. We purchased ladybug material from Leggett’s Store. Mrs. Pyne made skirts for all the girls in the room; each girl helped with her own skirt. We also had material for ladybug costumes. Mrs. Jean Pyne and Mrs. Bonnie Pritchett, Title I aides, agreed to make the costumes. April 23, Mrs. Brown went to Legislative Hall to lobby for the teachers. Representative Harrington asked if the class could come to Legislative Hall on Thursday, April 25. Mrs. Brown agreed. Permission had already been gotten from the parents for the children to attend Legislative Hall. We wanted to be ready. Sharita Green and Mark Mullen had been leaning a speech about the Ladybug.

Sharita learned: “The ladybug is round in shape and flat on the bottom. Most are orange, yellow, or red with black dots. Some are black with orange or red dots. Both the adult and larvae feed on pests such as aphids and scale insects. Sometimes ladybugs are sold to grove owners to help save the fruit trees because they eat the aphids that will kill the fruit trees, especially the apple, cherry and peach tree.”

Mark learned: “We have a State flag which is blue and gold. We have a State tree—the Holly tree. We have a State bird—the blue hen chicken. We have a State flower—the peach blossom. We would like to have a State bug—the ladybug. The ladybug helps to save the State Flower—the peach blossom.”

Thursday morning, April 25, 1974, school began. We still needed to practice what we were going to do and say. Representative Harrington stopped by the school to make final plans with us. He was very cooperative. Mr. Jamison, our Principal, came down to the classrooms to be our first audience. He suggested that we go to the other classrooms to show them our costumes and posters. While we were doing this, we would practice our speeches in every other room. This was very good experience for the children. We went to lunch early and got ready to go. Mr. Moyer, Director of Instruction, was going up with us on the bus. He also invited the boys and girls of Mr. Brooks’ class in the High School to go with us. The reporters from WHYY TV Channel 12 followed us up on the bus.

We arrived at Legislative Hall about 1:15PM. The children were looking for the “White House” so this had to be explained. We went inside. Representative Harrington greeted us and, of course, several of the news media. We took some pictures of the class sitting on the steps in the Hall. Senator Adams also welcomed the children. Both Houses were still in committee, so we were allowed to take the children into the Senate Chamber to show them the room where senators sat, and

pointed out the desks, speakers on each desk, and so on. Other senators came in and spoke to the children.

The time arrived. The House was in session. Representative Harrington asked us in. We marched around the chamber saying, "We want a State bug, we want the Ladybug", carrying our posters and signs of the Ladybug, the girls dressed in their Ladybug skirts, and Michael Peterman and Sammy Mullen dressed in their Ladybug costumes. Every child wore a badge we had made with the Ladybug on it and all the representatives were wearing the badges we had sent them. We stopped in front of the chamber.

Representative Harrington addressed the Speaker, had the Bill #667 on the Ladybug read, and discussion began. Representative Kenneth Boulden felt it should be a male bug—he had written male-bug on his badge, but he wasn't sure he could fight all those children. The atmosphere was very friendly. Representative Harrington spoke for the children and said that they definitely did not want a male bug, they wanted the Ladybug. Representative Harrington addressed the Speaker and had a letter read from Mrs. Brown which told how this class became interested in the State bug and what had been done up to this point.

Then he asked the Speaker to turn the floor over to Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown had to state her name and then addressed the House. She introduced all that were with her, Mrs. Pyne, Mrs. Donovan, Mr. Moyer, girls from the High School, and most important, her class. She stated that the children had something to say to them. Sharita Green stepped up to the mike and told the representative about the Ladybug and how useful it is. Mark Mullen told them that we have other state symbols (with the class saying what they were) and that we should have a State bug to help save the State flower, the peach blossom. The applause was tremendous. Representative Harrington called for a vote, the roll was called, all yes, except Mr. Boulden. Later, he changed his vote to make it unanimous. It was a lovely experience for my children. Many nice things were said. Pictures were taken and hands shaken. Then we marched over to the Senate and repeated our performance, followed by the press. This time Senator Thurman Adams was our sponsor. The vote was taken and it was unanimous. The Governor was watching us in the gallery.

When we left the chamber, Representative Harrington said we could go up to the Governor's office and as soon as the Bill was ready, we all went in with the co-sponsors and Governor Tribbitt signed the Bill on the back of Michael Peterman who was dressed in a Ladybug costume. It was a thrill! The Governor told us that when he wanted some legislation passed, he would call on us. Time was running out so the police were alerted and we got back to school just in time to put the children on the bus to go home. What a day! A State Bug, televisions and radio coverage, newspapers and all! We have many wonderful pictures and articles from the newspapers.

On Friday, we began our tasks of writing thank you notes to the Governor, co-sponsors, newspapers, Mr. Moyer and everyone that helped us. A letter to the editors to thank everyone was also written. We received many letters of congratulations, even one from Mrs. Meeker and a grandmother from Wichita, Kansas. She wrote us a poem called "The Delaware Ladybug". The Milford Chronicle put the poem in the paper. We have learned the poem. Mrs. Jeanette Short baked us two Ladybug cakes. They were delicious.

Derrickson's Clothing Store in Milford had a window decorated with all our Ladybug materials. Two children are dressed in the Ladybug costumes and one girl in the Ladybug skirt. They are watering and raking the grass. The posters, signs,

and scrapbook are also displayed there. We took a walk downtown on Wednesday, May 15, to see the window.

A representative, Mr. Robert Duane, from a children's science magazine call Ranger Rick Nature Magazine is coming down next week to see us about an article for his magazine.

Our job is over. Now it is up to the State to pick the exact species, but we want to protect all the Ladybugs. That's the story of the Delaware State Bug, the Ladybug.

