

CANDLE LIGHT SERVICE FOR FOUNDERS' DAY

The original program was written in 1946 and is a history of the founding of P.E.O. and the Founders.

*(Arranged for two speakers: * First Speaker; ** Second Speaker)*

* We have met here today to honor the Founders of P.E.O., and to celebrate the (fill in) th anniversary of its beginning.

** At the time of its origin, January of 1869, P.E.O. was the second national sorority to be organized, a pioneer sorority in a pioneer college in the pioneer days of the state of Iowa.

* The Civil War had recently ended. The country was still chaotic, trying to readjust itself after the turmoil of the Civil War. New ways of life among its people seemed desirable and possible.

** A new type of woman was emerging from the experiences of the war. The spirit of individual effort in newer fields, and of organization among women was gaining ground. These were the days of Julia Ward Howe, of Susan B. Anthony, and of Frances Willard.

* The little mid-western town of Mr. Pleasant, Iowa, was a thriving educational and cultural center. Not only was it the home of Iowa Wesleyan College, the first co-educational college west of the Mississippi River, there was also Howe's Academy, the pioneer normal school of the West; and the Young Ladies' Seminary, a school for girls.

** From this background of Christian education and culture came the seven young women whom we honor today. They were leaders in social and college activities: they were friends to an unusual degree; they came from the highest type of homes. They had been trained in their homes and their school and their community to know and to want the finer things of life. P.E.O. was the outgrowth of their desire to promote among all women those fine virtues of love, purity, faith, justice and truth.

* It was Hattie Briggs, the daring, efficient, executive type, the girl who believed in getting things done, who said to Franc Roads that January morning when they met at the old wooden stile that led to the College Main Hall: "Let's have a society of our own."

** Franc Roads, a girl of much beauty and poise, with a gift of far vision and a strong sense of justice, agreed that the time was right for them to have a society of their own.

* They found the other girls – Mary Allen, tall and handsome and popular, and also deeply religious:

** Sweet faced Ella Stewart, daughter of a Methodist minister, looking at life in terms of service for others:

* Little Suela Pearson, talented and charming, only a sophomore, but the much loved curly-haired beauty of the seven;

** Alice Bird, the literary one, a clever, witty brunette;

* Alice Coffin, a blonde southerner from Kentucky, tall and handsome, well poised and always beautifully dressed, direct descendant of Tristram Coffin of Mayflower fame; and perhaps the saddest of the seven, because she had been motherless since the age of nine. When the war had broken out and her father had been called into the service of his country, he had brought his four children to Iowa Wesleyan for safe keeping.

** These girls were all enthusiastic about a new society of their own, and agreed to meet again at three o'clock that afternoon in the Music Room in the Main Hall.

* As they separated that morning Alice Coffin said to Alice Bird: "You write a Constitution and an Oath, and see to it that you bring them back with you this afternoon."

** Years afterward, in telling of this important assignment, Alice Bird, then Alice Babb, said this: "Five hours at most in which to write a Constitution and an Oath. In spite of our enthusiasm I felt I had been given a great responsibility. To write what they had asked me to write I went off by myself to the seclusion of that holy of holies – the spare bedroom."

* Who dreams shall live,
And if we do not dream, then we
Shall build no temples unto time.

** For these young girls were conscious that they had
A something in their liking for each other
That made them friends above all other friends.

* As each considered the plan, she felt
Within herself a knowledge, part of joy
And part of pride, excitement mixed with awe
Of what the seven planned to do.

** Each one of them, beneath her youthful exaltation
Possessed a deep sincerity. Before
The day was gone, solemnity had joined
With friendliness and strong intent to keep
Forever burning, this relationship
To which the seven pledged themselves anew.

* To the college music room where doors would lock,

Insuring privacy and solitude,
 They went a little stealthily –
 With backward looks – on tip-toe now and then,
 And slipped excitedly into the room.

** Some later time their laughter would burst forth,
 Today they held their gaiety in check.
 Sue Pearson's curls for once were still.
 And Hattie's laughter was subdued and calm.
 Franc Roads had a look of seeing things beyond,
 And Mary walked with added dignity.

* They all were waiting for that moment when
 The darkly radiant Allie would arrive and show
 The task they had assigned to her to do.
 She came at last, and on the table laid
 Her papers – here the document by which
 They meant to rule themselves, and here the Vow.

** Then Ella, as befitting for the eldest one,
 Standing by the table as they gathered round,
 To Alice Bird, the author, administered the Oath,
 Their voices shaking as the other five
 Would shake when Alice Bird to each in turn
 Bestowed the Vow that gave them Sisterhood.

* It speaks well for that day's work that after ____ years the Sisterhood is still using six original features of P.E.O. that were planned by those seven Founders during that first week of organization: the Oath, the Emblem, the Name, the Objects and Aims, the Password, and the Voting Sign.

** The true P.E.O. they envisioned and planned as they began was one with the eyes of Faith, lips that speak only the Truth, ears that listen only to that which is pure and of good report, arms that carry the protection of Love, feet that tread the path of Justice.

* They built better than they knew; the very natures of these seven girls, the qualities that each possessed, dictated those standards and principles that have outworn time itself.

** The legend is told of a certain rich man, who when ready to make his will, gave each of his two sons a shilling, and told them that their father's great fortune would go to the one who could buy for a shilling what would most completely fill a certain room.

* One son bought straw. It was bulky and light in weight. But a shilling's worth of straw filled only a small portion of the room.

** The other son bought candles, which, when lighted and properly placed, filled the room with light.

* On that January day, years ago, our Founders lighted candles that have filled the lives of many a woman, and girls with the light of membership in the Sisterhood, with the benefits of the Record, the Educational Fund, Cottey College, the Welfare and Trust Funds, and Memorial Hall.

Light a candle as each name is mentioned.

** Today we light candles to the memory of: Hattie Briggs, for the name we bear; for her radiance of spirit; for her faith in herself and her friends, her faith in her God and her fellowman, for her faith in the future. Faith, the solid rock, and surely on that January day in 1869, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

* To Alice Bird, the first P.E.O. president, for the culture and talent that molded our pattern, our Constitution and Oath; for her emphasis on truth, the truth that makes us free from prejudice, from pride, from pettiness and misunderstanding, free to progress ever upward and on.

** To Mary Allen, the last of the Founders to leave us, for her depth of religion and strength of character, and their emphasis on purity, the purity of a clean heart and a blameless life. It was Mary Allen who later wrote: "It is for each of us to make the world better and happier. For this P.E.O. is love in action."

* To Alice Coffin, for her choice of the star for an emblem, and her emphasis on love and loyalty, the kind of love that quickens the virtues of all mankind.

** To Ella Stewart, for her philosophy of service to others, for her choice of our colors, and for her tribute to our star whose sentiment we hear in our initiatory service:

May we guard it with care
And may nothing e'er
Mar its bright rays.
Hold sacred our emblem
Ever keep it in view,
To our oath and our pledge
May we ever be true
All our days.

* To Suela Pearson, for her exaltation of beauty, who not only possessed beauty herself, but saw it in others, and in nature, art, books, study and society.

Full well she loved the world,
but she loved best
Whatever in the world was loveliest.

** To Franc Roads, for her keen sense of justice, her reminder that right may lie in the other scale.

* As we honor the memory of our founders let us think of them, not as being gone, but in terms of life, and dedicate ourselves again to their philosophy of life and work.

For: All about us though unseen
These dear immortal spirits tread,
For all the boundless universe
In life; there is no dead.

** They never quite leave us, these founders who have passed
Through the shadows of death to the sunlight above;
A thousand sweet memories are holding them fast
To the places they blessed with their wisdom and love.

Indented paragraphs were taken from the RECORD

Either of two candelabra arrangements is suggested:

- (a) Tall cathedral candelabrum, with two candle lighters, one on each side – preferably young women dressed in white.*
- (b) Two graduated height candelabra forming an aisle leading to a star bearing on its surface the names of the major P.E.O. projects; also having two candle lighters, one on each side, preferably young women dressed in white.*

White formals add greatly to the beauty of the scene when worn by candle lighters.

At a public luncheon or dinner, speakers should be seated at the speaker's table, forming a triangle with the candelabra and candle lighters in front.

Compiled and Arranged by
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