

“A Beginning”

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NARRATOR: Founders' Day is a day of remembering the past, and a day of significance for each P.E.O. member. To the seven founders of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, we dedicate this program as we sisters gather together.

On a January day in 1869, in a small town, seven college girls met and joined together. They had no idea that they were creating an organization that would grow and grow, and be passed on from generation to generation. These seven girls laid the foundation for the P.E.O. Sisterhood.

What was it like in those days of 1869? Let's take a journey back into the past and reminisce as to the beginning. Imagine our girls as the seven girls themselves, and imagine yourself in your home where there were no electric lights, no telephones, no cars, no planes, no radios, no television. But there were things like flower and vegetable gardens, hardwood floors, kerosene lamps, wood burning stoves, samplers on-the walls, homemade butterscotch candy, candy pulls, high-buttoned shoes, shawls and capes, and best of all--feather beds with quilts.

Rules of the college were very strict and girls were not allowed to speak to the boys on campus. And on this campus the idea of P.E.O. was born. The girls were always together, and they had much enthusiasm and high ideals. They were the pioneers in the growth of P.E.O. The girls had many qualities and they loved and admired each other. They set high standards, had firm religious convictions, led rich and happy lives, were eager and gay, and had a deep sense of friendship.

The number seven has been a mystic number. It relates to the seven planets, the seven tones of the scale, and the seven colors of the rainbow. The colors can be used to express the personalities of our seven founders, as the seven rays of light and color. Flowers are a wonder of nature, and the marguerite, or daisy, also is described as having white rays. So in a combination the daisy and our colors are expressed.

The seven girls, the Founders, were girls very much like ourselves, and the world was a better place because they lived. Their names were Alice Coffin,

Suela Pearson, Hattie Briggs, Mary Allen, Ella Stewart, Alice Bird, and Franc Roads. Maybe you can characterize some of their qualities with our own seven girls.

FIRST SPEAKER: Green. Green was chosen for Alice Coffin. Green for spring, hope, joy, happiness, tranquility and music. Alice was poised, loved beauty and dancing, and rhythm, was quick to anger and equally quick to forgive. She could be the jolliest of the jolly. She was a girl with imagination, and she suggested the star as the emblem for our Sisterhood. She was a vigorous character and a writer on many subjects, and a great reader.

SECOND SPEAKER: Orange. Orange for Suela Pearson. Orange for gaiety, warmth, and a sunny disposition. Suela was a pretty girl and had a quality of beauty, not only physically beautiful, but also beautiful from within. She reminds us that the best kind of beauty happens from the inside out. She was the youngest, and sunniest of the seven. She had the finest clothes, and the most beaus. She gave generously of her talents in music and dramatics, and was noted for her beautiful voice and dramatic ability.

THIRD SPEAKER: Yellow. Yellow for Hattie Briggs. Yellow for happy, and smiling with a sunshiny quality. Hattie was sweet and understanding, calm, quiet but eager, and a willing follower. She carried a beautiful faith and a radiant spirit. She conceived the idea for P.E.O. Her sunny disposition and smiling face reminds us that when our smile blesses others, it also blesses us.

FOURTH SPEAKER: Blue. Blue for Mary Allen. Blue symbolizes heaven, truth, peace, spirituality, and tranquility. Mary Allen lived a long and useful life. She was active in all sorts of religious work in the college, and was very popular. She had a sense of humor, it was contagious. Her life reminds us to take regular doses of laughter for love's sake. She had a deep religious conviction, and great strength of character. She said, "P.E.O. is Love in Action."

FIFTH SPEAKER: Violet. Violet for Ella Stewart. Violet symbolizes love, dignity, patience, and sacrifice. Ella was energetic, and an efficient worker. She was loved by all who knew her. Her life was characterized by her philosophy of unselfish service to others. Her life of service reminds us of the single most powerful force in the world, which is love. A truly lovely,

great and dedicated woman.

SIXTH SPEAKER: Red. Red for Alice Bird. Red for power and fire. She was cheerful and bright, witty and clever. She was exciting, and stimulating with vitality and action. A scholar with a questioning mind, and she was always searching for answers to life's most challenging questions. She loved literature, and was a remarkable student. She had ability as a writer and speaker. There was always a book open in her house. She always seems to stay young, and she was the best known of the seven. She wrote the first constitution, and was the first president.

SEVENTH SPEAKER: Purple. Purple for Franc Roads. Purple symbolizes the law. Franc had the mind of a statesman. She was progressive and lived a useful life. She had a vision of a better womanhood. She had a keen mind, a sense of humor, was lovely, smart, talented, calm, courageous, and self-controlled she was a girl of many talents, and did beautiful art work. Her real trait was her far vision, faith, honesty and personal integrity.

NARRATOR: All work and no play was not their motto. These seven girls had fun times when they conducted their meetings. Gavel was scarce in the early chapter. It was said that Suela rapped a mean beat with a big, old wooden crochet hook that was used to call the meetings to order. And no wonder, they talked ninety miles an hour and you know how fast that is! They stopped only to catch their breath, and then they were at it again. They always had a lot of business to conduct, and they loved voting by using slips of paper upon which they wrote "pro" or "con." No matter what they did though, they managed to get a little seriousness into their meetings.

Their little society grew and now has become a leading women's organization, which owns a college, administers a loan fund to help women who need money for their education, gives scholarships to girls from foreign countries who wish to study in the United States, provides funds for American and Canadian women who are seeking advanced degrees and has a program which helps women whose education has been interrupted. They really started something, those quaint young girls.

Goals can be reached through the power of prayer, and with God all things are possible. Our lives can be motivated by these girls, and the things we most deeply believe in are the things we cannot see: faith, love, purity, justice and truth. Each of the seven was different, as is each one of us. May

we always follow the example of our founders. It all started so simply -- a sisterhood to perpetuate friendship. It multiplied in their hands, even as the loaves and fishes multiplied on the hillside of Galilee so long ago.

So from generation to generation – Founders Seven – we honor you, and we pay tribute to you for “A Beginning.” Women united in one faith, one order, P.E.O. Sisterhood. We we’ve had time for fun and time for tradition, and now time for a flower for each P.E.O. Sister, and a time to close. And, in the words of Mary Allen, “God bless you all, and may He give strength and wisdom to building higher and better what we founded.” Thank you, sisters in love.

NOTE: This program was written and presented by Lois Hansen of Chapter NU, California, for a 1974 Founders’ Day program. It was compiled into story form from reference books: “The Story of P.E.O.”, “Out of the Heart”, and P.E.O. RECORDS.

Lois was a brand-new member in P.E.O., and was given the challenge of presenting a Founders’ Day program, her first, and most unusual. The program was so well received, that the idea of sharing it with other P.E.O. sisters was encouraged.

The characters were portrayed by the chapter’s seven officers. The mood of the program was set by using a kerosene lamp, and one large daisy flower with the original seven founders’ photos displayed on it.