

On January 21, 1869, P.E.O. came into being. That was _____ years ago. Each year we have a Founders' Day program in honor of this event where we specifically pay tribute to the seven young women who founded our sisterhood. We have a tendency to think, because of the pictures we see and because of the information that has been written about their clothes, that they were serious, very prim and proper, and literally old-fashioned women. For example, we are told in one instance that the long starched petticoats under their bouffant skirts may account for the spacing around the star in the initiation ceremony that we use even today. We see photos of their long hair piled into crown-like pompadours. But probably most memorable is the description of the white aprons they wore with the symbolic star pinned to their shoulders. This is the way they dressed in 1869.

Our seven founders were indeed women of their day. They were involved in the activities of their time. Remember, they were college students when women in college were a daring innovative concept. Sororities on campuses were even more rare -but they dared to undertake new ideas -particularly the idea of a group for women. They were involved in the issues of the day. Our founders were the young leaders of their time -they were the "IN PEOPLE" and the clothes they wore were the latest fashion of the day.

Remove from your thinking those bouffant petticoats, those white starched aprons and fast forward these seven young women into today's world. What would they be doing? How would they respond, what clothes would they wear -these seven founders -if they were the women of today?

Engage with us now in a few moments of fashion fantasy as we present the P .E.O. founders as they would appear in 2008. We invite you to move from the yesterday period of 1869. Picture those same seven women moving in the time period of the twenty-first century. Come join us in a "fashion fantasy" of the founders as they might engage in their activities today, as Chapter _____ presents our show entitled P .E.O. Always in Fashion !

MARY ELLEN STAFFORD (JOGGER)

Mary Ellen Stafford represents the healthful good living of the 21st Century. To her, moral principles were extremely important. She epitomized these beliefs in her dedication to her family and friends, as well as in her personal discipline to healthful living and physical fitness.

Mary Ellen models a navy blue and gold jogging suit, a yellow T -shirt underneath and to complete the outfit her Nike socks and running shoes. She would not be caught dead without her cell phone, i-Pod and water bottle.

She carried out her daily regimen of running in the many towns in which she lived with her minister husband and their four children. Her outfit is comfortable as well as modest, befitting the image of a "Parson's wife".

Her cell phone allows her to be in touch at all times with her children and husband and she is definitely aware of the importance of drinking 8 glasses of water a day. One historian quoted Mary Ellen as saying: "We are undisciplined if we cannot endure the quiet restraint of listening". This is attested to by the addition of her i-Pod, which she wears while running. This raises her

spirits and "inspires her to lofty purpose", which our founders believed were essential in the life of a true P .E.O

ALICE BIRD BABB (CORPORATE WOMAN)

Alice Bird Babb in 2008 would be the corporate woman wearing the always "right to wear" classic black suit. The fitted jacket denotes a 21st Century trend. The short skirt adds another modern feature as well as a feminine touch.

The color of her blouse reflects her bright intellect. Her intelligence was exhibited by her ability to be the best speaker, the finest conversationalist and the most scholarly of all our founders. Her trendy pointed toe heels make for tired feet at the end of her busy day, but they are oh-so fashionable!

She carries a practical leather back pack, which holds her new blackberry that enables her to efficiently check her email and phone messages. It also provides her access to the internet. In her spare time, she enjoys keying into her favorite websites on Greek and Latin -her favorite subjects in college. Tucked inside is also a paperback novel by her favorite author, Charles Dickens.

Definitely her most significant item of attire is the only jewelry she is wearing, the statement-making star shaped earrings. Alice is the author of the oath which is now included in amended form in our ceremony of initiation.

SUELA PEARSON (THE BELLE)

Suela Pearson was recognized as the belle of the 7 Founders. She was the youngest of the group at Iowa Wesleyan where she enrolled at age 15.

Today, she is wearing a deep teal silk chemise. The simple lines of the dress are offset with exquisite jewel and beading work around the neckline and wrists. The choice of hemline length was hers. The well-dressed woman will wear what becomes her most and not what fashion dictates. "Self control and equipoise" personified.

The long sleeves of the dress are just right for those cool Iowa evenings. Suela's jewelry is minimal, nothing to compete with the opulent trim of the dress, except for the very necessary watch (Rolex, of course) and this, because as you see, she carries her date book wherever she goes, being a prominent woman in Cleveland, Ohio society where her husband is an associate with Standard Oil.

As for shoes, Suela has given herself 2 options depending on her destination---the new slide style or a traditional opera pump.

Her glamour and graciousness continue to radiate wherever she goes. The flash of this outfit epitomizes what one male historian had to say about Suela. "She was the star of the planet - her light shone on us all, but no one was ever put under a bushel'. Perhaps it is because of the shining Suela that we in the sisterhood are to "radiate all light possible".

ALICE COFFIN (THE SWINGER)

This is Alice Coffin of today, in a gorgeous beaded jacket, black camisole top and long black pleated silk skirt. A classmate once wrote" Alice is an excellent seamstress and always an up to date dresser". This ensemble will take her to the theater, dinner or dancing. Alice loved to dance, in fact, though born and bred a Methodist, she joined the Episcopal Church as the Methodists frowned on dancing. Notice how her gold star earrings (she was the one to choose

the star as our emblem) swirl as she glides across the floor.

In her teaching she brought creativity and encouragement to her students. One pupil wrote of her "she was the kind of teacher the girls copy and the boys silently worship".

Alice had a romantic and serious involvement with Will Pearson, brother of Suela. At one time they were engaged to be married but Alice broke off the engagement, later there were other offers of marriage but Alice did not accept any of them.

Always the lively one among the founders, it is written that her life was a paradox for she was kind and generous to a fault, quick to anger yet quick to forgive. Alice managed 'at all times and under all circumstances to show a loving concern for her sisters"

HA TTIE BRIGGS (TRADITIONALIST)

Hattie Briggs is the traditionalist of the new millennium. One writer described her as modest and retiring and Hattie's outfit seems to emphasize that modesty and conservatism. Hattie wears a navy blazer, khaki gabardine slacks and a coordinating scarf --unassuming but dignified in its navy and rose colors. Draped casually over her shoulders, the scarf is practical and all-encompassing. It is an interesting fact that Hattie chose the name for our Sisterhood.

Hattie wears navy flats allowing her the freedom of movement that she needs as she goes from house to house giving piano lessons in Knoxville, Iowa, where she lived with her parents prior to her marriage. Her strand of pearls enhances the modest, but stylish ensemble of this minister's daughter. The matching pearl earrings further portray the character of Hattie Briggs, who joyously accepted the world about her with little thought of personal gain, always receptive to the needs of others.

Hattie's hat, fashioned with pheasant feathers fit her role as a banker's wife. The hat, simple yet elegant, is perfectly accompanied by the matching pheasant-feathered handbag. Hattie's best remembered physical traits, her smile and her large expressive eyes, enhanced the rare quality of making everyone near her feel comfortable. Her coordinated ensemble seems to say that Hattie Briggs did indeed, by her attire, "aim at self control, equipoise and symmetry of character".

FRANC RHODES (ACTIVIST)

Today, Franc is dressed as though she might to attend a women's rally in some large city. Her black cotton pants are from Ralph Lauren and the black cotton turtleneck from Abercrombie & Fitch. With these, she has paired a useful cotton khaki vest from the Banana Republic. Its many pockets hold leaflets, banners, water bottle and all the accoutrements necessary to attend a successful rally.

A red cotton bandana --Old Navy, of course, serves as a suitable head piece. Her marching shoes are comfortable suede rubber soled moccasins from L.L.Bean. Franc is dressed to perfection to attend any rally SUSAN B. ANTHONY would sponsor.

When not dressed in this attire, you might find her in an artist smock and painting pants.

Franc practiced ART as a profession --she studied at Columbia and Stanford Universities and the Chicago Art Institute. She also had an opportunity to study in Europe.

Franc worked for 18 years to secure women the right to serve and vote in the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Uppermost in her mind was a "sincere regard for our influence in the community".

ELLA STEWART (WESTERN)

Ella Stewart appears in this early year of the new millennium in a flannel shirt, jeans and hiking boots. Ella loved people --her life was one of service to others. She taught for many years at Iowa Industrial School (a home for wayward boys) where she established a rapport with these young men and instilled in them some of her love of nature.

Note the denim jacket embroidered with wild flowers and the always useful backpack -both of which represent her love of the outdoors.

Ella wears the hard hat to illustrate safety to her young students. She was continuously a role model for the Industrial School for Boys.

Although Ella was unable to graduate from college, as she was needed at home, she never gave up her association with her college friends. In fact, it is written that for several years she audited college classes at Iowa Wesleyan as a special student.

Ella's comfortable and durable outfit attests to her love of the simple and rustic life. She loved people, all people and her life "was one of service to others?".

Let's call them back, the seven founders as they look today.

Clothes symbolize their personalities, but the clothes are indicative of the time in which we are living. Outward appearances may change to "go with the flow of fashion and fad", but the spirit within our sisterhood remains the same. This is the message of Founders' Day, namely, continuity through adaptation to time. It is the message that has remained for _____ years. (Introduce and thank participants and those serving as helpers and hostesses.

Note: The description of the outfits can be changed to fit what you have on hand.)

Source: Marjorie Holland, EN, NE, 1990