

P.E.O. CUSTOMS

Setting: Living room before a P.E.O. meeting

Props: P.E.O. Record, Needlework in a bag, Hat

Characters: **New member:** wearing hat, carrying her needlework

Old member: carries a copy of the *P.E.O. Record*

NARRATOR – INTRODUCTION

You all know that P.E.O. exists today because of the deep and unselfish love seven young girls had for each other. Several of the girls were invited to join a sorority at their college, Iowa Wesleyan, but not all of them. They felt that if all seven were not to be included, they would simply form a society of their own.

That love, that loyalty, that caring for each other is what made P.E.O. different from the very beginning.

Our P.E.O. Founders added the practical application of simple ethics incorporated into the vows, mixed with a touch of secrecy, and the wonderfully simple name – P.E.O. was born. They chose an emblem, the star, to symbolize their search for the highest and best their lives could be. They gave us an organization sure to grow, where each member could realize personal growth through opportunity for service and through the vision that leads us toward the best that is in us.

Through the years, written and unwritten laws and customs have evolved. Some of these come so naturally to us that we scarcely recognize them as “laws.” Others take work, thoughtful consideration, and dedicated effort for some of us to achieve results in our lives.

To demonstrate some of these laws and customs, let us look in on two chapter members who have arrived early for a regular chapter meeting. We've entitled our skit, "How Not To Be a P.E.O." or NoNos in P.E.O. Our players are _____ and _____.

NEW MEMBER: I'm so glad we're early and there is no one else here yet. I have something juicy info I want to tell you about one of the women who belong to this P.E.O. club, or is it lodge...oh well, what ever you call it!!

OLD MEMBER: Hi. It is so good to see you. I'm glad we have time to catch up during our social time before the meeting. By the way, P.E.O. is not a club or a lodge, it is a Sisterhood. And, if you remember in your initiation, we are told to avoid gossip...we say no bad things about each other and we try to prevent others from spreading gossip about any of us too. Our Sisterhood is based on sympathy and understanding and love for our Sisters. By the way, you will need to remove your hat!

NEW: Take off my hat??? It is brand new. I saw it the other day at the mall and I just couldn't resist it!! It matches my scarf and earrings, don't you think?? (or dress)

OLD: It is a beautiful hat, but hats are never worn in chapter meetings or conventions of P.E.O. We have a lot of P.E.O. customs that have been handed down through the years, and that is one of them. We don't have a dress code for our Sisterhood, but everyone always uses good taste in her appearance.

NEW: Well, if I must! (Removes her hat) Let me show you what I am making! I want to finish off this section while all those boring old reports are being given, is that ok to multitask?

OLD: Thank you for asking! I'm sure there are many questions you may have on what is appropriate at a P.E.O. meeting. Yes, one custom of ours is to give thoughtful attention in chapter meetings to reports and the business of the Sisterhood. Each committee chair prepares a short report for each meeting, and since she took the time and made the effort to do that, we all listen attentively! In addition, no handwork is permitted during meetings, or smoking, or any type of activities that would take our attention away from what is important: learning about P.E.O.

NEW: Oh My Gosh! There is a lot to learn about a P.E.O. business meeting! But what is with the whole pounding of the gavel? I feel like I am in Judge Judy's courtroom!

OLD: It is a TAP of the gavel and it helps to indicate to us when to come to order for a meeting as well as a reminder to stand and sit at the president's order. It is very helpful for the members of the chapter to hear the tapping of the gavel.

NEW: Ohhhh, I had no idea! I just thought she was executing a power struggle

NEW: Hey, let us get a seat in the back during the meeting, so we can talk and catch up. I also need to send some text messages I have been meaning to reply

OLD: Catching up and socializing is what we do before or after the meeting. Talking during the meeting is very disruptive and actually rather rude to the sisters who have worked hard at preparing their reports. I know using your phone- texting or playing games- is

very tempting but enjoy having this time to turn off your phone and focus learning about P.E.O. and your sisters.

NEW: I know, but how am I supposed to not use my phone? This meeting could last like an hour!

OLD: Turning off technology may be exactly what you need!

NEW: Say, you know Mrs. Watcha call her...she said I could call her by her first name. She asked me to work on her committee, but I told her “NO” right off! I haven’t got the time to be doing all that research and giving reports at every meeting!!

OLD: Now that you are a P.E.O., whenever you meet another sister, whatever her age or position, feel free to address her by her first name. Also, whenever we are asked to do something in P.E.O., we do not refuse. We may feel we have neither the time nor the ability to carry out an assignment or fill an office; yet there is always time for what we really want to do, and we learn by doing. When we willingly and cheerfully take part in the work of the chapter, we are enabled to use what talents we have. Not only that, we often develop new ones.

NEW: Oh look, I just noticed that a button is missing on my blouse! I don’t have a safety pin, but I’m sure glad I thought to bring this P.E.O. pin along. Would you pin it together for me? It will hold my blouse just fine. It will be kind of cute there instead of a button!

OLD: Our P.E.O. pin is our Star. It is called an emblem and is to worn only over the heart. The emblem is never to be worn on the outside of a coat, but it may be worn on a suit jacket that is not removed. The way you decide where to wear your pin is to place your hand on your chest like this with your thumb in the jugular notch and your hand resting comfortably spread open. Where your

little finger lands is where you wear your pin. As a Past International President once said, “Wear it on the rise, not the point.”

NEW: Oh that’s a good one...wear it on the rise, not the point! I can remember that!

OLD: I brought along the current issue of the *P.E.O. Record* and I would like to lend to you. The *Records* are very useful for program information and inspiration. There is a page in the back called FOR YOUR INFORMATION with lots of important things you need to know.

NEW: Say listen, I want to tell you that I won’t be at the next meeting. Mary Smith asked me to go to a flea market with her...and I sure don’t want to miss a flea market!!

OLD: When we promised to devote our interest and energies to P.E.O., this included attending meetings, and our scheduled meeting days should be reserved for P.E.O. Nothing else should take precedence. P.E.O. is always a “previous engagement.”

NEW: OK, I’ll remember that. As long as we have some time, I want to tell you about a friend of mine, Mary Smith. I think I ought to ask her to join our club! After my initiation and the few meetings I have been to, I figure that I ought to know a good new member when I see one. I really do not know her very well, but her son plays with our son and they live close to us. Her husband has a big important job and her house would be a perfect place for meetings and parties!

OLD: A P.E.O. must be a member for one year before she can present a name for membership. She should know this person very well. When she presents a name, she is saying that this woman is congenial and will be as asset to the chapter as well as the

Sisterhood. P.E.O.'s are selected for themselves and not for their husband's status or for the size of their house.

NEW: Well, we go to the same PTA and you know what? At the last meeting, I just up and told them how business is conducted here in this chapter...the things we did, how much money our club has, and what we do with it. You know what I mean, like that school for dogs, Collie College, and all that foreign peace stuff, and that little bank we run on the side for the girls to borrow money!

OLD: I do wish you would stop calling our Sisterhood a club!! We never discuss private P.E.O. business with anyone who is not a member, no matter how close we may be to her. If you are asked, it is perfectly permissible to tell about our projects, Cotter College, International Peace Scholarship, Program for Continuing Education, Scholar Awards, and our newest project, the Star Scholarship Educational Loan Fund from which girls may borrow to go to college.

NEW: I see. Listen, I heard something very interesting that one of our officers said during that, what do you call it...installation, or inauguration, whatever. Here, I have written it down. Let me read it to you.

OLD: It is called Initiation!!! No part of the initiation ceremony may be written or copied!! Many of our rules, like this one, may be found in our constitution!!

NEW: Sorry! Uh-Oh. I think I may have already forgotten the password. Can you give it to me please?

OLD: No one can give you the password but the president. If you will go to her, she will be glad to help you. I know there is a lot to learn but know that your sisters are here to help you.

CONCLUSION:

A big thank you to _____ and _____ for a job well done.

Now we all know that the person that _____ played so humorously would probably have to be taught a little more on P.E.O. before asked to join in the first place. This is all just exaggerated fun, of course, but maybe there are lessons here for all of us, lessons that will help us to be better P.E.O.s and make full use of the opportunity for true friendship and the building of our own character that our Sisterhood gives us.

On a more serious note, I've gathered some P.E.O. customs to share with you. P.E.O. is rich in tradition and these customs have grown out of that tradition. P.E.O. is not just another club or women's group, **it is a Sisterhood** in the special significance of that word. The difference is clearly shown in the way we increase our numbers. We do not merely add members, we **select** sisters.

Your P.E.O. meeting is ALWAYS a previous engagement. Let the hostess know if you cannot attend a meeting. You are expected unless you notify otherwise. We try to say "YES" when we are ever asked to help.

Greet each sister personally, first name only needed, at each meeting. Expressing a loving concern for each sister becomes a way of life.

Your emblem is worn to all P.E.O. functions on the outside article of clothing that will not be taken off. It may be worn on a jacket lapel. It should be worn over the heart, with no other jewelry above it.

When the president taps the gavel once at the beginning of the meeting that is to alert us. After that, each time the president taps the gavel you are to stand until she taps the gavel again indicating you may sit.

Put your cell phone on silent for the meeting as well as your mouth unless you have been recognized by the president to address the chapter. Each member gives thoughtful attention in the chapter meeting.

When making a report or presentation, or anytime you speak in front of the chapter, always stand and address the chair, saying "Madame President."

Memorize the Opening Ode and the Objects and Aims, PLEASE. Each member tries to live up to her initiation vows and to the works of the "Objects and Aims."

Members are asked to sign up to be a hostess or co-hostess for a chapter meeting and also encouraged to give programs. The President will also appoint you to various committees to help you learn more about the P.E.O. experience. It is helpful to take your yearbook to all meetings.

Only P.E.O. members may be in your home during the Exemplification of the Ritual of Initiation or the practice of it. Remember, the ceremony is not to be written or copied.

Dues are paid in January and February. They are delinquent on March 1. Not paying your dues will result in becoming an 'inactive' sister.

In writing to a P.E.O., keep it personal, even if you have never met the sister. Use the person's first name such as "Dear Jane" and

close with “Lovingly in P.E.O.” or “”With P.E.O. love”, or “Love in P.E.O.” which is abbreviated LIPEO. Address the envelope to “Jane Doe” rather than Mrs. Robert Doe.

P.E.O. is Always written with periods after each letter and never as a merge of 3 letters

Share ideas between sisters, officers, chapters and states. As one PSP told me “Plagiarize Each Other.” (Plagiarize each opportunity)

Private business is not discussed with non-members. But it is OK to talk about P.E.O. Share information about our projects whenever possible.

Our husbands are known as B.I.L.s or brothers-in-law. (Not BILLS)
Our chapter is good about planning social functions with them.

We do not smoke, do handwork, or wear hats to chapter meetings. Children are distracting and are not brought to meetings. Having food or drink during the meeting is the discretion of the president

If you visit another chapter, you will be asked to speak during “Remarks by Visitors.” Stand, address the chair, and bring greetings from your chapter, i.e. “Hi my name is _____ and I bring greetings from Chapter _____ in _____ Georgia.

Among your P.E.O. sisters, you will hear humorous stories about the ideas that people have about the meaning of our letters. In your own family circle, there may be some really funny meanings. While there is much in our ceremonies that is known only to ourselves, P.E.O’s image is **not** enhanced by stressing its secret

aspects. We like to say that P.E.O. is a Sisterhood, with just a little secret.

If asked what P.E.O. means, simply reply "It is a philanthropic, educational organization." The appropriate meaning for our letters explains our purpose and offers a simple, dignified way to answer a well-intended question.

Founders' Day is observed annually, commemorating the founding of P.E.O. at Iowa Wesleyan College, Mount Pleasant, Iowa on January 21, 1869. P.E.O. came into being because seven girls were friends and wanted that friendship to deepen and endure throughout their lives. Beyond that, they wanted to be of help to others.

Through the years, the Sisterhood has grown in numbers and strength and power; the spiritual import, the idealism, the loving spirit are just as real and apparent today as in the days of our Founders. For generations of P.E.O's, we find ideals for a way of life. We may each apply the philosophy of P.E.O. to ourselves as it fits our own needs. We share a community of spirit in which we encounter encouragement, inspiration and deep affection. We are an organization that embraces a diversity of talents, personalities and age groups, yet each member has a unique place in the Sisterhood. Each serves in her own way, and through the united effort of all, the Sisterhood is enriched and strengthened.