Show White and Cinderella Discuss Membership

(Adapted from a Maryland State program by Rita Briggs, Chapter AF, GA – 2009)

Cast:  The “Organizer” who acts as narrator

           Snow White, President of Chapter HI

            Cinderella, President of Chapter HO

Scene:  Snow White and Cinderella are sitting back to back with phones in their laps or on a table next to them. Organizer is to the side to begin the Tale and then sits down until the end.

Props:  Crowns, wigs, costumes if desired, large hand mirror, two phones (princess style would be good!), kitchen timer to create ring of phone

Duration:  Should take about 20 to 30 minutes depending on the presenters and the audience laughter.

Organizer: Over the last several years, chapters have been asked to stress membership, and that emphasis needs to continue, but we need to look to nurturing the members we have, and make sure that every member is an involved and active part of the chapter.

            The following story illustrates the different types of members that are in a typical chapter. Of course, the names have been changed and the characters in our story are wearing disguises, but if you look carefully in your magic mirror, you may find you recognize yourself as one of these sisters.

            Once upon a time in a small mining community in the Enchanted Forest, Snow White, the President of P.E.O. Chapter HI, sat down to call her cousin, Cinderella, who happened to be the President of Chapter HO (also in the Enchanted Forest). In the past they’d discussed how much they enjoyed their chapters and what wonderful sisters they had. Here’s what happened:

Snow:  (Picks up phone receiver and presses 7 buttons on phone to make call. The organizer will ring the kitchen timer, and Cindy picks up her phone receiver.)

            Hi, Cinderella. It’s me Snow.

Cindy:  It’s so good to hear from you again. I should tell you that I stopped by to visit Cousin Aurora the other day, but she was getting her Beauty Sleep as usual, so I didn’t stay.

Snow:  We had our P.E.O. meeting last night, and I just felt the need to call you. You mentioned in our last visit that your chapter had a health review and I think I may need some advice.

Cindy:  (Holding phone away as if talking to someone in another room.)

            Oh, that’s okay, honey. I got it.

(Puts phone back to ear) That was Bill. You know he thinks P.E.O. stands for “Phone Each Other”.

            Back to your question, yes, over the past couple of years, we decided to put a real emphasis on chapter health and membership. We’ve tried several new things and made some changes that have really paid off. We held a Family Meeting so that everyone could participate in a review of the chapter and have a voice in setting our goals for the future. We also contacted the state officers and the state membership committee asking them for help and suggestions.

Snow:  That sounds like a good idea.  Cindy, you know that I love my P.E.O. sisters, but I have to admit they sometimes puzzle me.  I thought you might like to hear more about my Chapter HI sisters.

Cindy:  Yes, I would. Go ahead.

Snow:  I’ll start with Dopey. We don’t see Dopey very often – it seems that she always forgets about our meetings. And of course, she never remembers to call the hostess when she isn’t going to attend. It it’s her turn to give a program or report, or to be co-hostess, we have to call her several times to remind her about it and, when the time comes, she still may not remember. She is such a scatterbrain, but we wish we’d get to see her more often because we do love her dearly.

Cindy:  We found several things that have helped our Dopey. Now we use the telephone tree and email to remind members of upcoming meetings and events. We also send out a post card to every member at the beginning of each month listing all the P.E.O. events for the month. We even distributed a bag of gold stars along with the yearbooks so that each sister could put a star on her calendar for each chapter meeting. Some sisters have taken it upon themselves to call Dopey and arrange to carpool to the meetings with her. (Giggle.) Of course, they still call her before leaving so they know she hasn’t forgotten and will be ready when they arrive. We see a lot more of Dopey these days, and we’re finding that the more we see of her, the more involved and excited about P.E.O. she has become!

Snow:  Those sound like some good ideas. We’ve also got good old Sleepy. Bless her heart, she never seems to know what is going on. At the meetings she often seems lost – in another world – not paying attention or contributing to any of the discussions. She never seems to know if we’re in the middle of committee reports, or new or old business or what. She’s usually willing to lend a hand if we give her specific instructions, but they often have to be repeated for her several times. I wish I could think of a way to get her more interested and involved.

Cindy:  You won’t believe what helped our dear sweet Sleepy. We finally figured out that she couldn’t hear what was happening or keep track of our discussions during the meetings so she would just quietly drift off. Now we make sure that Sleepy has a “front row” seat near our guest speakers. During our meetings we are more careful about being recognized by the President before speaking so that only one sister is talking at a time, and standing when we speak so that it is easy for everyone to know who’s talking. That change has really helped our meeting run more smoothly, too.

            Another thing that’s made a difference for Sleepy has been to help her get more informed about P.E.O. We’ve made it a point to have regular reports on the P.EO. Projects to make sure that all members know about the Projects and maintain their interest in them. At each meeting, we have a member report on information from the State Chapter’s website or The P.E.O. Record. After all, Snow, we both know that not everybody reads them cover to cover the way we do. We also try to keep our meetings short and discussions on track and save socializing for before and after the meeting. Sleepy came up to me after a recent meeting and told me how much all these changes have helped her and how excited she is to feel more a part of P.E.O.

Snow:  Wow, I never thought she might not be able to hear well. I’ll implement some of your chapter’s ideas at our next meeting.

            Sneezy is one of our newest members. With Sneezy, you never know what’s going to happen. She just seems to blurt things out whenever she thinks of them – no matter if it’s the right time for them or not. If it comes into her head – it comes out of her mouth! Interestingly enough, the ideas she comes up with are often very good ideas, but you just never know when she’s going to erupt. She does make me smile though because she is so enthusiastic, however, I must admit that sometimes I find equipoise a lost quality around Sneezy – she gets me so flustered.

Cindy:  I know just what you mean about equipoise.

            One thing that really made a difference for our Sneezy was the program I gave on the President’s Book. I shared the book with the chapter, showed them what was included and the descriptions of what business should be addressed during what part of the meeting. Many sisters told me they’d never realized how much information was included in the book and how just about any situation the President might face is addressed. Maybe that will encourage them to want to be President, too. I’ve found it to be such a privilege!

            I also discovered that somehow our Sneezy never had a post initiation counseling meeting, so we had one for her. At that meeting, the membership committee and I were able to go over procedure for chapter meetings and several other things that we think will help her get the most out of P.E.O. Sneezy told me that now she can see how it really helps the president to let her know in advance of business she’d like to raise or that she has a name she’d like to propose so that the President can be prepared too. Sneezy still has great ideas and suggestions, but now she usually makes them at the right time in the meeting and things are running so much better for all of us.

Snow:  I’m so glad we’re cousins and in P.E.O. together.  It makes things easier when we can talk. Another of our sisters is Grumpy. You may have met her the last time you visited, Cindy. She’s the one that always has some complaint or another. Last meeting she wanted to know why we had to have so many meetings every year. Other times it’s been “why do we have to stand to address the chair?” and “why do we have to spend our time memorizing initiation parts?” I love her dearly, though she often reminds me that we are only “striving for temperance in opinion and speech” but may not have fully achieved it yet. In fact, sometimes she is a real challenge to MY self-control and symmetry of character. She sure keeps me on my toes. Do you have any ideas on ways to help her be a cheerier member of our Chapter?

Cindy:  Grumpy is a tough nut to crack, isn’t she? Your Grumpy sounds just like ours! Some days I wonder how she manages to find so many things to complain about. She does keep me hopping! Believe it or not, we’ve even seen a change in Grumpy’s attitude lately. When I was making assignments this year, I asked Grumpy which committee she’d like to serve on. I was surprised to have her say she’d never been asked that before and had always wanted to serve on a specific committee. Now she seems almost cheerful when she gives her committee reports.

            Grumpy’s attitude also changed a little after we had a program explaining the reason behind some of our procedures. By helping her to understand that the reason that we do many of the things the way we do them is because we are following the laws and regulations of our Sisterhood. Understand this has made Grumpy more content. During the program on the Constitution and Bylaws, we learned about how changes to either may be made. Then, as a chapter, we discuss the proposed amendments to the constitution or bylaws before the conventions and listen eagerly to the part of the convention report telling about the amendment debate and its outcome. Knowing that the Sisterhood is looking carefully at itself and looking to the future seems to be helping Grumpy feel less crabby.

            I must confess, Snow, there are some days when I find myself being a Grumpy too, but once I get around my sisters, I snap right out of it!

Snow:  I can’t imagine you being Grumpy. You always seem so upbeat and happy when I talk to you.  I have to tell you Chapter HI is so lucky because we have several sisters named Happy. Surprisingly enough, they are all cut from the same mold. They are all such dear sisters – always offering to help with whatever project we are working on or do whatever needs doing. If one of the other sisters need to trade hostessing or cohostessing a meeting, one of our Happys is usually the first one to volunteer. Do you remember last year when I ate that bad fruit and got so sick? I don’t know what I would have done without the Happys. While I was recovering one brought me so much good food I started calling her “Cookie”.

Cindy:  I do remember that and you were so lucky to be so well taken care of.

Snow:  With any of the Happys, it seems “How can I help?” are the first words out of her mouth. What dears! They kind of remind me of that Fairy Godmother of yours, Cinderella. Each of our Happys seems to radiate light all around her with her positive attitude and the loving concern she shows to us all. I find myself striving to be more like my Happy Sisters.

Cindy:  Me, too.

Snow: I think I’ve told you about Doc before. She’s probably the most creative member of the Chapter. She always has a new idea to share with us and she’s usually got her eyes open for new fundraising activities we can try. Doc loves learning new things from books, art, nature and anywhere else she can find them. I look forward to any meeting when Doc is responsible for the program because I know it will be fun, and chances are I’ll learn something too. Doc’s also a great sister because she questions things, but in such a constructive way. She asks why we do certain things the way we do them, and if she can think of a better way, will suggest a bylaw change or whatever is necessary to make our chapter work better. I wish there were more sisters like Doc in the chapter.

Cindy:  Thank goodness we have several Happys and Docs in our chapter too. It seems that every year at least one of our officers is named Happy or Doc. And each one is eager to participate in the initiation of new members and tries her best to memorize her part – because she looks at it as a gift she can give her new sister. They are so wonderful. If you are down, one or another of them will pick you right up. They just seem to embody all the values P.E.O. represents. I try to use them as shining stars guiding my way and, so far, they’ve never let me down.

Snow:  I know exactly what you mean. I have one more sister to talk with you about – Bashful.  I don’t know why she is so hesitant about speaking up and getting involved. She has such great ideas when she finally does share them. Last year, one of our most successful fundraisers came from an idea of Bashful’s, though she told me she almost didn’t share it with the chapter because she didn’t think we’d be interested. Bashful rarely volunteers for anything at the meetings, but if we ask her to work on something she always does a wonderful job. I know she has several friends who would make great sisters, but so far, she’s never introduced them to us so we can get to know them better too. I sure wish she would!

Cindy:  One of Chapter HO’s newer transfers is our Bashful and getting to know us better has really helped bring her out of her shell. We also tried to get her more involved by asking her to help with a couple of our committees. Once she discovered how open we were to listening to her ideas she was more willing to share. Recently, when one of our officers moved, we asked Bashful to take over. At first she said no, saying that she didn’t know how to do the job and had never done anything like that before, but we assured her that we had confidence in her and we also made sure she knew there were several sisters ready to help her any time she needed it. What a difference all this has made for our Bashful! The last time we had a guest luncheon she even brought a couple of her friends.

Snow:  Well, Cindy, I’ve told you about my Chapter Sisters. You know, when I think of it, I probably have sounded like each of these sisters at one point or another in my P.E.O. life. Guess all we can do is try to be as loving, active and involved as our Happys and Doc. Do you have any other suggestions?

Cindy:  I do have one other thing.  Chapter HO decided to make getting to know our sisters a real priority this last year. That led to several really fun programs – during one, we had to write down something no one in the chapter knew about us and then we guessed who had written what. We also created a chapter member biography book that includes a picture and one-page biography of each member. We’ve found that getting to know each other better has helped each member appreciate the others more and more.

            I hope some of these suggestions are helpful to you and your Chapter HI sisters.

            I’d better go and see what those mice have been getting into lately. And you won’t believe what my step-mother and step-sisters have done this time – but I’ll save that for our next visit.

Snow:  Cindy, I’ve got to admit I’m dreading our next meeting because the Organizer is coming to visit and I’ve heard horror stories about her.

Cindy:  Don’t be scared of the Organizer. I’m sure she only wants to help – I hear she’s “one of the fairest of them all” and has some great recipes using apples!

Snow:  I hope all is well with you and that Charming Prince, Bill!

 Cindy:  I look forward to our next chat, Snow. Bill sends his love. Don’t worry; I’m sure that “Someday your Prince will come!”

Snow:  Bye, talk to you soon.

(Both girls hang up the phones.)

Organizer:  I hope that you enjoyed our story about the sisters in Enchanted Forest, Chapters HI and HO (say these as words instead of chapter letters) and will think of them when it’s off to P.E.O. you go.

(Hold up the hand mirror and primp a little)

I also hope that when you look in your magic mirror, you will find Happy or Doc looking back at you.