

SEVEN PERSONALITIES AND A "SITUATION"

The following is a program for information on the founding of P.E.O. It can be used for a regular meeting program and/or a special event such as a social or luncheon, Founder's Day, or the newer International P.E.O. Day.

It is good for smaller chapters and can be shortened or expanded. As printed, there were 5 readers but 2-3 could be used as well. If possible, seven members could dress as the founders and tell about themselves in a dramatic way.

The statistics given on the end page will need to be updated for current use or deleted.

This program was given at a Founder's Day luncheon. Tables were decorated with vases of greenery and daisies. Surrounding the vases were framed pictures of the seven founders.
Pencils and Matching

Game sheets were provided at each table.

Answers to the quiz are as follows:

A=4

B=5

C=7

D=2

E=6

F=1

G=2

H=3

I=1

J=6

K=7

L=4

M=3

N=5

Offered by: Chapter Q

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Sources: The P.E.O. Record and "Out of the Heart" by Stella Clapp

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READING 1

The founding of P.E.O. was in response to a “situation” that involved the bond of friendship.

In 1869, when tuition was only \$20 at Iowa Wesleyan, the Greek fraternity system was not widespread. Only one society, Beta Theta Pi, had been formed in 1868.

Lizzie Brook and her sister from Monmouth, Illinois, enrolled at Iowa Wesleyan and organized I.C. Sorosis in December of 1868. Some of our founders were asked to join I.C. but they declined because their dear friends were left out.

On Thursday morning, January 21, 1869, Hattie Briggs and Franc Roads were discussing this situation. According to Franc’s memoir, Hattie said, “Let’s start an order of our own.” Excited about such a move, they first found Mary Allen. These three (Hattie, Franc, and Mary) had been especially close and were called the “Triamese Friends.”

One by one, they gathered Alice Bird, Alice Coffin, Suela Pearson, and Ella Stewart to lay out the proposition. These four shared in the enthusiasm and the idea became a purposeful plan.... organize that very day! Alice Bird was given the task of writing the P.E.O. oath. It was thirty-five words long.

The seven friends gathered in the music room of Old Main later in the day. They brought the Bible down from the chapel, the oath was administered, and P.E.O. was born.

So, now, 156 years later, we celebrate Founders’ Day by taking a look at these seven unique and very determined young ladies.

Reading 2

Today’s program is entitled “Seven Special Personalities.” We have heard of the admirable character traits of our founders such as: “intelligence, visionary, progressive, talented, leadership, equipoise and symmetry of character.”

However, today we will focus on specific personalities....something that will set each young lady apart and help us remember her in a special way.

So, get your pencils and paper ready, listen carefully, and make a mental note of some uniqueness of character or event that will help you to identify each Founder.

MARY ALLEN 1848-1927

Mary Allen was 21 when P.E.O. was founded. She was tall and slender...very poised. A classmate commented that she had great taste and made smart clothes look even better.

Mary chose the classical course of study and graduated in June of 1869, five months after the January organization of P.E.O.

Two years later, she married Charles Stafford and for 52 years, shared in his Methodist ministry. They had four children. Life as a pioneer minister was not easy for the Staffords but Mary had a great sense of humor, was a wonderful homemaker, and a gracious pastor's wife.... making the parsonage a place of laughter and love.

The Staffords lived in about ten towns. Nevertheless, Mary was active in P.E.O. whenever possible, moving her membership five times. She stressed the importance of proper procedure and good order when conducting business, believing as she stated: "We must endure the quiet restraint of listening." Mary Allen lived the longest of any founder; she died when she was 79 years old.

ALICE BIRD 1850-1926

Alice Bird, at 19 when P.E.O. was founded, was the intellectual. She loved the classical course and was quite knowledgeable in literature, often quoting and portraying characters she favored.

Alice composed the P.E.O. oath and was its first president. Like Hattie and Mary, she graduated in June after the January organization.

An expert in Latin and Greek, she taught these subjects as well as elocution (speech and drama) at Iowa Wesleyan.

When Alice asked her father's permission for Washington Irvin Babb to be her escort to a soiree, he replied: "Well, Babb's been in the Civil War and is old enough to have a little sense, I guess you can go." Alice married her Civil War soldier and they had four children.

Alice helped direct the Grand Chapter in its formative years. She contributed to the preparation of resolutions, laws, and ceremonies. An associate editor of the P.E.O Record in its early years, she used her pen name, Avis.

Alice died when she was 76 years old.

HATTIE BRIGGS 1849-1877

Hattie Briggs was 20 years old when she said, "Let's start an order of our own."

A classmate described Hattie: "She had the biggest heart." A leader at church and on campus, she was known for being bright and cheerful with a very radiant smile.

Hattie chose the science curriculum and graduated in June, five months after P.E.O. was founded. She lived with her parents and taught music and art.

Her father was a Methodist minister. One Sunday after his sermon, Hattie and her beau, Henri Bousquet, met at the altar. To the great surprise of some and excitement of all, they were united in marriage! Soon after the ceremony, accompanied by a large group of friends, they left for Pella, Iowa, where they were to make their home.

Hattie and Henri, a native of Holland, had two sons. But Hattie was a mother for only five years. She died at the age of 28 when her boys were 5 and 7.

ALICE COFFIN 1848-1888

When P.E.O. was begun, Alice Coffin was 21. She was the one who suggested the star for the emblem. Alice turned heads when she entered a room--a tall and willowy blonde, she was first lady at the ball....queen of the dance! An excellent seamstress, she wore attractive clothes in a regal manner.

Alice and Will Pearson, Suela's brother, were quite a handsome couple and their romance blossomed at Iowa Wesleyan. However, Alice broke the engagement and never married.

Alice was a teacher...a very devoted teacher who encouraged the total child. She focused not only on her students' scholastic needs, but their physical, and emotional needs as well. She even helped some of them financially.

She joined the Episcopal not only because she liked the rituals, but the Methodist church frowned on one of her favorite activities, dancing.

Alice lived near her sister and, although she had no family of her own, cherished and was adored by five nieces and a nephew. She died when she was only 40 years old.

SUELA PEARSON 1851-1920

Suela Pearson was 18 when P.E.O. was organized. The other founders, without jealousy, said that she was the prettiest and most popular. She was a talented musician and enjoyed drama.

Suela was the “story-book child”...beautiful, smart, and affectionate. Part of a very sociable family (her father-a doctor, her mother-hospitable to college students, her brother Will-handsome and well-liked) how could Suela not be a social butterfly?

She was a P.E.O. at Iowa Wesleyan for only two years when, soon after graduation, she moved with her family to Washington, D.C. where there were no chapters.

At 25, Suela married Frank Penfield. He was a Mayflower descendant and worked for Standard Oil. They had two children and a high place in Cleveland, Ohio, society...living near the Rockefeller home. However, years brought difficult change....her father's, her brother's, and her son's death, financial reverses, and the care of an invalid mother. Suela's lights dimmed but she responded with courage and determination. After a long illness, died at the age of 69.

FRANC ROADS 1852-1924

Franc Roads was the youngest founder at 17. Her interest and profession was art. She studied a summer in Europe and at several noted art schools in the states. She gave private lessons in drawing and painting.

Franc and her husband, Simon Elliott had two sons. When the family came upon serious financial problems, Franc wanted to keep her son in medical school so she went to work in the public schools in art supervision. She created a model school room that was widely noticed. A notable first for women, the state of Nebraska appointed Franc as assistant art commissioner to the New Orleans Exposition in 1884.

Franc was a crusader, interested in social issues and the advancement of women. Susan B. Anthony was a friend. Franc worked for 18 years to get the right for women to have a seat and vote in the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Conference.

In her later years, she lectured extensively on art, education, and civic advancement. She often attended P.E.O. conventions and was very interested in the P.E.O. Educational Fund. Franc Roads died when she was 72.

ELLA STEWART 1848-1894

Ella Stewart was 21 when P.E.O. was born. She was the “Irish Lass” with curly auburn hair and deep blue eyes. She always wore earrings.

Her early childhood was spent in Pioneer Hall, the only building on Iowa Wesleyan’s campus at that time. Classes were held on the first floor and two apartments on the second story housed the president’s family and the Stewarts.

Tragedy came to the family in later years when Ella was sixteen. At a pastorate in Keokuk, Reverend Steward died. Mrs. Stewart was left with five children and one on the way. They moved back to Mt. Pleasant, where she started a boarding house to support the family.

Ella did not graduate from Iowa Wesleyan. She was needed at home and couldn’t carry a full course load. However, she stayed active in P.E.O. as well as other college activities and audited classes. With kindness, she also ministered to the aged, infirmed, and needy.

Ella gave piano lessons but needed more income. So she got a job at the Iowa Industrial School where she spent eight years teaching and helping troubled boys.

At the age of 46, Ella died of a lung disorder.

Parting thoughts:

That distinctive beginning happened in the music room of Main Hall, the heart of campus learning.

That distinctive beginning made by the Seven Founders affirmed their lifelong pledge to friendship.

That distinctive beginning then moved out in concentric circles from this place to encompass incredible philanthropic and educational benefit for women and their families.

.....Elizabeth Garrels
Past President, International Chapter
P.E.O. Record, January 2015

P.E.O. has given over \$435 million in financial assistance through ELF, IPS, PCE, PSA and STAR projects to more than 125,000 women.

P.E.O. Educational Loan Fund loans total \$252.3 million. 51,625 women have received loans since 1907.

P.E.O. International Peace Scholarships total \$49.8 million. 7,122 women have received scholarships since 1949.

P.E.O. Program for Continuing Education grants total \$74.6 million. 54,587 women have received grants since 1973.

P.E.O. Scholar Awards total \$36.7 million. 2,935 women have received awards since 1991.

P.E.O. STAR Scholarships total \$21.8 million. 8,794 women have received scholarships since 2009.

In addition, P.E.O. has owned and supported Cottey College since 1927. Cottey is an independent liberal arts and sciences women's college that develops leadership qualities and a global perspective within its students throughout their academic and co-curricular experiences. In 2023-24, 99% of Cottey's students were enrolled in a four-year program, and 36 percent of 2023 graduates left Cottey with no debt. Cottey College and P.E.O., together, are Creators of Incredible Futures!

Figures taken from 2024 impact report

“SEVEN SPECIAL PERSONALITIES”

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|------------------|---|
| 1. Franc Roads | ___ A. “attraction magnet” |
| 2. Hattie Briggs | ___ B. joined P.E.O. in many towns |
| 3. Alice Bird | ___ C. was not a college graduate |
| 4. Suela Pearson | ___ D. married after church service |
| 5. Mary Allen | ___ E. chose the star emblem |
| 6. Alice Coffin | ___ F. artist |
| 7. Ella Stewart | ___ G. “Let’s start an order of our own.” |
| | ___ H. first president of P.E.O. |
| | ___ I. crusader and social activist |
| | ___ J. broke engagement, never married |
| | ___ K. Irish lass always wore earrings |
| | ___ L. P.E.O. for two years |
| | ___ M. intellectual expert in classics |
| | ___ N. Methodist ministry for 52 years |