

Angels  
P.E.O. Founders Day Play  
By Karen DeJulio and Terry Kuhn  
BL Chapter, Montrose, Colorado – 1987  
Revised 1994  
Revised 2008

Place: Heaven

Time: Present

Characters: Alice Bird, Franc Roads, Mary Allen, Hattie Briggs, Suela Pearson, Alice Coffin, Ella Steward

(Enter Mary, Alice Bird and Franc)

Alice Bird: Franc, for heaven's sake, your halo is slipping again?

Franc: It never will stay in place (Tries to straighten halo.)

Mary: (To Alice) Alice, have you tried the new wing wax that is out now?

Alice Bird: Yes, I have, but I don't think it's any better than the old feather oil that we've used for ages.

Franc: Don't let St. Christopher hear you say that. He's been developing the wing wax for eons.

(Everyone chuckles....)

(Enter Suela and Hattie)

Suela: Do you girls know what day it is down on earth?

Hattie: It is the \_\_\_\_th Anniversary of our founding of the P.E.O. Sisterhood at Iowa Wesleyan.

Alice Bird: Wasn't that fun marching in to chapel wearing our matching aprons and stars? Everyone was so surprised and curious! And those I.C.'s couldn't believe what they were seeing.

(Enter Alice Coffin and Ella Steward)

Mary: Oh good, you're here! Grab a cloud and join us... we were just talking about when we founded P.E.O.

Alice Coffin Who would have thought we had started something so important to the women of the world?

Ella: Yes, at a time when education for women was not encourage, we certainly were on the right path.

Hattie: Allie, your idea of a star for our emblem was brilliant. It's still as appropriate now as it ever was?

Alice Coffin: That was a heavenly idea, wasn't it?

Suela: It really is amazing that most of the ideas we developed then still apply today, such as our "Objects and Aims," and our rituals and our goals.

Alice Bird: I am so glad we kept the letters P.E.O. instead of changing to Greek letters. It means so much more to the members and is makes us a community organization instead of a college sorority.

(All girls voice agreement to this statement.)

Franc: Everything you girls have said is true, and besides having fun, our sisterhood has brought to women increased opportunities for higher education.

Alice Coffin: Yes, in 1907, the P.E.O. Educational Loan Fund (now referred to as ELF) was founded to lend money to women needing education beyond high school. Just think how many women have benefitted from this opportunity to pursue higher education. ELF celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in the year 2007.

Mary: Well, remember what H.G. Wells wrote after making a study of American women, and I quote, "I am no prophet, but; as I have watched the Women's Suffrage Association and the W.C.T.U. each achieving a worldwide climax in its noble purpose, I think I can see the P.E.O. Sisterhood imbued with, and impelled by its spiritual and educational ideals coming on leading the van ahead of all the other women's organizations, upward, toward the great world climax of putting soul into education."

Ella: We left quite a legacy. Just remember what happened with Alice Cottey, Founder of Cottey College in Nevada, Missouri. After becoming a P.E.O., Alice realized that her goals in education were much the same as P.E.O. Even the flower and colors for the college were identical to P.E.O. She wanted Cottey to be safe and cared for so she offered it to Supreme Chapter in 1927 to be owned and supported by the P.E.O. Sisterhood. Supreme accepted the gift. The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cottey College was celebrated in 1984.

- Hattie: Yes, does everyone recall how the International Peace Scholarship (IPS) fund was established. During World War II, the chapters went together and established the P.E.O. Victory Fund which purchased five clubmobiles. These clubmobiles were used as recreation and disaster units overseas for “our boys’ on the front lines. After the war ended, P.E.O.s realized the importance of service to World Peace so the P.E.O. United Victory Fund became the International Peace Scholarship fund... providing scholarships for foreign students to study in America and then return to their home country.
- Suela: The fourth project the P.E.O.s have funded goes even further towards our goals. The Program for Continuing Education supplies grants to women in the United States and Canada who wish to become better educated and more self-sufficient. This is a great fund for women who, for some reason have had their education interrupted. Then, in 1991, the P.E.O. Scholar Awards were established to help women in the United States and Canada pursue advanced degrees or for advanced study and research. You should see the resumes of some of these women, most impressive!
- Alice Bird: We should be very proud of ourselves!
- Franc: And, just recently the P.E.O. Foundation was established as a service to P.E.O.s. Tax deductible contributions to this fund are managed by P.E.O. and the contributions go to supporting all P.E.O. projects. What a great idea!
- Suela: Remember the fun we had at our meetings? It was exciting when some of our members moved away and started new chapters. We became a family of chapters. I heard from St. Christopher the other day that in 2007 there were almost 250,000 members and close to 6,000 active chapters. That’s staggering enough to almost make me fall off my cloud!
- Alice Coffin: It was especially flattering when they moved to different states and organized chapters there. For example, remember the chapter started by Laura Rice in Mississippi. They met twice a week, they were so enthusiastic!
- Mary: What a time International Chapter has had with its name! Since the first National Convention in 1882, it has changed the name three times. First it was Grand Chapter, then Supreme Grand Chapter, then Supreme Chapter, and now International Chapter. Wonder what they’ll change it to next?
- Franc: Going along with changes, I like the change they made from “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds” to the P.E.O. Ode, written by Caroline Kettle of Chapter G of Colorado It was first sung at Supreme Convention in 1921, where it was adopted.
- Ella: Our sisterhood has grown since those early days, and such wild stories our International officers had to tell about organizing many of the chapters!

Hattie: I always laugh when I think of Viola Whittlesay, second Vice President of Supreme. She went to Carlsbad, New Mexico on January 21, 1909, forty years to the day after P.E.O. was founded to organize Chapter A. When she arrived at the station, no one was there to meet her. Her letter telling them she was coming had gone astray. Not only that, five of the seven homes involved in the new chapter organization had whooping cough and her supplies for the ceremony weren't all there. They say "misfortune builds character." Viola must have been really strong after that organization!

Alice Coffin: And now they use those fancy computers and send their messages by e-mail. What a change we have seen in P.E.O. over the past years!

(Everyone chuckles)

Suela: I think one of my favorite parts of P.E.O. is the B.I.L.s and their parties.

Alice Bird: You still haven't changed, have you Suela? You always like the parties; but, I agree, I liked them too.

Franc: I like best the Centerville, Iowa, story on how the B.I.L.s originated.

Alice Coffin: Oh, yes! The five members of the Ancient Order of Bachelors met their "Waterloo" when they met and married the five P.E.O.s. They became brothers-in-law to the sisters and to each other...hence the initials B.I.L.

Mary: Aren't the girls fortunate the B.I.Ls have been so supportive through the years? And, oh, what they think our letters stand for. Some of those are soooo funny, good, and creative!

(Girls voice agreement.)

Ella: Just think of all the famous women who have belonged to P.E.O. over the years. As an example, the daughter-in-law of Abraham Lincoln was a P.E.O.!

Hattie: And wasn't that chapter in Washington, D.C. lucky when Bess Truman dimitted into it when Harry Truman went to Washington? At the time Harry was President, Bess entertained her chapter at the White House when it was her turn to have the meeting!

Suela: Mary, was that the same chapter that returned you P.E.O. pin after it was lost for 42 years?

Mary: Yes, wasn't that remarkable? I lost my pin while visiting an aunt in Washington in 1882. In 1924, Chapter J invited me to be their special guest. They presented me with a gift and when I opened it, there was my original P.E.O. pin! The owner of my aunt's old home found the pin when digging up dirt for her flower boxes.

(Everyone agrees verbally how lucky it was.)

Alice Bird: (Turns to Mary) Since you lived on earth longer than the rest of us, Mary, you experienced more of the rewards of our early years of work. You were able to turn the first spade of soil in the ground breaking ceremony for the P.E.O. Memorial Library at Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant.

Mary: Yes, the ground breaking ceremony was held on January 11, 1927. The Library was dedicated the following September. I would have so enjoyed the excitement of the dedication, but the Lord called me here before it was finished.

Ella: One of our really big achievements to place into that Library was the P.E.O. Record. Having our own publication was a great step forward. I remember the first issue was January, 1889; our darling Editor sewed the pages together on her sewing machine at home. What a difference in the appearance of the P.E.O. Record after being in publication for \_\_\_\_ years! The new look is sleek and the “Little Girl” logo so appropriate to the new millennium.

Suela: You know, after all of this reminiscing I realize the rich heritage and example we have left to the members of the Sisterhood...a way of life fashioned on a plain background of everyday living, a pattern of glowing beauty handed on to them to admire, to copy and to treasure always.

Alice Bird: Yes, I believe our sisters today treasure these values as we always have. Alice, do you remember by chance, the message you sent to the Iowa Convention in 1887?

Alice Coffin: Oh, yes, I remember. You know, being an angel and having total recall does have its advantages at times. (Clears throat and steps forward toward the audience.

“I greet you as sisters. May you raise the standards of true womanhood, elevate the fallen, help the weak, give smiles, scatter rose blossoms, make light the burdens of the oppressed, and may our badge of sincerity and friendship – our Star – be emblematic of the Star of Bethlehem, a guide for our Sisterhood to holier, purer and better things than earth can give. May we, indeed, be stars among women in whatever vocation we fill.”

The End

(Script material came from P.E.O. Records.)

