

CHAPTER BL, Madison, Wisconsin

A History of the Chapter's First Ten Years

Chapter BL celebrated their tenth anniversary May 2, 1962. Our evening's program was a review of the first ten years of BL. We are including the script in our history records and we hope you will enjoy "looking back" with us.

The program began with Fanfare, "Anniversary Song" and "Happy Birthday to You."

When we celebrate a birthday, we celebrate a beginning! And so it was that in May of 1952.....A Star was Born! It was a wee star when you consider the vastness of the Universe and next to Arcturus and the Pleiads...it was just a flicker in the sky. But there is magic in this star and it had a particularly radiant glow. It was held fast by the magnetic pulls of Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth. These simple enduring virtues somehow made it shine in a special way. This star had first been worn by seven young ladies who chose it as the symbol of their PEO sisterhood; conceived in girlish conspiracy to outwit the arrow of I.C. Sorosis. Can you imagine how one of them might have looked on her way to chapel that morning in 1869 at Iowa Wesleyan?

Model in 1869 dress

Music -- When You Wish Upon a Star

But our star was born almost a hundred years later and it was called BL. Before it ever appeared on the horizon it had gleaned a rich heritage. There had been thousands of other stars preparing the way. This star of BL must particularly thank others of its galaxy. For now we remember that day of 1952 when thirteen women from eight different states and four initiates joined hands and sought to travel by starlight together. It was a gala day...with installation and a luncheon at the Loraine Hotel. And there it was! A star after months

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of meetings and waiting. The present members of Chapter BL honor these sisters who chartered our course. Two of these seventeen women are still in our ranks as non-residents, nine have found other chapter homes and we honor the memory of May Rarick and Gail Frazier who have found a place in the Chapter Eternal. Only four of these members are still a part of our chapter: Beth Ross, Jeannette Thomas, Betty Rennebohm and Jane Wilson.

Girl dressed in white pins a large gold star on each of the four.
Music -- PEO Star Song sung by Mary Heine

It was from the hands of Winona Reeves..one of PEO's most famous and beloved members that BL received its chartered right to glow. And it was our Betty Rennebohm who received this charter in LaCrosse. In our history, I found these words that Nancy Ragatz wrote about Betty, "She somehow or other always knew the right thing to do at the right time; and the right way to do it. She knew both the law and the lore of PEO. She had a vision of what she thought a PEO chapter should be and she laid the foundation accordingly. She built that foundation with great honesty and integrity; virtues that are part of her own character. It was a sturdy, strong foundation and it was a good thing it was, because in the days ahead we needed that kind of a foundation. For her wise counseling we will always be grateful." And for her vision we have a rose.

Girl in white presents rose to Betty
Music--Stardust

1952 was the year that young Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne of England and it was the beginning of our BL journey. Betty called it a "shakedown cruise," but one that she felt was going

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in the right direction. 1953 brought the death of Stalin and Dag Hammerskjold took his place as UN secretary. This was the year BL was honored by Jane Dorschel and asked to present the model meeting at the Milwaukee convention. The big question was, "What to wear". After this was solved everyone turned their thoughts to perfecting their duties. BL had the thrill of a chapter achievement and if I'm not wrong...a wonderful feeling of release when it was over!

These were the years that our comings and goings caused the star to blink in alarm. BL was described as a sieve. Demits, Demits, Demits! Coming-Going-In-Out-and Roundabout! New York, Illinois, Texas, New Mexico, California... In fact, things got so mixed up---three of the officers left in one summer! A special four star tribute to the unsung heroines of these ten years...The Corresponding Secretaries:

Fanfare

Girl in white enters with prop book and reads:

Dorothy Vickerstaff	Ruth Thomas
Betty Land	Jean Clausen
Nancy Ragatz	

Fanfare

Christmas auctions had begun and somewhere there is a basket waiting to be filled! What distant planet did we lose it to? 1954 headlines told of the McCarthy hearings, the Supreme Court's ruling by which racial segregation in the public schools was declared unconstitutional and the beginning of Salk Vaccine tests, but our own clippings reveal: Dr. Marian Caldwell Wed to H. F. Mason, Miss Doris Ann Johnston Wed to William Rieman: to Honeymoon in Europe. These weddings were in the family as our Marian Caldwell married our own Mary Mason's son, Harold;

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And our Doris married new initiate Edna's son, Bill.

Girl in white with Wedding Veil

Music -- Wedding March Mary Heine sings "I Love You Truly"

The star was shining brighter as friendships deepened and new women were added to the always changing roster. Jeanette Thomas was chosen to pilot our star and this was a busy-growing time for BL and a critical time too, and we needed a strong hand at the wheel. Jeannette used all of her energies to help the chapter grow and to anchor it to the rock of financial stability. These were the years of Secret Sisters, the Box Social, Peanut Crunch and Mints, and when the treasurer went regularly to the bank to buy bonds! It was Jeannette's enthusiasm that galvanized us into action and made our star gleam with a golden hue.

For her enthusiasm, we have a rose.

Girl in white presents rose to Jeannette

Music -- Stars and Stripes Forever

In 1955 Churchill resigned, Cardinal Mindszenty was finally released, Argentina ousted Peron and President Eisenhower suffered his coronary thrombosis while the rest of us listened to:
Music -- Do-Re-Mi from the "Sound of Music"

And there were creatures stalking the streets who looked like this!!

Model in beatnik costume

Music -- Beatnik-type Music

The Christmas auctions reached dizzy heights in great part due to Hazel Weeden's devoted needle. Her doll clothes have brought joy to BL's daughters. This was the time when we started selling dish cloths to ourselves. But even so we were not

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standing still as the woman who was described thus:

Girl in white reads poem about "Dishrags" from a PEO Record

We realized that not only did we have direct mastery in the shaping of our own destiny, but could also influence those around us. And so it was that we increased our contributions to Cottey and the International Peace Scholarship Fund.

In these years we adopted what might almost be called a chapter costume. This was the era of the pregnant guards.

Model in White Maternity Top Carrying Guard's Case.
Music -- "I'm Just Biding My Time"

And in fact this maternity bit became a real problem and we very cleverly concealed this with the greatest maternity dress of all time.

Model in white robe carrying guard's case.
Music -- Brahms Lullabye

This was a milestone in our chapter life and we are proud of our robes...and production record.

Perhaps you would be interested to know the baby statistics of our active membership. Chapter BL has mothered approximately eighteen tiny bundles of precious humanity in these ten years. In 1956 Betty Land found herself with two responsibilities to shoulder for she was the president of BL and Reciprocity too. And with her guidance, the Reciprocity Board sponsored a brand spanking new star...BW. It was with sentimental reminiscence that we watched the meetings of the unaffiliates grow into a chapter. Betty's orderly ways helped to mature our chapter, and we found our star securely on a serene path.

And for her energy we have a rose.

Girl in white presents rose to Betty
Music -- "I Saw Stars"

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1957 was the year Sputnik launched us into a new space era, Little Rock Arkansas became a headline, the Braves won the series and BL turned out in full force for inspection only to discover that there weren't enough white balls for all of our members to vote.

It was at this time that Betty Rennebohm went to Denver to be our delegate at the Supreme Convention, leaving behind her husband, her four children, and forty-two piano pupils. It was a terrible wrench.....but we all appreciated it.

Cookie tasting parties began and the Triple Trio with its 8, 10 or 11 members was in full swing. Do you remember how we all loved this song?

Mary Heine sings "Sound of Music"

This is a generous group with spirit and fun and they have made our star beam with pride. It seems only right then that Mary Justice would lead both the singing BL's and the chapter too. Mary was the one who discovered that our "white" robes were turning pink! That year was marked by voluminous correspondence with the Collegiate Company and before we knew it, we had another set of robes as white as if they were fresh from a Cheer test. If these turn pink, we'll know that we're just a bunch of blushing marguerites.

In 1958 the first Satellite, Explorer, was fired into orbit, Alaska became the 49th state and the Nautilus, the first atomic powered submarine crossed the top of the world under the North Pole. 1959 found Castro's revolt in Cuba, the admission of Hawaii as the fiftieth state, and the Soviets created a stir in outer space. We celebrated sweet May's 80th birthday with

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a lovely party at Mary Alices'. In 1959 BL had the honor of having their triple trio sing at Supreme Convention in Milwaukee. And since no one can ever do anything alone...we borrowed robes from BC, Jane Horswill from V, Virginia Thurman from BW and moral support from the rest of the chapter. This was the year that Mary Justice left for Alabama to be swallowed up in southern hospitality, camellias, and challenging new horizons of work. For Mary's lovely song we have a rose.

Girl in white puts rose in bud vase for Mary
Music -- Stars Fell on Alabama

In 1960 we welcomed BY to the roster of Madison's PEO stars. Their installation was an impressive service and a day to be remembered, but perhaps the most inspirational aspect of the affair was the complete harmony of the Madison chapters in planning the day for BY. And now even the children are giving the program! Do you remember when Fran herded her two babies across the living room and upstairs out at University Houses? And now...Russ Bright and Karen Clausen have been to Europe and even behind the iron curtain!

They tell me too, that time was, and perhaps some of you recall it, when a compact was a gadget women dabbed their noses out of and now its an automobile. And, perhaps you did not know that they now have false teeth for cows or that BL again outdid themselves in their eagerness to impress the organizer. This time one of the members blackballed our imaginary candidate for membership.

The events of 1961 and 62 are such recent history and full of such significance for the future that we can but remember that life is made up of little things put together like the quilt

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patterns Gladys Meloche told us about. Like the little lamps of friendship....

The little lamps of friendships
We light along the way,
Go shining on far down the years,
And brighten every day.
Tis love that keeps them burning
in sympathy and trust,
God help us that no lamp goes out
Because we let it rust.

There is still a rose left.....and I want to give it to Jane Wilson whose quiet helpfulness and serenity have been an inspiration to each of us. We shall miss her more than we can say, but we wish both she and Bryan God Speed and happiness always.

These are our ten years. Our yesterday will become a guiding star for our tomorrow. We know that the future of PEO lies not in the star, but in ourselves when the star's message is received in our hearts and minds and is reflected in our lives. Then all will know that all our life among men has been but a Journey to a Star.

Music --"Stairway to a Star"

Skit prepared and
presented by Jane
Jewell for the ten year
anniversary of Chapter
B.L.

Used for program
May 14, 1997 celebrating the
45th anniversary of the founding
of Chapter B.L.