

B.L.'s Past Presidents, prepared by Nancy Ragatz

1.

Before Chapter B.L. was organized in Madison a group of unaffiliated P.E.O.'s had been meeting in their homes. With some help, but mostly because of their own determination our Chapter was organized. They chose Betty Rennebohm as their president. They chose wisely. Betty 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 P.E.O. She had a vision of what she thought a P.E.O. 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.

So to Betty Rennebohm our chapter owes much. May we keep her star brightly shining and her halo glowing in our own.BL skies.

2.

When Jeanette Thomas became the second president Chapter BL was like a seive. We welcomed the nicest girls into our chapter, knew them a short time, and then sent them on their way. It was the most critical time in our history. But Jeanette too had her vision of how a P.E.O. chapter should grow, and she was determined that we should grow on the same principles that Betty had followed. It wasn't easy. She had to convince a complete reciprocity board that from the viewpoint of our own chapter some things should be different. She made chapter BL's voice heard, listened to, and respected. When this was accomplished she bent all her energies, and there were times when it must have been very discouraging, to the growth of our chapter. She faced up to a financial problem that she could just as well have let

go until a later administration. The entertaining of the State Convention. Her own enthusiasm sort of galvanized the rest of us into action, and we became a solvent, if not a downright rich chapter, and a flourishing one. We don't know who else could have done it.

So to Jeanette our chapter owes much. May we keep her star brightly burning and her halo glowing in our own BL skies.

3.

So well did Jeanette build--that when Betty Land became our third president it was no longer necessary to turn our eyes inward, and Betty turned them outward. She too had a vision of what P.E.O. should mean, not a narrow one confined to our own chapter, but one that encompassed all P.E.O.'s. She too had to battle, convince is a better word, a rather complacent reciprocity board that a sisterhood should be concerned about the P.E.O.'s in Madison who were not made welcome, and with all of the zeal of a missionary, she too made Chapter BL's voice heard and respected. I doubt if ever again will Madison be lax in it's awareness and welcome to P.E.O.'s who come to our town. All of the future P.E.O.'s who come to our town will be indebted to Betty Land for that, and Chapter BL can take pride in having her for our President.

So to Betty Land our Chapter owes much. May we keep her star brightly shining and her halo glowing in our B.L. skies.

4.

All the while our chapter was growing we were assuming a definite character and flavor all our own that set us apart from the other chapters. This was due to the very modest and unassuming talent of our fourth President--Mary Justice. Just when this started it would be impossible to say, but it was there and growing as our chapter grew. Years ago when my children were little I read a book by Van Wyck Brooks, you may have had it in compulsory reading in American Literature, and so didn't enjoy it the way I did. It told about how, in the Puritan

times in the New England States, certain influences were growing and making themselves felt that finally culminated in a rich period of American Literature in the period of Longfellow, Holmes, Emerson etc. He called his book "The Flowering of New England." I like to think of the period of Mary's turn of office as the "Flowering" of Chapter BL. Certainly, due to her we have flowered and are known city wide--state wide--and nation wide.

So to Mary Justice our chapter owes much. May we keep her star brightly shining and her halo glowing in our BL skies.