

OUR STAR

Our Star - an emblem - something that will be a visual reminder of our search for the highest and best.

The purpose of my few minutes tonight is to make all of us a little more aware of the extraordinary treasure that shimmers within and beyond the shiny gold emblem we wear over our hearts. The use of emblems within any group of people is a form of symbolism: a means of communication.

Seven young women founded P.E.O. in 1869 and chose a star for their emblem. Then they incorporated the star into a design for their pin. Exactly what symbolic idea or ideas did the founders hope to convey by searing the pin? Exactly what idea or message do P.E.O.'s wish to convey to a recipient as we wear our pins today - a century later?

The first message is for the one who wears the pin. To her, it denotes a oneness with others of similar ideas, ideals, achievements and aspirations. A true P.E.O. takes pride in wearing the pin, but is aware that it should be worn with love and dignity and modesty and with a deep sense of responsibility, else it would not reflect the character of P.E.C

The second message would go straight and true to the recipient. Automatically, the emblem, seen on the shoulder of one of the founder **S** would have conveyed an instantaneous message. To anyone who saw it there it would have said, "You see we have pioneered by forming a society at a time when societies for women are practically unknown. This is a part of our destiny."

If the recipient of a wearer's message is another P.E.O. the message might well, beg "Please make yourself known so we may share interests and become friends."- If the recipient is not a P.E.O. but has some P.E.O. CONTACT and recognizes the pin, the message may be "Yes I am a P.1.0. .. Please don't hesitate to make yourself known. I would like to hear about your P.E.O.friends." But if someone sees the pin who does not recognize

it, the message would mean only, "I belong to some organizations to some group or unity of persons."

The message that each communicant reads into such a symbolic transfer of ideas will be determined by the breadth of her own knowledge and experience, and by her own ability to relate herself to her surroundings. That is exactly what Ella Stewart was doing about 1890, when she wrote one of her rare articles - this one about "the badge" and its significance.

"Our star, as a badge, what could be more significant? ..The stars of heaven are bright because they are reflected upon. Likewise should our lives be made radiant by the reflection of God's love upon our hearts, giving us light and wisdom.

Our star.... with its five shining points directing us... in the paths of virtue, and with those mystic letters, P.E.O., telling their own sweet story. The points radiating from them bear their-message of faith in God and in each other. Purity in thought, speech and action. Justice to all in deed and opinion. Truth in speech and conduct. Love to God, to our friends and to each other. With the five lessons of virtue ever before use their principles embodied in our own beautiful star, let us keep strict watch that its brilliance is not dimmed nor the beauty of a single point marred by what we do or say.

But let it shed over our hearts and lives a golden splendor and point us ever to God who guides us with his love. Our lives should be affected by our emblem in that we are pure minded, truthful, faithful and loving in character, wearing upon our hearts the zeal of our Masters love."Ella was about-40 years old when she wrote this. .She died four years later. Her pin is the only one of the original pins known to exist.

The founders and other early initiates gave serious thought to the proper method of wearing the star. Its properly acknowledged place was

on the left shoulder where it might be touched as a signal of distress or warning. It could also be worn for decoration at the discretion of the member, perhaps in the hair or on a collar. Today our Constitution states, "It shall be worn on the left side above all other pins worn as badges."

There have been several changes in the pin which we wear. The first ones were large and flat, then later they were curved. The greatest change in pins came in 1915 when a much smaller pin was adopted as the official emblem. Examples of most of the changes are on display in the historical room in the P.E.O. Memorial Building, Mb. Pleasant, Iowa.

other pins-

1. Circle of seven Seven Marguerites -with a tiny star in the center an optional pin for past presidents of States District, and Provincial Chapters.
2. Pin for past presidents of International Chapter.
3. Jeweled pins -- rare -- they were make to express appreciation for extraordinary service to the society.

Many years after the star was agreed upon as a symbol for our sisterhood philosopher-psychiatrist named Carl Jung observed that symbols give us a sense of participation in the divine drama. He said that awareness of the deeper meanings of a symbol can change a person "s universe. Maybe we can increase our awareness of our special symbol by thinking about- some of its ageless meanings.

More than anything else, a star has always been a symbol of everything that keeps human beings looking up. Let your P.E.O. star remind you that if you will keep your eyes fixed on the beautiful and the uplifting and the inspiring, you will probably stumble now and then, but there will also tie times when your spirit will dance through the skies, in tune with the

stars. It's worth the risk!

Think on this thought a second - When can you see farther - at night or in the daytime? Most of us quickly would answer, "In the daytime, of course." But we are wrong. The most distant object we can see in the daytime is the sun, but-at night we can see stars which are* millions of times farther away. Remember this - especially during times when your own private world seems to be turning dark. When you face dark times in your life, let your P.E.O. star remind you that it is precisely at those times that you can increase the range of your vision, by opening up your inner eyes.

Besides being a symbol of everything that keeps us looking up, our star is also a living mystery that reaches back before beginnings and touches the edges of infinity. Its an ever present reminder of the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory of our God and of His Creation.

In closing, I would like to share this final thought with you. An alien who wishes to become a citizen of the United States must learn many things before becoming naturalized; but only years of living in our land can bring a true realization of its blessings. To follow the star, so to speak, implies an adjustment or naturalization process. Only by years of studying our Constitution, our history-and traditions, of living and working with our sisters can we come to know and have that something known as the P.E.O. spirit. One P.E.O. has said, "When we reach for the full glory--of the star that is P.E.O., we reach for heaven itself. Our striving may never be attained, but in reaching, we have gained much."