THE OBJECTS AND AIMS OF OUR SISTERHOOD

Given by Michigan State Chapter Executive Board
Saturday, May 15, 2004

Tiffany:

During this past year the Michigan State Chapter Executive Board did an in depth study of the Objects and Aims of our Sisterhood. We used them as our devotions for each board meeting. Two members were responsible for a section each time we met. The presentations were based on the duos interpretation of their assigned portion and the research they performed. All of the presentations were compiled into a booklet and excerpts were used for these devotions. It was our intent to broaden our understanding of the Objects and Aims and to focus on self-improvement, which we felt we accomplished.

This morning we would like to share with you some thoughts from these studies.

*Out of the Heart* tells us that the first reference to what we know as the Objects and Aims can be found in the original constitution, which Alice Bird was asked to prepare when the Founders met in the music room at Iowa Wesleyan College. She was asked to bring it to their next meeting. Undoubtedly Alice received many suggestions from the other six, but it was Alice who so adequately put into writing the first ideas and ideals that outlined the basic principles of P.E.O. She sat in the spare bedroom in her father’s house and after having difficulty finding the necessary words, her father came to her aid with the “whereas” and “therefore resolved.” And then, she recalled, she could scarcely stop, for the needs of all women must be embodied in that document. That original writing may well have read like this:

In Article 2\textsuperscript{nd}, we find-

*The object of this society shall be general improvement, which shall comprehend more especially:*

1\textsuperscript{st} Improvement in charity toward and interest in each other as P.E.O.s.
2\textsuperscript{nd} Improvement in our charity toward and interest in all with whom we associate.
3\textsuperscript{rd} Improvement in our manners at home and in society
4\textsuperscript{th} Improvement in our minds by the pursuing of such books and pamphlets in and out of society as shall be proper for P.E.O.s.

Gail:

*To seek growth in knowledge and in culture, and to obtain all possible wisdom from nature, art, books, study and society.*

Personal growth is essential to improving our overall lives. Seeking growth in all positive areas of life keeps our Sisterhood vigorous and exciting. Franc Roads said, “Evolution and growth mean life to organizations as well as individuals.”

In these words from Nancy Hoium she tells us:

“We stretch just a bit further than we think we can; we tackle new things—even things we think we don’t like to do. We are challenged to add new dimensions to our lives. The incredible problems in today’s world demand solutions, and P.E.O. with its emphasis on
ideals, education, and growth can help each member strive for the insight to do her part to help resolve these problems.” (The P.E.O. Record, July-August 2003)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” James 1:5

Sparla:

To radiate all light possible by conversation, by writing and by the right exercise of any talent we possess.

In the May 1998 Guideposts (p. 146), author Elizabeth Sherrill tells the following story of Castle Island, “…a mere strip of sand near the eastern end of the long Bahama archipelago.”

“Tiny and isolated though it is, Castle Island is important for the lighthouse that is its sole human trace. Sailing in the area,…[her] brother Donn anchored there one evening and swam ashore to stretch his legs on the beach. The lighthouse keeper…surprised and delighted to have company, insisted that Donn join him for fresh caught lobster and a tour of the building. What astonished…[her] brother when they’d climbed to the lantern room at the top of the stairs was the size of the light that signaled safe passage through a maze of shoals and reefs.

“It was a tiny kerosene flame,” Donn told…[her]. ‘Barely bright enough to read by.’ Yet with the aid of mirrors and reflectors, it was visible twenty-five miles out to sea.”

In this same article, Elizabeth Sherrill also indicates:

“…[she] thinks often of that lighthouse keeper and his stewardship of that feeble flame on his scrap of land. ‘Let your light shine.’ … But what if my light is a dim one? What if my good works are few and small?

“Perhaps … my little light is magnified in the immense mirror of God’s love. Perhaps…[God’s] reflectors are human hearts, spreading the flame of kindness one to another. Castle Island tells…[us] that even the most insignificant act of …ours ceding…[our] spot in the grocery check-out line to a mother with a fretful baby, a two-line note dropped in a new neighbor’s mailbox, a smile and a “hello” to a toll booth attendant—even such faint candles as these can be multiplied by…[God] to shine like beacons in a dark world.”

What simple act of ours will radiate all light possible?

“Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16 (RSV)

Tiffany:

To aim at self control, equipoise, and symmetry of character.

This section of the Objects and Aims appears to be the lone segment dealing with how we appear outwardly to others: how others perceive us.

The inspirational book, Finish Strong, was written by Richard G. Capen, Jr., a publisher of The Miami Herald. In it, Mr. Capen states:
“My years as publisher of *The Miami Herald* and as a public servant provided unusual access to special people from all walks of life. Some ran grocery stores, others ran the country. Some had enormous energy, others were crippled and bedridden. All had accomplished exceptional things in their lives.”

“As I gathered material for my book, I decided to conduct a survey of these wonderful friends and acquaintances. My survey consisted of four questions:

- What three accomplishments do you consider to be the most important in your life?
- If you knew you were going to die tomorrow, what two or three values would you want to be remembered for?
- Who have been your mentors, and what did they teach you?
- Name an unsung hero whose values you admire.

“In all the survey replies, a common thread occurred: the influence of dedicated parents and family, faith in God, and hard work…. Though many could rest on their laurels, few were; they had the compulsion to share with others and to make the world a better place.”

Mr. Capen relates the story of Alfred Nobel.

“Alfred Nobel, creator of the prestigious Nobel Prize, once woke up to read a notice of his death in the newspaper. It had been a terrible mix-up, but a good one for Nobel. The experience caused him to rethink his life, one that had produced huge profits from the development of dynamite. When he read his own obituary, he realized that he didn’t want to be remembered for giving the world the ability to blow itself up. Rather, he wanted a legacy centered on peace, science and culture. Thus, he funded a wonderful program—the Nobel Prizes—to honor people in these fields. ‘Every man ought to have the right to prepare a new epitaph midstream in his life,’ Nobel said.”

How would your obituary read if written today?

**Gail:**

**Aim at temperance in opinions, speech and habits.**

The key word in the character forming section is “aim.” “Aim” like “strive” is an action word meaning we are attempting something. In this case we are attempting to become more balanced in our actions and words. The early members of our Sisterhood didn’t say we had to act or think a certain way. They wanted us to try to be moderate in what we do and say. They gave us targets for our actions.

A program written by Helen Wollin, Chapter AI, Montana, suggests these thoughts:

“Aim at temperance in opinions, speech and habits. By so doing we are giving the best indication of that self-control which makes it possible to work with others. To do this, we must be tolerant and broad-minded. Tolerance is an essential part of friendship. It is not our conviction that our friend is right that makes us love her – but it is the faith we have in her sincerity and determination to do the thing, which is right as she sees it. You must be tolerant of my opinions and I of yours, then we will have surmounted one of the greatest barriers in the pathway of harmony. If the quality of harmony is worth enough to become an ideal for which the whole world is striving, surely it is worth the while of every true P.E.O. to place it among her own personal objects and aims.”
“Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.” Ephesians 4:29b

Sparla:

*It shall be the chief duty of each member to consider thoughtfully the full import of P.E.O. This will include a sincere regard for our influence in the community.*

Nancy Hoium has said, “This places responsibility on each of us to consider how our actions reflect on ourselves and also on the Sisterhood.” (*The P.E.O. RECORD*, July-August 2003)

A *P.E.O. Record* article by Rosemary A. Wood, says “The kind of woman who epitomizes our organization has an inner strength, a high moral fiber, a graciousness and kindness toward others, honesty, integrity and an ability to look the world in the eye as a worthy citizen of her community and the world.” (*The P.E.O. Record*, September-October 1997)

I’d like to share the following poem that Jane Burtis Smith included in one of her President’s Messages:

I am my sister’s keeper.
We’re in this together
not to win,
not to compete
not to conquer,
But to educate,
to nurture
to help.
We are each other’s keeper.
Let us celebrate
The power within us all
To make a difference.

Author Unknown


Gail:

*A careful consideration of feeling when speaking and a determination to do all we can at all times and under all circumstances to express a loving concern for each sister.*

Melody Carlson, the author of *Women are Sisters at Heart*, wrote the following:

“Women Helping Women:”

“How I long to be the type of woman who is willing to smile at a stranger, quick to offer an encouraging word, and ready to roll up her sleeves and pitch in. Yet how often I hesitate – second guessing my motives, wondering if someone will think I’m presumptuous or I’ll offend the woman I’m trying to help.”
“I have to remind myself that even a bumbling kindness is better than kindness withheld. And besides, we can only improve with practice, right? So a few weeks ago, I offered to hold a crying baby in the doctor’s waiting room while the nervous mother filled in her insurance forms. To my surprise, the baby even quieted down by the time his mother was ready to take him back. Our eyes met for a brief instant, and she realized someone cared about her – someone who had been a young mother once, too.

“Now that my children are grown and my days have taken on a less demanding pace, I’m asking God to make me more aware of the women I meet in the course of my life, perhaps for only a few minutes or hours. When a sister in need crosses my path I want to be sensitive to her feelings, and responsive to God’s leading. I hope I will reach out in kindness and love, as so many others have reached out to me. For the act of sisterhood has been passed down through the ages. Women have helped women throughout history. In fact, it’s only in recent years that women have become less dependent on other women. We no longer rely on older women to help us through childbirth, or with the care of our little ones. When life begins to close in on us we feel we must be strong and walk tall through our problems….alone. But when we become too self sufficient, we miss out on the joys and rewards of sisterhood. That’s not just sad, it’s tragic.

“Come on girls. Let’s reach out TO EACH OTHER. Let’s be there FOR each other.”

Tiffany:

*A just comprehension of, and adherence to, the qualities of Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth. These virtues were added to our Objects and Aims.*

Their importance is a constant reminder to us, as they are repeated twice each time we meet.

We search for understanding of these qualities, and commit ourselves to action that mirrors their meaning, always remembering that... the greatest of these is *LOVE.*

**BIBLIGRAPHY**

