

Founders' Day: Remembering Those Who Came Before Us

In the fall of 1897, a young woman named Mayme Johnson (Oesterle) came back to Muncie, Indiana, from her summer vacation with news of a Greek letter society that friends in New York were involved with. She talked with her friends at Muncie High School about starting their own society. So along with her friends, Mary Louise Carmichael, Huda Smith (Kimbrough), Ethelyn Dowell (Hinckley) and Sue Derexa Smith, Mayme started their organization. They were supported by teachers Emma Cammack, Martha Ivins, and Eve Kessler, who helped them put together the name, purpose, and focus of their new sorority, Psi Iota Xi.

The letters were chosen because the girls liked their appearance. They adopted a constitution and rituals and chose the diamond shape of the pin and the colors of turquoise and old gold. Mayme became the first president. At this point, the group was solely together for social purposes. Their main events were a banquet, pledge and initiation services, and a big Christmas dance.

The banquet was held each year precisely on Sept. 19, unless it happened to be a Sunday. It was a formal affair with a dinner of several courses served in the private dining room of the Delaware Hotel in downtown Muncie. The room was always decorated festively with flowers and fancy centerpieces.

Now, we celebrate Founders' Day in September, but probably not with such formal flair. Our September chapter meeting is a wonderful time to remember our humble beginnings and celebrate the women who started our sorority. It is also fitting to honor the women who have helped lead our chapters through the years. Consider inviting former chapter presidents to your September meeting. A personal invitation from the current chapter president can be a meaningful way to reconnect with members who may no longer be active but whose leadership helped shape the chapter. You may wish to present those who attend with a yellow rose and a special acknowledgment of their service. For past presidents who are unable to join the celebration, a card signed by the officers or the chapter can let them know they are remembered and appreciated.

The Founders' Day meeting is also a good time to remember the sisters lost in the last year with a memorial service. Remembering our "fallen petals" honors our foresisters. The closeness of sisterhood can be felt in remembering those who went before us.

As you celebrate Founders' Day this September, take time to think of the women who came before us and gave us the opportunity to be who we are today.

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