

Helen Hays Hutton Hartley



Helen was born August 31, 1897, in Centerville, Iowa, to John and Lillian Hays just a few months before Lillian was initiated into P.E.O. Eleven years later, the family moved to Sioux City, Iowa, where Helen's mother became a charter member of Chapter DX. Her mother served as president when Helen was initiated into DX in 1917.

Helen attended Morningside College and the University of Iowa, where she was a member of Phi Beta Phi and majored in journalism. After college, she worked for several years as a reporter, woman's page editor, and feature writer for the Sioux City *Tribune*. Early in the 1920s she moved to California, where she edited a column and wrote feature articles for the Los Angeles *Evening Express*. While in LA, she married her high school sweetheart, Charles Hutton. Chuck was a graduate of the University of Michigan Law school and a veteran of WWI. They moved back to Sioux City, where their only child, Thomas, was born. Chuck had an interest in automobiles and began working at a car dealership, soon advancing to sales manager.

In about 1924 the Huttons moved to South Dakota, where they lived for 15 years. Helen was a member of two chapters in South Dakota and a charter member of a third. With each move, her husband had acquired ownership in larger, more profitable car dealerships.

In 1932, Helen was elected to the South Dakota State board as corresponding secretary. She served two years as organizer. While 2nd vice president, she served as a page at Supreme Convention. She was the president of SD state chapter 1937-1938, leading a delegation to Supreme Convention in St. Louis. On opening night of her state convention in 1938, her mother, Lillian, was her special guest. It was also the 40th anniversary of her mother's initiation into P.E.O.

Helen instituted a number of firsts for South Dakota's convention—things we now consider standard. She had a display of chapter yearbooks and a display on Cottey College; she had a printed copy of the amendments mailed to delegates before convention, which was considered the first reading; she gave outgoing president's remarks; and she suggested South Dakota's convention adopt a rotation of groups of hostess chapters rather than have only one hostess chapter try to handle everything.

The South Dakota climate was very difficult for their son Tom's asthma, so her husband acquired a Dodge car dealership in Memphis, and the family moved there in January 1939. Chuck was also an innovative person. His dealership was the first to have neon lights in the showroom and electric garage-door openers. Chuck eventually went on to have ownership in eight car dealerships in seven different states.

By May of that year, Helen had limited to the only P.E.O. chapter in Tennessee, Chapter A, and was elected treasurer. In the fall of that year she was off to Supreme Convention in Houston, where she presented revisions to the P.E.O. Ritual proposed by a committee she had chaired.

The next year, Helen helped select the charter list to organize Chapter B in Memphis. The organization was scheduled for a date in April 1941 at Helen's house. At the last minute, the Supreme Organizer was taken ill, so Helen was the proxy organizer, doing all the parts of the initiation by herself. She was installed as Chapter B's first president. That fall, she accepted Chapter B's charter at the Supreme Convention in Victoria, British Columbia.

In 1945 Helen went on the Board of Trustees of Supreme Chapter's Supply Department. As the chair of this committee, she returned to South Dakota's State Convention as their Guest of Honor.

By 1956 Tennessee had 11 chapters, and Supreme was pushing for a Tennessee state chapter. The convocation to organize the state chapter was held November 16, 1956, in Memphis, and Helen was installed as the first president of TN state chapter. She also wrote the words for the songs used at the convocation. The following spring Tennessee held its first state convention, and the entire board was reelected, thus serving 1½ years in their original offices.

At the 2nd State convention, when Helen left office, she presented \$25 toward a Cottey College scholarship in honor of her own Chapter B. Mrs. Alpha Brown, Chapter E (who later became a state president herself), moved that this fund be called the Helen Hays Hutton Scholarship Fund. The convention adopted the idea, and \$201 was donated to the fund. The next year and each year after, Helen's husband Chuck donated \$100 to this fund in Helen's honor. When Chuck Hutton died in 1961, numerous memorials were made to the HHH fund in his honor. At the 1969 state convention Helen gave 100 shares of Delta Airlines stock to start the HHH endowment. An advisory board was established. The shares were sold and 42 shares of Standard Oil were purchased. At this writing (2005) the HHH endowment is worth over \$96,000. This is money donated by chapters and individuals. All the interest for the past 47 years has been awarded as scholarships)

After leaving the TN State Board Helen served on the state finance committee. She also served on Supreme Finance committee and on the Board of Trustees of the P.E.O. Foundation. As chairman of the Foundation, she served as Supreme Representative at TN's state convention.

Helen had a great sense of humor. At the 1971 Convention of Supreme Chapter she gave her Foundation report wearing her foundation garments on the outside of her clothing. She attended every State convention for 25 years except one, when she sent greeting from Spain. She frequently gave motivational speeches to the state convention and reports on her travels; one she called "Around the World in 88 Days." Helen continued to be active in her own Chapter B, giving reports and organizing the chapters' Ways and Means project of selling furniture polish. On one occasion a potential customer contacted the out-of-state dealer for the polish and was told that Helen was the agent for the company in this area.

Helen was active in the Presbyterian Church, war work, the Girl Scout Council, Kings Daughters, two garden clubs, and taught a class in Creative Writing. She had poetry published in various magazines and anthologies.



Being the organized lady she was, in this time of monogrammed suitcases and handkerchiefs, when in 1968 **Helen Hayes Hutton** remarried, she chose **Hugh Hartley**, a member of the Cottey College Board of Trustees from Kansas City.

Helen's last state convention was in April, 1981. She entered Chapter Eternal on August 1, 1981. She had been a P.E.O. for 64 years.

—Bobbie Welty