

HISTORY OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY TO THE F. O. E.

The Grand Aerie of the Fraternal order of Eagles assembled for the 28th Annual Session in the city of Seattle, Washington in August of 1926 they must have seen the handwriting on the wall or simply decided to throw up their hands in despair, for it was at this convention that the delegates formally approved the creation and formation of the Ladies Auxiliaries to the Fraternal order of Eagles.

It is not known how many years before 1926 the ladies had been accompanying their husbands to the Convention and petitioning for recognition as bona fide affiliates, but there is evidence that as early as 1914 when the Grand Aerie Convention was held in Kansas City, Missouri, they were on hand and even sported badges indicating their association as a group. It is a known fact that the wives and other female relatives of Aerie members were participating in local Aerie functions of a social nature. There is no doubt that they most likely prepared most of the refreshments for the all-men organization probably since the first Aerie was instituted in Seattle in 1898.

As the years passed and the Aerie rosters grew, their numbers grew also until there came a time when they said that well, we'll just set up our own little organization for as long as our men get together, we might as well too. Even from the beginning, despite the boasts that the Eagles "was a man's organization", the family influence was being felt. The pressure must have been felt increasingly for it was in January 1926 that the then Grand Worthy President Charles C. Guenther issued an official Circular to the effect that the time had come for definite action as regard to the organization of Ladies Auxiliaries to the Local Aeries of the Fraternal organization of Eagles. Mr. Guenther felt that the statement for these organizations had become so strong and so pronounced that recognition for Auxiliaries could no longer be deferred. The Grand Worthy President advised that he had referred the entire matter of issuing a dispensation from the Grand Aerie for this purpose to a special committee composed of Frank E. Hering, M.O. Burns and Conrad Mann.

It was Past Grand Worthy President Conrad H. Mann who was then Serving as Chief Auditor, who said, "We commemorate Mother's Day. We strive for membership classes in honor of Mother. By lip

Service we consecrate ourselves to the defense of our womenfolks. Still we deny them suitable or official recognition. I again strongly recommend such recognition under suitable and proper Grand Aerie supervision." What he might have said is that these women are never going to leave us alone until we permit them into the organization, of affiliation with the Order that they desire. So it was, that the delegates approved a resolution at this Convention under the Rules and Regulations established by the Grand Aerie for the official formation of a Ladies Auxiliary in connection with an Aerie. It was agreed that the womenfolk could and would be a great help, so formerly unrecognized units in Aeries throughout the country sometimes known as "Eaglettes, Feathered Friends, Ladies of The Eagles", and no doubt, other such appellations became the foundation for the Ladies Auxiliaries as we know them today.

The first Auxiliary was instituted in March 1927 in Pittsburgh, Kansas. Three days later Frontenac, Kansas joined the women's ranks. The Pittsburgh Auxiliary has passed from the scene as did the original Frontenac Auxiliary, however, in 1953 an Auxiliary was again instituted in Frontenac. ,Davenport, Iowa Auxiliary #235 hold the distinction of being Eagledom's oldest Ladies Auxiliary. The institution date of Davenport's Auxiliary was March 29, 1927.

Today there are over 1566 Auxiliaries with a total membership Of approximately 390,431 women enjoying Companionable affiliation and the opportunity of helping others Through their own Local, State, Grand Aerie and Grand Auxiliary programs. Known as the "fastest growing women's organization in the world, the women had applied for and gained their organizational status in the only way they knew how - by making themselves needed and helpful.

State and Provincial Auxiliaries were first organized in 1948 and today there are 45 such units on this level.

The greatest years of growth in our Auxiliaries were in that decade of the 1940's, so it was fitting that State and even an International or Grand Auxiliary should become part of the Order.

Past Grand Worthy President Lester Loble of Montana who had long been a champion of the women's units and who was instrumental in starting the State units, was the supporter and Instituting Deputy for the Grand Auxiliary when it was formerly created on August 14, 1952 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Alta B. Smith contributed much in the organizing and instituting the Grand Auxiliary. She was appointed the first Grand Madam President to serve in this capacity. The

Grand Auxiliary is formed as is each Individual unit, for the purpose of aiding the Fraternal Order of Eagles in carrying out its humanitarian, patriotic and other "PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE" causes. All of the activities of the Grand Auxiliary are designed to promote the objectives of the fraternal Order of Eagles and it has no purposes that are apart from the aims of the Order.

The Board of Grand Trustees is empowered to make and adopt Rules and Regulations for the administration and government of all Ladies Auxiliaries and an Auxiliary may only be formed by majority vote of the membership of a local Aerie.

The Grand Auxiliary has no power to legislate but has full authority to recommend legislation to the Board of Grand Trustees and always in accordance with the Statues. The Grand Auxiliary meets at the same time and place annually as the Grand Aerie.

There have been six honorary memberships issued by the Grand Auxiliary. The recipients of these honorary memberships have all been women selected because of their leadership and participation in International activities. These six ladies are: Eleanor Roosevelt (deceased); Mrs. Susan M. Wagner (wife of former Mayor Robert Wagner of New York City - deceased); Virginia Graham (of television and radio fame) ; Genevieve D. Blatt (former Secretary of the of the Interior in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and now serving as the Judge of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania); Bess Truman (wife of the late President Harry S. Truman); and Rose Conway (Secretary to Bess Truman - deceased).

In 1952 when the Grand Auxiliary was instituted the ladies adopted as their first major project, the raising of funds for research in the field of Muscular Dystrophy and pledged to find its cause and cure before ceasing their efforts on this Humanitarian project. In 1958 Auxiliary members raised about \$15,000.00 and completely furnished the Eagle recreation and dormitory at Home on the Range for Boys in Sentinel Butte, North Dakota. In 1967 the women completed a project which they built and furnished a residence hall for girls at High Sky Girls Ranch near Midland, Texas. In addition, full participation on the part of the ladies has been forthcoming in Grand Aerie programs such as the Mam Baer Heart Fund, Robert w. Hansen Diabetes Fund, Jimmy Durante Children's Fund and Child Abuse, Art Ehrmann Cancer Fund and Kidney Fund, Golden Eagle Fund and Alzheimers, Retired Eagles Clubs and others. These all have had the full support and cooperation of Auxiliary members. As all Auxiliaries are required to raise their monies "the hard way" there is a constant calendar throughout Eagleland of rummage sales, penny marches, dinners, luncheons, card parties, in fact, some of the more ingenious methods for getting a dollar here and there have been

devised by women with talent and imagination and membership in the Auxiliaries. They receive their greatest gratification from the reports made at the Grand Aerie Conventions when they hear reports on the results of their many times menial tasks.

There are somewhere in the neighborhood of 108 Aeries which do not have Auxiliaries. Many an "old timer" has said, "we'll have an Auxiliary over my dead body". But as the newer generations over the leadership in Aeries, realization that the order is a family organization, has brought about a continuous growth for these units and caused these same "old timers" to say, "WE SHOULD HAVE HAD AN AUXILIARY A LONG TIME AGO".

Note: This Document was distributed at Grand Aerie Convention 1997 and some grammatical corrections were made to it in 2021.