

WHEEL

Tonight we have the honor and privilege of paying tribute to the officers who have served you so well this past year. I am sure they have done a great job and helped you as Soroptimist meet the goals that you set one year ago. To the outgoing officers, we thank you, and the _____ members what you to know that they appreciate your leadership during the past year.

In keeping with our western theme, I have developed my thoughts and ceremony around some very important items of the west.

One of the most important items in the west is the wheel. The wheel is undoubtedly the most important mechanical device ever invented and made its appearance in the old world during the bronze age about 3500 B.C. As the pioneers traveled west, some traveled on foot. Some rode horses or mules, but most of the families traveled in covered wagons with large wooden wheels. Wagon wheels were made wide for rolling through soft earth. The ends of the wagons were high so that things would not slide out on the hill. Uphill travel was hard and downhill travel was dangerous. The wheels had to be strong and sturdy to carry the weight and take the abuse of the west. Because of this importance of the wheel in the west, each officer tonight will become a spoke in that wheel.

Directors: As directors, you can be likened to the cowboy. The cowboy of the west was a hired hand on horseback. He would not admit he worked for anyone. He would say that he rode for such and such a "brand" or ranch. He usually rode a ten dollar horse and a forty dollar saddle. He furnished his rope, saddle, bridle and clothing. The cowboy was carefree. He was quick to fight when insulted. He was honest, and his word was like a gold bond. His rope was his third hand. If asked to bring in some wood for the cook, he would rope it and snake it up to the chuck wagon. As directors, you are important to the smooth operation of your club as the cowboy was to the ranch. You are the grease that keeps the wheel turning. You will help plan and carry out the activities of the club. You will have a voice in all deliberations of the board. May you discharge your duties on the board like the cowboy of the old west, with honesty, dependability, support and cooperation to your club.

Treasurer: Your job is likened to the pony express ride, quick, full of courage and full of physical endurance. Although the pony express was only in operation for a short period of about eighteen months, it served a very worthwhile purpose and will ever be a part of the western history of this country. Messengers were chosen for their horsemanship. Everything was done to make the new service as speedy and efficient as possible. Relay stations were set up along the 1,960 mile route some fifteen to twenty miles apart, depending on the type of country in between. Only two minutes were allowed for the rider to transfer the mail bag and to continue his journey on a fresh mount. Pony express riders seldom needed the two minutes allotted to them. The station attendant would have the pony ready, saddled and waiting. As the express messenger drew up, he would throw the mail bag over the fresh pony, then without dismounting, we would swing from one saddle to another on the gallop. Usually a rider changed ponies three times before handing over the mail to a fresh messenger. Whatever happened, the mail had to go through. Only one mail bag was lost in the history of the pony express, although many of its messengers perished at the hands of Indians or hold up men. Riders relied more on the speed of their ponies than on weapons to protect them. Like the pony express rider you must be dependable and honest. You must be quick to prepare your financial reports and to record the financial dealings of your club in a satisfactory manner. Whatever happens, your records must be accurate and timely. Just like the mail carried by the pony express rider, the records must not be lost, as they will record the dealings of your club for reference in the future.

Secretary: Your responsibilities can be likened to the best known of the covered wagons, the Conestogs. The Conestoga originated in Lancaster Pennsylvania and was named after a tribe of Indians who lived in that area. From the early 18th century until after the Civil War, when many different smaller wagons were introduced, the Conestoga carried most of the overland freight. They were sturdily built vehicles. Offer more than twenty six feet long and eleven feet high. The body was shaped rather like a boat, sagging in the middle so that the ends were higher than the center. This prevented the freight from falling out when the wagons went up or down hills. Conestogas were watertight so that in times of heavy rains they would be floated across the rivers. The trackless plains seemed so like the sea and the wagons so like boats, that especially in the southwest, a modified version of the Conestoga wagon became known as the Prairie Schooner. Like the Conestoga wagon, you must be strong and able to function in all types of weather and under all types of conditions. You will keep the minutes of the meetings of your club and board, maintain membership rolls, and be custodian of the permanent records

Vice President: Your duties are like the horse of the old west. The horse became very important to all areas of mankind but especially important in the west. The horse was able to carry people into many places that wagons and vehicles were never able to travel. The horse is usually sure footed and able to perform under many different and difficult situations. The horse has been used for pulling heavy loads, for tilling the soil, by the Calvary, for horse racing, by the pony express, for rodeoing, riding and work of all kinds. It has been said that the cowboy got his horse from the Indian pony. The wild horse, the type the Indians used, was ideal for the cowboys use. He had speed and endurance and was easy to manage when tamed. Your office must be like the horse. Able to perform many functions on your board as asked by the president. Your ability to work in any capacity as needed will be very important. Your duties will require strength and endurance to carry the load whenever asked. You must be ready to step into shoes of the president and carry forward in her absence. May you help bear the burden of administration in your club as the horse has become known to carry the burdens of the west.

President: Your responsibilities are extremely important to the success of your club. They can liken you to the chuck wagon of the west. The chuck wagon was just an ordinary four wheeled farm wagon without springs. On the back was built a box with shelves and drawers for the food and cooking utensils. The chuck wagon was drawn by four horses, mules or oxen and followed directly behind the band of extra saddle horses. The chuck wagon is often referred to as the mess wagon and when the cowboys were driving a herd up a trail, or during the roundup, it was the cowboys home on the range. The chuck wagon had to carry a months supply of provisions as well as bedding and extra clothing for the men. The cook rode the chuck wagon and was the Load and Master. The chuck wagon was an extremely important part of the west. Like the wagon master, you are the master of your club. You will direct the affairs of the club, preside at meetings, appoint committees, receive recommendations for membership, keep your members informed of the business to come before them, make annual reports, and generally attend to all such other duties as pertain to your high office. You must at all times keep yourself well informed and wisely guide and counsel with your board. It is important that you read all matters coming to you through federation and regional offices. Read the Soroptimist magazine, and answer all your correspondence promptly. This is a big order, but the wagon master on the cattle drive had a big job. If you can do all this to your satisfaction, you, your board and club members will be able to accomplish much. As wagon master you will also have to be fair, tactful and just. Above all, be gentle and kind, showing love for your fellow Soroptimists and love for others in your community through the service you and your club members are able to render. Through your service, you will receive joy and satisfaction for a job well done. May you, with your leadership abilities and a sincere desire, organize and conduct the Soroptimist Club of _____, so that you will receive the joy of achievement, that your club members will grow, and develop a greater understanding of Soroptimism and the ideals for which it stands.

As a symbol for each of your board members, I would like to present each of them with a little horse, to wear and remind them of the duties which they have accepted, and to encourage them to carry out those duties in a pleasing and satisfying manner. To your president I give a cowboy, to help you remember the important responsibilities you have agreed to accept, that you will be a guide and a help to all.

To your club, Soroptimist International of _____, I give a wheel. It is my hope that you will display this at some of your club meetings this year to remind each member of the important commitment to service for which we stand.

Now, will each of you pledge to carry out the duties of the office to which you have been elected?

I now declare the officers and directors duly installed as officers for Soroptimist International of _____. I congratulate each of you and wish for you a most successful, happy and satisfying term of office. It is my hope that with the support of every member, you will be able to capture the west in a way that only you, who put forth the effort, will know and enjoy.

