



# WOMEN IN LEISURE SERVICES

*The Professional Connection for Women...*

**Founded 1935** *Celebrating 50 Years of Gamma!* **Chartered 1936**

## Looking Back...

Chi Kappa Rho was created from the mind of one woman with a great idea. She believed that women engaged professionally in the various fields of recreation could come together to promote unity of purpose, high standards of achievement, and a better understanding and appreciation of related endeavors for the attainment of professional goals. Such a group could also provide an opportunity to foster friendship and sociability, stimulate mutual helpfulness and loyalty, and provide professional services.

In 1935 the woman, **HELEN I. PONTIUS**, shared her idea with several women at a Los Angeles Playgrounds Department Recreation Directors meeting. In 1936, Alpha, the first Los Angeles chapter, was chartered, and Chi Kappa Rho became a reality.

The organization grew slowly within California between 1935 and 1967. The first National Board was established in 1964, and in 1975, the organization became a California non-profit corporation.

In 1991, the membership voted to officially change the name of the organization from Chi Kappa Rho to **Women in Leisure Services, Chi Kappa Rho, Inc.**

Today, Women in Leisure Services, Chi Kappa Rho, Inc. is a national organization for professional women involved in the delivery of leisure and community services in public, private, non-profit and commercial settings.

A network of chapters serves administrators, supervisors, educators, therapists, and allied professionals in geographical areas across the nation. Each chapter provides an effective framework for women from a variety of

professional, leisure and community service fields to share ideas, broaden interests, sharpen skills, and influence the profession with the authority of a unified group.

The network of local chapters forms the base from which stems the National Board of Directors. Each chapter selects a delegate to represent them on the National Board. The National Board Delegate is the key person to facilitate the communication between the local chapter and the National Board. She attends the National Board meetings where she speaks and votes on issues in a manner that represents her local chapter members. She is responsible for reporting pertinent information to her chapter membership.

In addition to one board delegate from each chapter, the National Board consists of five officers, elected from across the nation who has had previous chapter board experience.

Constant input from each woman in our profession is needed and desired. It is up to each chapter to reach out to professional women in their area to form a local base from which to offer strength to our network and to help formulate the direction and growth of our national organization.

The name Chi Kappa Rho comes from the Greek letter X, K and P, which stand for character, knowledge and recreation. The symbols on the Chi Kappa Rho seal are the scale for justice and service, the lamp for enlightenment, and the wings for athletics.

**X - Character**  
**K - Knowledge**  
**P - Recreation**

## 1959 Original Board Members

**Helen I. Pontius**  
**Mazine McSweeney-Hjel**  
**Cornelia Stevenson**  
**Alma Wilson**  
**Margaret Shull**  
**Mary Wallace Wier**  
**Minette Spector**

## 50 Years Later...

**Michelle Khzouz**  
**Robyn Hockenhu**  
**Lindsay Cutrell**  
**Lydie Gutfeld**  
**Jenny Hanlon**  
**Allison Brammer**  
**Adriana Moran**  
**Danielle Valadez**  
**Pearl Raya**

# WILS FOUNDERS AND HISTORY

## Helen I. Pontius

The following is a transcription of a February 12, 1971 interview with Helen I. Pontius, founder of Chi Kappa Rho, taped at her home in Los Gatos, California.

"Greetings, to my dear sisters in Chi Kappa Rho and friends. This is indeed a heartwarming experience for me, to be able to speak to you via this medium. My only regret is that I am not able to be with you in person at this luncheon in Fresno, on the occasion of the 23rd California Pacific Southwest Recreation and Park Conference. Many of you I have known through the years, and the rest I know in name only. Each roster is sent to me and in this way, I keep in touch with your names and activities, and get the feeling of knowing each of you.

My mind still races on with plans and dreams for further expansion and development for Chi Kappa Rho, and particularly, now that we have crossed the Sierras and are heading east. This was always my ultimate dream, so let us keep moving on to the Atlantic.

This means contributions toward better programs and increased activities and most of all, the steady growth of Chi Kappa Rho, which will make this dream possible.

Motivation should be our theme for the future. The present day recreation center has come a long, long way from the days when recreational activities were offered at what was referred to as settlement houses. Such a center is where I had my first experience as a volunteer worker, and it was at Holland House in Cleveland, Ohio.

My second experience was with my dear friend, the late Jane Adams of Hull House in Chicago, Illinois. Recreation, as such, was

not offered as a subject at that time in colleges and universities. I'm speaking, you know, of more than fifty years ago.

It seems to me that we must concentrate on newer methods and activities in order to keep abreast of these changing times. Our sorority should be the leader for such changes since we are professionals in our field, and we are representatives of people in the field of recreation.

Before I say goodbye, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of Beta Chapter for their kindness in arranging this recording.

And now, goodbye dear children and may God bless each and every one."

## Maxine McSweeney-Hjelte

### "HOW IT ALL BEGAN"



Forty-eight years ago last week I first heard of Chi Kappa Rho. I happened to sit next to Helen I. Pontius at a luncheon meeting of recreation professionals. I didn't know Helen well, although we were both Recreation Directors in the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. Helen had been away on an extended sick leave. An auto accident left her unable to walk for more than a year. When she returned to

work, she walked with difficulty and leaned on a cane. But even leaning on a cane there was a queenliness in Helen's bearing. She was a beautiful woman, slightly taller than the average of that day. She had dark hair, combed in a classic Greek style, and eyes that glowed as if she was vitally interested in her companion of the moment. You could apply to Helen the comment friends made of playwright Moss Hart. They said, 'When Moss enters a room, everyone there seems a little nicer.' With Helen, we not only seemed nicer, we were nicer.

With perseverance Helen recovered from her injury so by the time of our luncheon meeting she stood with graceful erectness and walked with animated stride. She was soon to originate and conduct the program at the Department's Girls' Camp, a program that through the years brought happiness to thousands of girls.

As we chatted during our 1936 luncheon, Helen's blue eyes shone with increased friendliness. Very seriously she said, 'Maxine, I want the women in recreation to have a sorority. You know how much the fraternity means to the men. A sorority would mean as much to us. Will you meet with a few of us to plan such an organization?'

I was delighted, first of all, because of the association with Helen. She scheduled a series of breakfast meetings and asked six women to help her draw up a constitution and bylaws. We had to meet at eight o'clock in the morning because that was the only time all of us were free from work schedules.

She had already selected our name, the meaning of the letters,

# WILS FOUNDERS AND HISTORY

and the design of our pin. She told the six of us that our pins would be set with diamonds to distinguish us as founders. We were not the founders. Helen was the founder. We six were a planning committee that helped her bring her dream to reality. And who were the six planners?

## Cornelia Stevenson



One was Cornelia Stevenson, Executive Director of the Los Angeles Area Council of Camp-fire Girls. If you were typesetting Cornelia in a play you would cast her as an angel. She looked like one; natural ash blond hair, gentle blue eyes, and alabaster skin. And she acted like an angel. Motivated by the highest principles in everything she said and did, she helped our constitution reflect these same high principles.



### What Things Cost in 1936:

Car: \$600

Gasoline: 19 cents/gal

House: \$6,200

Bread: 8 cents/loaf

Milk: 48 cents/gal

Postage Stamp: 3 cents

Stock Market: 180

Average Annual Salary: \$1,600

## Alma Wilson

Then there was Alma Wilson, a true pioneer in the recreation movement. Even before 1920, she was a supervisor for camps for Los Angeles. You would cast Alma as a mother, because of her kindly concern for all her fellow humans. Her feet were firmly on the ground. When visionaries on the committee strayed from reality, Alma brought them back to earth with a calming "Now Girls".

## Margaret Shull

Another pioneer in the movement was Margaret Shull, who had been a professional in recreation almost as long as Alma. She was Director of Barnsdall Playground. Her work included conduct of an indoor program in the distinguished Frank Lloyd Wright building that had once been the Olive Hill home of Aline Barnsdall. Where Alma was motherly, Margaret was more the gracious lady, a hostess, who often welcomed us to her center for our early morning meetings and she frequently served us fruit juice and sweet rolls.

## Mary Wallace Wier

White-haired, like Margaret, was Mary Wallace Wier. She was the merriest of our group and probably the most experienced with organizations like ours. She was Director of Recreation at Children's Orthopedic Hospital where she supervised a large corps of volunteers.

She knew how to plan distinctive social events and made her most significant contribution when we reached the need for such events.

Mary Wallace, along with Minette Spector, probably did most to help Helen achieve the style and class she wanted for her new organization. Many of us knew Minette as Supervisor of Girls' and Women's Activities in the Los Angeles Department. She worked on the committee to see that our events were held in the best places and that all of us wore our best clothes.

Like most women entering the professions in the thirties, we hesitated to wear smart clothes lest we appear frivolous and lacking in dedication to our jobs. But Minette was different. She loved clothes and fashion as an art form, as well as a means of personal adornment.

For example, the style of the moment was a small head hugging hat with flirty little veil. I wanted one but refrained from buying because I thought I couldn't wear it to the monthly meetings of recreation personnel where all women wore hats. Then, at one of these meetings Minette appeared not only with a flirty little veil on her hat but with a violet corsage on each shoulder.

As I gasped my admiration she said, 'Vogue reports that there's only one thing smarter than a shoulder corsage, and that's two shoulder corsages'. She cared about fashion and encouraged the rest of us to care.

