WHAT THE PILOT CODE OF ETHICS MEANS TO ME

Pilot International Convention

July 7, 2021

......Realizing that whatever a woman touches should be ennobled by that touch, we as business women are resolved to keep our business standards high..........

I heard the Code of Ethics for the first time as a young woman – age 22. I had just finished one year of teaching music in the Tupelo MS Public Schools. A fellow teacher, Miss Nell Hughey asked me to be in charge of a program in August, that the Pilot Club of Tupelo was responsible for! All I had to do was lead the group in singing. During that time together, I observed how the
Pilots were enjoying fun and fellowship as they interacted with one another and with the local community leaders. I really liked what I saw.

School began in September 1959 and all was right with my world. I just happened to be in the teachers lounge at the same time as Ms Nell and she was talking about a fund raiser the Pilot Club was having in November. I took that opportunity to share with her my desire to become a Pilot and I asked “What must I do to become a Pilot?” She informed me that the PI By-laws stated that membership was by invitation only; and that each nominee must have two sponsors. The next step was a vote by the membership….and that two NO votes, could disqualify an individual. Right then, dismissed any hopes of ever being a Pilot.

The Pilot Club met on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month. On the 1st Monday in October, during their business meeting, my name was presented for membership and my two sponsors were Ms. Nell and My Principal, Ms. Mary, This was all done in secret.

I received my invitation for membership the following week, I filled out the paperwork, paid my dues of $10.00 and attended my first meeting, October 19, 1959. I was initiated that night and a part of the service was the reading of the Code of Ethics. That night was the first time I had ever heard this document and it was a most inspiring moment. My “New Member Folder” had a copy of the Code in it which I framed and read frequently.
I understood fully that this document was a standard for moral principles, and rules of conduct.

It portrayed to me a sense of right and wrong; a sense of duty; The words embodied in the Code of Ethics gives all of us a sense of hope; a sense of belonging. It presents us opportunities to discover something new; something better – to be kind and patient; to be loyal, honest, and generous; to enlarge our visions and to have self control; to grow and thrive in challenging conditions.

In short, it was a blueprint for me to follow as a Pilot member, a teacher and as a community leader.
I recall my first PI Convention was in 1964 at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City. When I sent my registration form in to PI Headquarters, I checked the little box that said, “serve on the Music Committee”. Soon after that, my principal, who was a Pilot, came to my room and said that the President of Pilot International was on the phone and wished to talk to me.

I answered the phone, and we shared the normal greetings and then President Ruth Cunningham from, San Gabriel, California told me that she needed me to be the Chairman of the Music Committee at the PI Convention in July! I inquired about the responsibilities of the chairman and she said “basically, all I had to do was assign the members of the music committee to lead the singing prior to each session. So, I said yes, I can do this, after all, that was what I did for a living.

I arrived in New York City around noon, attended the Music Committee meeting, which was a very responsive group of ladies. We got our assignments and adjourned to prepare for the opening meeting. I assigned myself the opening meeting.
At 6:45, I found myself at the podium, in one of the most beautiful ballrooms in the world. And in that ballroom was over 1400 Pilots, Co-Pilots and guest.

As I looked at that sea of faces, I could tell they were wondering what in the world was that Pilot from the “Hill Country” of Northeast MS going to do? I must tell you, At that moment, I was wondering the same thing. But my training from Ole Miss kicked in and I can tell you now, that it was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my Pilot life.
During that same evening, Peg DeJaifre from Apple Valley, California read the Code of Ethics. As she read the words that I had adopted as the “blue print” for my Pilot journey, I realized that it didn’t matter if you were from the West coast, the deep South, North to Canada, or to the East coast where we were that night, those words by Pearl Sparks in 1926 held the same meaning for all Pilots.
In 1976-77 I had the honor of serving as President of Pilot International. There are daily duties and responsibilities that the President and the Headquarters staff have to take care of in order for the organization to run smoothly. I also took the time, that year, to visit clubs that asked for assistance. It was during the last week of October 1976, that I had a call for help from the Pilot Club of Nassau, Bahamas.

I definitely assigned myself to that trip.
I enjoyed a tour of the Island to see the projects that the Pilot Club was involved with, and there were many. I presented the Charter to their Anchor Club, attended a District Kiwanis Meeting, and met with the Pilot Club to clarify some points that they were concerned about. At the close of the meeting, a young Pilot recited the Code of Ethics.

Here was a beautiful Pilot of color reciting the same Code of Ethics that Pilots from all over the world had embraced as their standard of living...and it had the same meaning for her as it did for you and me. When that meeting adjourned, I engaged her to give the Code of Ethics at my convention in 1977.
The PI Convention in 1977 was held in one of the playgrounds in the South, New Orleans, LA.

It was in the beautiful Fairmont Hotel with over 1700 Pilots, Co-Pilots and guest in attendance.

The Presidents Banquet was on Monday night and I called it the Presidents International Banquet, because I assigned delegates from each club outside the United States to be seated at the head table.

At the closing of the meeting, the Code of Ethics was given by Kayla Burrus, the lovely young lady from the Pilot Club of Nassau. She recited it with such poise, dignity and grace, as if
she were a princess. It was the first time a Pilot of color had presented our Code of Ethics at a PI convention.

We as a group realized at that moment, the color of the skin does not matter.....the Code of Ethics means the same to all of us.

I experienced another first at the 2015 Convention in Orlando. Sherry Johnson was the presiding President and it was fun place to be.
My 5 year old granddaughter and I rode to Orlando with Collett Cross at the steering wheel. We went early just to spend some time at Disney World.

Mickey Mouse was a SPECIAL guest and it was a fun convention with plenty of wonderful memories.

Shannon Burks Clegg was installed as President on the last night of the convention. She chose one of her sister Governors from 2008 – 2009 to recite the Code of Ethics.
This friend was Chuzuru Kawabata, they called her Chizzie. Chizzie was from the Japan District and she chose to recite the Code of Ethics in her native language. I would say, that 99% of those in attendance did not understand a single word she spoke, but we all understood the meaning of what she was conveying to us. The Code of Ethics has the same meaning for Pilots in all nations where we are represented, no matter the language barrier!

We were in for another surprise at the 2018 Convention in Nashville, When President Elect Karen Cupit asked Pat and Gary Jarvis to give the Code of Ethics in the closing moments of the installation service.
Yes, a man, a male Pilot, was standing before us sharing the presentation of the Code of Ethics with his wife, Past President Pat. So Pilots, We have come full cycle and now we know that our Code of Ethics has the same meaning to every Pilot member around the globe.

During the month of May of this year, I received some information from Past President Cindy Weaver, which dealt with some research she had done about the Code of Ethics. I felt that it was appropriate to include the information in this speech in order to give you some insight to the origin of our Code.
The author of the beautiful Code of Ethics was Pearl Sparks. She was born February 18, 1878 and was the Charter President of the Pilot Club of Florence, Alabama. She presented the Code of Ethics at the 5th Annual Convention in Montgomery, AL in 1926 with 69 Pilots in attendance.

According to the story, each club in attendance at that convention was supposed to present a skit and or share a talent. The Pilot Club of Florence chose a ballet dancer as their talent. Sometime prior to the convention, the dancer had an accident of some sort, and could not represent them in Montgomery. So President Pearl, who had been considering the possibility of writing a Code of Ethics for Pilot after reading her
brothers copy of the Rotarians Code of Ethics. She decided she would complete her work on the Code and present it as their talent. We have been told that she actually put the finishing touches to her masterpiece during the train ride to Montgomery.

Ms. Sparks was an educated lady; she was a librarian, and as such was surrounded by resource material. Some of the sources of inspiration that she used were: the Rotary Code of Ethics, the Lions Code of Ethics; “As a Man Thinketh” and “Visions and Ideals” by James Allen, Articles by John Ruskin and Carl Jung.

Here is one reference:
FROM: “As a Man Thinketh” by James Allen

“Cherish your visions; cherish your ideals; cherish the music that stirs in your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that drapes your purest thoughts, for out of them will grow delightful conditions, all heavenly environment; of these if you but remain true to them, your world will at last be built.”

FROM: Pilot Code of Ethics

“To cherish our visions and our ideals; to cherish the music that stirs our hearts; the beauty that forms in our minds, knowing that on these things we can build our world.”

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The Code of Ethics was adopted at the 5th Annual Convention in Montgomery, AL in 1926. The only changes from the original copy was changing the gender. Where she used Woman and women, we changed the words to Pilots and leaders.

After the 6th Annual Convention, in 1927, Pearl Sparks was named the first editor of the PILOT LOG.

Pearl Sparks died in 1965 at the age of 87, but she left us a legacy that will keep us all on a True Course Ever!
On April 30, 1976, the Pilot Clubs of Alabama paid tribute to their sister Pilot by placing on her grave in the Florence City Cemetery, a Marble Masterpiece With the words of the Code of Ethics engraved on it. The June 1976 PILOT LOG shared this quote from the dedication: and I quote, “This outstanding tribute is to a Pilot who radiated that which was unselfish, beautiful and true. When she had finished her task, she had given an upward impetus to human ideals and achievements.”

As a Pilot, you are a leader, You are a guide, You are a friend, You are a servant.

Ghandi once wrote: The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.
When you joined Pilot International, you made the choice to DO More, Care More and to Be More in the service to your community. And

Yes, You chose the Code of Ethics as your GUIDE!

Have a wonderful Pilot Journey.

Presented at the 2021 PI Convention: Atlanta, GA

Betty DuVall King

1976 – 1977 PI President

July 7, 2021

PI 100th Anniversary