What keeps an organization true to its vision?

When you pull the threads apart, what legacy endures?

reflections on a 1995 conversation about
A Slender Thread: Stories of Pioneer Girls First 25 Years

by Eunice Russell Schatz

Unraveling—

--finding the key to,

illuminating,

make sense of. . .

--interpreting,

explaining,

figuring out. . .

and finally

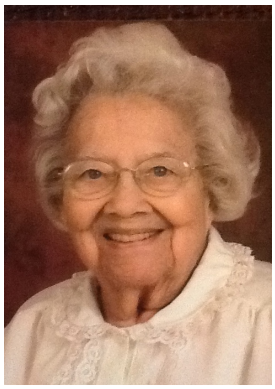
--unleashing,

loosening,

freeing!

Introduction

Last summer, acting on an impulse to clear out my work space, I came upon a box of old audio tapes. Curious, I pulled out a set labeled “The Slender Thread” and began listening to a conversation that took place in the spring of 1995. The occasion was a gathering of a few former staff members of Pioneer Girls for me to interview before writing my first book, *The Slender Thread: Stories of Pioneer Girls’ First Twenty Five Years*. These women constituted a particularly rich resource for me in tracing Pioneer Girls’ early years. Hearing their voices reminiscing about an experience three decades earlier brought cherished memories back to us instantly. The conversation was often hilarious, alternately thoughtful and raucous, sometimes tender and wistful. Pioneer Girls had made a powerful impact on all of us.



The conversation took place in the home of Louise Troup, one of Pioneer Girls’ co-founders in the early 1940s. After a term of missionary service in Africa in the 1950s, she had returned to direct Pioneer Girls in the 1960s. I write to honor her, in part, since she died earlier this year at the age of 94.

Phyllis Cunningham was another member of the group, someone who helped pioneer several initiatives in the organization—joining staff in 1955 as Field Representative in Ohio, Western New York and Ontario. Two years later she became Western Field Director. She left her mark on the organization as a fledgling adult educator (a field in which she later earned international distinction). In Pioneer Girls, she instituted training materials for organizing field work more effectively; she helped Canadians launch their own parallel organization; and she took on the immense task of developing— from the ground up—North Star, a national leadership training center. I also honor her memory, as she also recently died—in 2012, at age 84.

Three others joined us in the conversation—Zondra Lindblade Swanson and Mary Ann Lindblade Mackenzie, who served on national staff, and Ruth Bamford, whose involvement was in leadership in camp program and in guide retreats. It was primarily their trenchant observations about Pioneer Girls as they had known it in the 1950s and 1960s that stimulated my thinking along new lines. They talked about the charisma that surrounded the genesis of this young movement begun on a college campus during wartime in the 1940s. They asked provoking questions about the dynamic of Pioneer Girls’ original vision and its outworkings, and posed explanations for the apparent diminishment of that vision after that first quarter century in which we had participated.

Listening to the conversation made me think about my own life work history. My innate curiosities and gifts had placed me in a series of organizations that embodied a powerful original vision. How is such a vision sustained? I took a hard look at my involvement in these enterprises:

> —Pioneer Girls was an organization rooted in a profoundly organic vision for young girls, begun in the 1940s and ripe for an era when most churches confined their outreach to youth to Sunday programs. I was part of it as a young girl—later as part of the staff.
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> —In the 1970s, along with Phyllis Cunningham and a number of significant others, my husband and I helped found, and later direct, the Urban Life Center in Chicago for Christian college students. We were countering the suburban and rural isolation of Christian colleges in the midwest by offering a semester-long immersion experience in the richly diverse culture of inner city Chicago.
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> —Ten years later, in 1981, my husband and I moved to Boston where we joined with an Episcopal priest to establish Life/Work Direction in the heart of the city. The major participants at first were young people in their late 20s eager to serve Christ and needing to be grounded in their calling. Their fresh spirit of adventure needed to be undergirded with insight into their gifts and the world's needs—providing the spiritual stamina necessary for staying power.

There is something about the dynamic of a compelling vision, the courage of a charismatic leader, and a collection of kindred souls gathered around that leader, that generates a movement—and eventually an institution with some level of formal shape. I am familiar with that process, seeing it from the inside.

In the conversation that day in 1995, we were both remembering the lively experiences that elicited so much feeling—laughter and tears, sorrow and joy—and examining the process by which the gradual institutionalization of the free-flowing movement present at the beginning needed careful tending, lest the original vision be muted.

I decided to take a longer look at the story unfolding in the conversation that day. Three stages in my own understanding through time came clear, and provide the structure for this piece of writing:

Part 1 - Pioneer Girls' Charisma, Character, and Change: 1940-1970.

This is my version of Pioneer Girls' story of birth and growth *as I experienced it through its first quarter century* until I left Pioneer Girls in 1966.

Part 2 - Three Key Strands of the Original Vision.

In 1995 we wound up identifying three key elements that had been "carriers" of the original vision, and which had significantly altered in the organization after I left in the 1960s.

Part 3 - The Legacy That Endures.

Today, in 2014, I want to acknowledge my part in Pioneer Girls' past, discern the implications for my present work, and unravel remaining strands of wisdom for "the legacy that endures."

PART 1

Pioneer Girls' Charisma, Character, and Change - 1940 - 1970

--finding the key to, illuminating, make sense of. . .

A free flowing reflection on Pioneer Girls' charismatic founding in the 1940s, its character as it grew in the 1950s, and the way it began to change by the end of the 1960s. It is written not as a research scholar with footnotes and careful attention to detail, but as a personal observer reawakened by listening to these tapes.

Telling the Story

Our conversation about Pioneer Girls' first 25 years elicited a swarm of vivid memories. They rolled out, tumbling over one another in profusion, as we animatedly described a remembered past coming to life in the present. We were reliving a formative time in our lives and reveled in the telling of familiar stories. Interwoven throughout was a cautionary note, an undertone of sadness that surfaced intermittently. It had to do with our sense that the enthusiasm and idealism we had experienced had been later lost by the organization we were remembering and I was writing about.

The conversation was lively, with raucous laughter and rapid-fire exchange of half-finished sentences and exclamations. As a group we were trying to articulate for ourselves the particular charismatic quality of this organization to which we had given large chunks of our life and energy as young persons. I heard my voice—the interviewer—quietly asking probing questions. Only occasionally did I join in, usually to clarify a point of history or amplify a point stemming from my research for the writing of the book. There was energy in the room, an energy I recognized from my own involvement in Pioneer Girls ever since its inception and I was a twelve years old participant, and later when I had joined staff for fifteen years after college.

There was a story here I was yearning to tell, a story fed by the rich assortment of experiences these women were recounting. I wrote the book in 1995, as planned: *The Slender Thread.* But hearing the conversation again in 2014 made me want to share the saga again—but this time, I saw its history *in the context of the times*.

The 1940s

It has always been interesting to me that Pioneer Girls was birthed at the outbreak of United States' entry into World War II, to some extent a product of the times, and in some ways ahead of them. Around the table, we talked about our own memories of those times. Phyl Cunningham in rural upstate New York and I in suburban Wheaton had entered into the war effort by growing Victory Gardens, buying defense stamps, and in my case knitting afghan squares for army blankets. The natural patriotic enthusiasm of the times meshed well with the excitement I encountered when I attended my first Pioneer Girls camp, just six months after Pearl Harbor. We saluted the flag each day, and gathered around a glowing campfire each evening for stories and songs. I was learning to build fires from scratch, mark trails, and use archery equipment. (Later camps even included riflery!) Later we on staff resisted being referred to as "Christian Girl Scouts" because we thought we were so much more in our basic philosophy and spiritual aims, but it is not incidental that other girls' organizations like Campfire Girls, Girl Scouts and 4-H clubs thrived in that era as well. All had a faint military edge, laced with patriotic fervor.

Founders Challenging the Status Quo

The impetus behind the emergence of a new program for girls lay in the broader picture within Christendom in the 1940s. The institutional church was not providing outreach to young people beyond its Sunday programs. This left a vacuum, into which surged a groundswell of energy outside the church. New organizations like Young Life and Youth for Christ proved intimidating to the church, siphoning off the interest and loyalty of young people all week, thereby reducing participation in Sunday programs. A college campus like Wheaton was a natural birthing place for new movements that promised to deliver the message of Christ in terms that spoke to the hungers the church was not addressing. It proved to be fertile soil for planting two unique programs responding to differing needs of the young on the threshold of adolescence, first one for boys, and then another for girls.

Joe Coughlin

It was Joe Coughlin, a student at Wheaton in the late 1930s, who conceived of the original vision for Christian Service Brigade, his response to the challenge of meeting the particular needs of young men. Unexpectedly, from his point of view, this planted a seed that would spawn a parallel organization for young women—Pioneer Girls. In both cases, charismatic authority came by virtue of the spirit of pioneering in which both organizations came into being, and the trail of dynamic leadership that followed.

Joe's charisma was undeniable; his Brigade clubs attracted other college students as leaders. Even when the venture seemed to collapse at semester's end, every summer he went back to the drawing boards and revamped his program to improve it and began anew in the fall, indefatigable and determined. But he lacked the insight and skills needed to preside over the essential developmental stages of an enduring institution. Fortunately, capable others stepped in, and Brigade continued.

Joe's vision never strayed from its focus on the growth of boys and young men. He freely admitted he didn't know what to do with the girls who began clamoring for a club program similar to the one their brothers were enjoying. So he first went to Betty Whitaker Bouslough, a fellow student on Wheaton College campus, and asked her to provide something for girls.

Betty was not to be the charismatic founder, as it turned out. She responded to Joe's request somewhat reluctantly, by her own admission, for she did not see herself as an initiator or visionary. She patterned her little program closely after Brigade, with its roots in ancient heraldry and knighthood. She named it Girls Guild, with its notion of becoming "ladies"—the relevant term in her mind. It would require another person to set forth the bolder more contemporary concept of becoming "women"—even pioneer women.

The Scripture verse Betty chose as motif, "The king's daughter is all glorious within," taken from the St. James version, was even more problematic, since later versions would more accurately translate this phrase as pertaining to what the princess was wearing—"cloth of gold" rather than referring to the development of inner character, so primary in Pioneer Girls' philosophy. Christ was to permeate every phase of a girl's life, not worn as adornment outside.

Betty did not want to continue with Guild after a year; she was engaged to be married, and wanted to devote more intensive time to her studies as well as support her husband who was entering seminary. She quickly bowed out of any leadership role, and turned everything over to Joe in 1940, who sought out a new leader for girls' work.

Carol Erickson Smith

Carol Erickson Smith was an instinctive pick, Joe Coughlin said. He claimed that he had been sitting in the Frost library at the college, and heard through an open window the sounds of a girls' field hockey team playing in the distant athletic field. One voice soared above the others in volume. It was Carol, and he knew she was his choice to undertake the project of creating a club for young girls. Carol was majoring in the hard sciences, bent on becoming a doctor, and as such was an unlikely person to conceive a philosophic vision that fit more suitably into the "softer" sciences, like Christian Education.

But Carol plunged seriously into research, seeking in America's pioneer history a motif suitable for a program that could fire the imagination of young girls. She was fascinated by the statue of a "pioneer woman" that stands in Ponca City, Oklahoma. The image fit her own sensibilities as a woman able to forge her own future and make independent decisions. The new club program would be called Pioneer Girls and would incorporate the hardy values that were associated with women on the early frontier of this country. It was also characteristic of her unconventional style and process that while sitting in biology class one day trying to come up with the right "catch phrase" for materials she was preparing for Pioneer Girls club leaders, these words came to her in a flash of intuition: *"Christ in every phase of a girl's life."* She instantly knew this embodied the aims she was trying to achieve with a younger generation of girls. It was more important to her in that moment than passing the biology exam.

Small wonder, then, that the five of us seated around the table, referred to Pioneer Girls' real birth as occurring in 1941, when Carol started anew to shape the vision and its outworking on her own terms. I have no quarrel with including Betty's work in the founding, but Pioneer Girls was based on Carol's vision for girls—and consonant with Joe Coughlin's for boys. We did not carry on the motif set by Betty. Parenthetically, it is interesting to note why after 1970 and so much changed, the organization began referring to Betty as the founder, rather than Carol. Betty was always honest and humble about the minor influence of her role. We suggested that Betty represented a more conventional and comfortable figure, whereas Carol was always seen as a trifle eccentric, too impassioned and impatient about ideas that were ahead of current conventional thinking. She often stood alone in her stand for principles about certain matters, and did not know how to negotiate persuasively.

Sandra Mathis, high schooler who earned the highest Explorer award—Wing Guide

Although the age range of the program became 8-18, the early focus centered on the critical 12-14 year age group—an age cohort famously difficult to engage. Carol also put a strong emphasis on the program she designed for 15-18 year olds called Explorers, using an aviation motif. She herself had been a pioneer in that field, being the first American woman to obtain a sea plane pilot license. It was easy to appeal to the 8-11 year olds, but Carol was not content to stop with what was easy. She recognized that the challenges of adolescence had to be met—a time when a girl especially needs influences outside the home, and the opportunity to think for herself. From the beginning, Pioneer Girls took care to provide Explorers with training and opportunities to exert leadership in camp.

Louise Troup, a Partner

Carol's charismatic influence was instantaneous—drawing in a college friend, Louise Troup, who saw her place as supporting and strengthening the working out of original ideas developed by Carol. Louise was quick to detect Carol's idealistic impulse toward creating demanding requirements for the "achievement badges and ranks" for the program, for example, and countered it by inserting more modest standards. Louise's role was often to be the one "alongside"—softening the sharp edges of Carol's eccentricities, and finding a smoother path through rough places.

I have pondered the phenomenon of these two organizations—Brigade and Pioneer Girls—having been conceived by energetic twenty-year-olds. Louise, in particular, always accentuated her own motivation in being part of the first clubs and camps as "having fun." The college friends she talked into joining her in coming to camp all seemed to look upon the venture as an escapade! The hardships of transporting supplies and setting up camp were the setting for jokes and even pranks, occasionally! Financial pressures did not dampen their enthusiasm; they bore those concerns lightly. These were attitudes bred in the atmosphere of a nation surviving the Great Depression and pulling together to win a war. The flavor of these optimistic attitudes persisted. The phrase "Christ in every phase of a girl's life" connoted lively participation in every conceivable activity. It was an experiential education model, not one tied to the idea of sitting quietly in rows of chairs listening to a teacher.

Upon graduation from college in 1942, Carol and Louise were determined to find a way to take this embryonic movement into a program national in scope. Beginning on a Midwestern college campus setting was made to order for such a vision. A number of women students gathered around Carol, their imagination fueled by the fire of her energy and enthusiasm, and volunteered to lead the first clubs. When these women graduated, they took Pioneer Girls with them, spreading it quickly across the country. Carol and

Louise decided to devote their energies sacrificially for the next two years to realizing their vision. It would mean delaying entrance to medical school for Carol, and nurses' training for Louise.

Launching a new venture in a time of war turned out to have peculiar advantages, opening up good-paying jobs in Gary steel mills for Louise and Carol at a time when women were being eagerly sought for positions normally accrued to men.

> *Louise: Carol and I were working in the steel mills as spectroscopists. That was because the war was going on and they could get college graduates, that was great. Carol was a Chemistry major, but I had graduated with a Literature major, and they were as glad to have me as Carol.*

It was while these two women were completing their senior year in college that I first met Louise as my 8th grade Literature teacher. Very soon she began trying to persuade me and my friends to come to camp that summer. It was one of the first Pioneer Girls camps. We had been attending Betty's Girls Guild club the year before, and in a characteristic act of teenage rebellion, we objected to the name change and insisted we wouldn't attend any more. To me, having known Betty and her sisters since fifth grade, and living down the street from them, the connection felt personal. But over time, Louise Troup's infectious enthusiasm won us over. Camp made the difference, a factor that would continue to be true over time.

It was my first time away from home and with peers, making the glow of the campfire and the aura of life in the out-of-doors heighten the experience. Vibrant young women, just a few years senior to us, were teaching us to canoe, cook over an open fire, and share quiet talks in the cabin at nightfall. I was introduced to a new world of possibility. I didn't yet know the theory behind it; it was the people—not expert professionals, but college age counselors brimming with energy, and loving nothing more than simply being with us campers and having fun. The joy was contagious. As I would later learn, "more things are caught than taught."

The Camp Setting Draws Me In

Once I had experienced the vitality of the camp experience in the twenty-four hour-a-day seven-day-a-week setting, I was permanently hooked. My summers revolved around camp—as a 12- and 13-year old camper, then as an "aide" washing dishes at 14, and finally at 15, I could take on the role of junior counselor. At 16, I became part of a traveling team of counselors called the "Conestoga Caravan"—a summer project where four of us teenagers, accompanied by two

The Caravan "wagon"

adults, Rachel Hartman (first field representative on Pioneer Girls staff) and Helen Becker, traveled to five areas through the Midwest, constituting the core counseling staff for one-week camps. We created a kind of magic as we came onto the scene, having a store of camp songs to teach, lots of dinner time skits and acts to perform, and campfire stories to tell, all with irrepressible youthful enthusiasm.

The personal presence of a staff member from headquarters as camp director amplified the charismatic element. She would come sailing in a few days before camp opened, train the staff, and direct the program. The logistics were handled by a local committee. Later, this created an aura around field representatives directing camps in their areas, much as they might try to deflect centrality of focus.

Through these experiences as both camper and counselor, I sensed I was being drawn into a distinctive staff culture—something we referred to in our conversation around the table in 1995. I think of how we adopted bird names as nicknames when we became counselors. It was a way of avoiding over-formalization (Miss or Mrs.) or over-familiarity. But it created a distinct sense of apartness as we took on a distinct identity as "Duck" or "Raven" or "Robin". I took special pleasure in finding I could take just part of "tufted titmouse" as a junior counselor, and was thereafter called "Mouse," a name that still sticks for some old friends.

We talked about the little traditions that became part of the special language that arose, the clothes with insignia we wore and made fun of, the little books we carried full of ideas (our "brains"). "*A whole culture that went with being a field rep,"* one of us remarked.

Pioneer Girls was incorporated as a national organization in 1943, at which point Carol and Louise left to pursue their medical education. In their absence, the work was held together by a succession of women—Lois Thiessen, Judy Carlson, and Betty Montague. None of these women aspired to permanence in the position, and only Lois made substantive contributions to program by her writing of impelling heartfelt newsletters that brought in donations, and her creation of the local church PAL program that strengthened both local and national support for clubs.

The 1950s

Others Join the Movement

It was inevitable that one day I would seek to join the organization as a staff member. I had majored in Christian Education, saturated in a philosophy that fully and explicitly undergirded Carol's intuitive perceptions. I was one of many enterprising single young women with a flair for independent functioning who were attracted to Pioneer Girls staff. This extended the charisma embodied in camp, where the atmosphere accentuated strong emotional and spiritual connections with others likeminded and altruistic.

It was under Betty Montague that I came on staff in 1950 as Publications Director. It was incumbent upon me to articulate the program's philosophy—a natural continuation of core ideas, now embedded in materials used to train guides. This assured continuity of Carol's original vision as I was living in Carol's home and she always had her eye on me, and trusted me to communicate her vision in its pure form in ways others might hear. I knew the spirit behind her vision firsthand from my time as camper under her leadership

As Publications Manager, I realized my dependency on others for creative material, having never run a club myself. By the end of that decade I hired a string of 27 writers from across the country—all of them guides who ran successful clubs. The natural inclination for these women to get together and to share provided a continuing inflow of creative ideas—coming up from the base, not from on top. I was also greatly assisted by an associate, Emma Lou Henning, whom we knew as "Kim"—a person who grasped Pioneer Girls' basic philosophy and watched over major program revisions during her tenure with Pioneer Girls.

Emma Lou Henning

Midway through that decade, I took a leave of absence to pursue a Master's degree in Christian Education. My thesis was based on my keen interest, tracing "The Development of Pioneer Girls Philosophy." I often became a spokesperson for the application of that philosophy to program elements. At the time, I was not clearly focused on its role in being a guide to future decisions. A sad omission. I was caught in the charisma and assumed that vital energy so alive in the organization out in the field would serve to preserve the program's vitality and strength.

Pioneer Girls did not have a widespread reputation yet in 1950; we were a small rag-tag outfit begun by college students, not recognized by the Christian establishment,

making us something of an orphan as far as churches were concerned. But as the servicemen came home from the war, used the G I Bill to prepare them for the post-war world of work, and moved into the suburbs to create family life modeled after a TV series like “Father Knows Best” or one of its other look-alikes, the population boomed. The pressure on churches to provide meaningful activity for their young made them look upon Pioneer Girls with favor. By the end of that decade, “total church programming” *required* the provision of an outlet like Pioneer Girls, if not our program itself.

The 1950s became a period of steady growth. This was the era when two of us around the table, Phyl Cunningham and Mary Ann Lindblade Mackenzie, came on field staff, along with a cadre of talented young women; their names conjure up warm memories. After pioneers like Rachel Hartman and Jean Neely and Virginia Aamodt—came Phyl Jensen, Jo Fletcher, Joy Woods Iddings, Virginia Anderson, Jeanne Sherrow, Millie McConnell, Alyce Meloon Van Til, and so many others we warmly remember.

Joy Mackay

This surge of growth required the development of a more solid organizational structure. The board turned to Joy Mackay, East Coast field representative, to begin this “second tier” of leadership. Joy had started a club in her home church in Philadelphia, and soon became active in area events. She moved into the position of field representative, where she grew her area with impressive skill. She had an intuitive grasp of the basic philosophy, and was gifted in program implementation on a practical level that guides appreciated. Coming from outside the “Wheaton cocoon” in which Pioneer Girls was birthed, Joy saw ways in which the organization could develop its foundations more firmly. She was well-suited to serve the organization in a period of stabilization and growth.

Joy’s leadership was “soft” in some ways; she relied on me to articulate the philosophy, and produce the materials for leaders. But she had a “hard” edge, and was rigorous in financial matters. Some of us joke about the session she conducted at one staff

conference on “how to care for your car.” She was known for her Scotch thrift in stretching every penny—keeping the car tuned, driving cautiously and anticipating traffic so as to save fuel by braking less. One of us quipped, “Well, I came in all the way from Cleveland on one tank of gas, and didn’t brake once!”

She was a pioneer in areas of her expertise. The development of camp standards that applied to all of Pioneer Girls’ camps came about under her encouragement. Other Christian camps copied our camping materials—including this attention to standards. This is an area where organizational acumen for the rules—the “law”— can undermine the spirit, such as ironclad insistence on a ratio of 1:6 counselors to campers in a cabin. Pocono camp objected fiercely, having built new cabins to hold eight!

Joy was open to daring moves, convincing the board to proceed with the acquisition of a national headquarters building two years after her arrival in Chicago. Her forward-looking attitude coincided with Carol Erickson Smith’s visionary impetus. I remember a trip Joy and I made with Carol to scout out the property on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan destined to become the home of our Leadership Training Center. Joy instantly saw its potential for future leadership development.

Joy with her camp lantern in a friendly moment with Bunny Eide Sendelbach, a Pioneer Girls camper and counselor in the 1950s

Joy’s business-like entrepreneurial style worked well in solidifying the organization financially, but it produced some rough edges. By the end of the decade, pressure to make changes increased. Louise Troup had just returned from missionary service in South Africa, where she had been in a role requiring initiative and leadership. Although not by nature a visionary founder, when given a charge in her field of expertise, Louise moves forward with confidence. The Nurses Training Program she developed for African young women was a pioneer effort, and continued beyond her tenure there. She returned to the States, intrigued by American culture that was unfamiliar to her after seven years of intense involvement in a Third World country. She spent a year getting reacquainted with Pioneer Girls, which had experienced steady growth during her absence. When Joy expressed a desire to take a sabbatical in order to obtain a Master’s degree, Louise offered to serve as interim in her place for the year. One year at the helm of Pioneer Girls would turn into a decade for Louise.

The 1960s

The 1960s arrived, with all of the turbulence often associated with that decade. The organization moved away from its urban base in Chicago to the suburbs in Wheaton, a move I strongly decried. It signaled to some of us a "white flight from the city" and a desertion of the concern for urban diversity. It also meant moving closer to Brigade—for they would occupy part of the building we purchased. The two organizations had kept friendly, but discreetly separate. We were obviously not in competition, but our leadership styles were distinctive. I was aware of the values and tensions of occupying this space together.

The deeper concern was the move to a suburban location, signifying surrender to the influence of the conservatism of the evangelical church at that point in time. The cold war had seeped into parts of the church in some places, creating a retrenchment into the suburban enclave and a fear of what racial unrest was creating. There was also a pulling back from certain developing trends in the culture—in music, in sharper questioning by young people of authority. The president would be shot; we would go to war in Vietnam; the usual restraints on the young were not holding.

Louise Troup

This was the decade of Louise Troup's directorship. Coming back from South Africa, she was being asked to make a difficult cultural adjustment to an American society radically different from the one she had left in 1949. But her natural gifts of warmth and communication skills honed in years of teaching nurses in the United States and Africa served Pioneer Girls well at this stage of its growth.

As Louise began in the interim position of executive director, she sensed a need for repairing some of the rough edges generated by Joy's leadership style. Her skills were especially tuned to building rapport among staff through careful communication, and these helped steady the field staff and keep them free to innovate and strengthen their area work. They were widely spread across the country and only convened once a year to share experiences and do long-range planning. They needed the stronger tie to headquarters. Louise provided sympathetic listening, and then carefully conveyed concerns between office and field staff.

Once Joy returned from her Master's program, the contrast in leadership styles proved difficult to manage, and the result was a schism that cut Joy's tenure short, along with that of others who left. I was one of those most torn, but stayed six more years.

Joy's departure was a loss to the organization, one we all felt. We did not foresee that this loss would one day be followed by a similar difficult loss of Louise as well—a realization that underlay some of the conversation we were having in Louise's home that day in 1995. Neither Joy nor Louise would have chosen to leave. But by the 1960s, the board of Pioneer Girls began to assert its power in areas where there was a clash of opinion—such as occurred in both their cases.

Working with the Board had already become more challenging during the years of the organization's steady growth in the 1950s, and Joy was a private person and not inclined to expend energy in cultivating board relationships except on a business level. Louise was faced with unpredicted challenges—many of them due to the times. Churches had ramped up their "total church programming" at the same time that families were providing their kids with more options in their free time, making Pioneer Girls one of many choices. Women were working more often outside the home, reducing the incentive and availability to serve as volunteer leaders. Pioneer Girls was hiring married women whose freedom to travel away from home for extensive periods of time limited their placement in large geographic areas. Securing a reliable financial base posed an increasing problem. It was natural for the board—especially the business men who were now more prominent—to impose a more corporate model in order to meet these challenges. Soon, Louise's position as executive director became less secure. In retrospect, I wonder if no one saw clearly the "routinization of charisma" that had been taking place under our noses. Not only had it been routinized; it had been routed, displaced by distrust.

The Board

Boards are an interesting phenomenon, and this was the case in Pioneer Girls. Incorporation as a non-profit in 1943 necessitated an appointment of a board. The founders were thrilled to be able to secure as chairperson a woman of distinction, Dr. Rebecca Price, head of the Christian Education department at Wheaton College, and someone whose philosophy of Christian education coincided with Pioneer Girls' core thinking and practice. But Dr. Price remained a distant figure, appearing occasionally, but often living across the country, and increasingly disabled physically and unable to be present. Many of the other women chosen were in their mid-fifties bred in another era, inexperienced in work outside the home, suburban in outlook, model mothers and wives, and accustomed to listening to men when it came to financial decisions and matters of policy.

For these matters, in the initial years they relied on H. J. Taylor, chairman of Club Aluminum. He used his phenomenal financial success in re-making his company to fund the Christian Workers Foundation that in turn supported five Christian organizations

geared toward meeting the need of young people—Young Life, Inter-Varsity, Child Evangelism, Christian Service Brigade, and Pioneer Girls. Taylor would come to Board meetings and wait until the financial report was read and discussed, then leave the nonfiscal matters to the women. But he paid careful attention the day Joy made her case for buying a headquarters building, instantly recognizing her acumen in this area. He encouraged the board to proceed, allaying any fears of the women on the board were more timid about this bold move into owning property.

There is an intricate history here in the composition and functions of the board. As the organization began to mature, it needed to build institutional structures that would incorporate the charismatic impetus and also meet changing needs. Of immediate importance, it entailed hiring support staff in the national office, establishing procedures for training new staff and volunteers, and figuring out how to build a solid financial support base. It had to do all this while maintaining the core goals, and just as important, the philosophy underlying those goals.

Internal affairs moved fairly smoothly, but external factors proved more elusive for a board composed primarily of women familiar with the suburban context. Carol Smith, still on the Board in the 1960s, was an exception in her continuing visionary outlook, but her voice had less authority on issues that dealt with the organization's financial stability and smooth functioning on a broader level. She maintained the pioneer spirit, sensing the challenge of the changing times and having a vision for new ventures like North Star, the leadership training center in northern Michigan—ventures that coincided with societal movements awakening to the importance of racial and gender equality.

Field staff were affected by the tides of change sweeping the nation, especially in the area of racial inclusion (as in camps and North Star) reflecting increasing sensitivity to social justice. We had to rethink the role of women in leading the clubs in local churches and coming to camp as counselors. On the one hand, women were less available; many were tasting the work world and were thinking differently, and on the other hand, they returned home from leadership training at North Star and area retreats with new ideas and methods and content, raising suspicion among conservative church leaders and pastors.

At one point in our conversation, Phyl asked, *"How could you work for 8-9 years and not be concerned about issues of class and gender?*" And then she answered her own question: *"We were very unconscious."* Today I can wonder, if we were unconscious, was it likely that this was also true of some of the members of the board?

The 1970s

When Carriers of the Fire Leave

What can be said for the 1970s? I lost touch with the every-day operations, and knew only by periodic communications with some staff who remained what was taking place. Losing so many staff during the 1960s probably left a vacuum, allowing forces to seep in that were less tethered to the original vision. It was natural for us in 1995 to assign the brunt of responsibility for the changes taking place to Brigade board chairman Ken Hansen because he wielded the authority, using his appointed Brigade director to set up a new structure combining Pioneer Girls with Brigade. Coming from the corporate sector, a milieu where success is measured in quantitative terms, often by the financial "bottom line," Ken sought to apply corporate logic to this nonprofit organization for women and girls. He thought success lay in combining Pioneer Girls with Christian Service Brigade and emphasizing formal sponsorship by local churches to steady the finances. We were critical of Ken's and his tendered solutions. We wondered why no one has been able to lay out a cogent argument for the power of a single sex enterprise that could sustain a meaningful relationship both to the times and to the institutional church.

I tried to explain his actions that day in 1995 by my knowledge of some of his life history. He had begun his career in what was then called "fulltime Christian service"—with Christian Service Brigade. But when his son was born with Down's syndrome, he felt forced to work in the business sector in order to support the special needs now required. He wound up being very successful at his business, naming it Servicemaster. But his application of business thinking to the non-profit sector did not feel like a good fit at the time to some of the staff.

He failed in seeing the merger of Brigade and Pioneer Girls take place. The two organizations remained separate, and we wondered if the process of change set in motion by Ken Hansen and others had continued to influence board and staff in setting the organization's direction. A few things we knew: subsequent leadership gouged out what many of us perceived were the guts of the organization by removing the field staff, meaning that the entire structure of training and development of local leadership through a personal presence was gone. Many of the camps also were released one by one—removing what served as a dynamic locus of leadership development. North Star and its underlying vision had to be abandoned too. The main thing left standing appeared to be the Program Division that produced written materials. I can take some comfort in the fact that it was essentially my division in charge of producing written materials that survived, and in fact became dominant. But that change felt two-dimensional to us; the vital three-dimensional core of living personal representatives in the field was gone.

Soon the organization changed its name—to include boys—and changed its age range to 4-14. High school girls need not apply, and in their place were the very young. The appeal of the program felt as though it was more to the church and to parents, than to the girls themselves. The use of language about "children"—as opposed to boys and girls

—spoke eloquently to that. Parents can *send* their four-year-olds to a program; adolescents need to be appealed to directly and *choose* to attend.

We can try to speculate about what had caused the changes taking place after the 1960s. In retrospect today, I can see how forces in operation earlier in my tenure—both internally in Pioneer Girls, and externally in the changing society around us—came to a head in the 1970s and later. Louise's particular gifts of leadership maintained Pioneer Girls' internal strength on many fronts, while she had often relied on others for the vision in facing external societal pressures. Some of those most concerned about the changes in the culture were the ones who left before the end of the 1960s. Perhaps there was less place for visionaries either on the board or on staff. Radical change is frightening.

It may have been factors outside the organization that were most influential. In talking with Mary Hackman recently, someone who remained steady and loyal through the tumultuous changes taking place in top leadership, she said that churches were beginning to look for a different kind of program than what Pioneer Girls offered and were adopting other options that had not been as prevalent before.

> *Incidentally, Mary is the unique example of someone who came to work at Pioneer Girls in its growth phase in the 1950s in the mailing department (I actively recommended her hiring), who was then promoted to become administrative assistant to the executive director—Joy, then Louise—and then stayed on permanently until her retirement! Although there were fewer camps after the 1970s, Mary became responsible for preserving the camping emphasis, convening an annual camp council and directing camp herself. She deserves special recognition for her constancy, and I value her appreciation of the original vision of Pioneer Girls.*

In my mind, I wonder about the consequences of having gradually shifted from free-ranging *community*-based clubs to aggressively adopting the principle of *church sponsorship* in the 1960s. It was the most identifiable conscious effort we made to rein in the instability of the early years when charismatic leadership sufficed to attract growth. This meant we were increasingly trapped in suburban churches that could afford us, while urban churches and inner city missions were calling loudly for help, especially for the poor who had less access to the kinds of activities Pioneer Girls provided in both clubs and camp. With a pang of sadness, I remember how many of our very first Pioneer Girls groups were established in the inner cities of Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, and Toronto for girls growing up poor and coming from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Attitudes toward race and class were different in the 1940s before the civil rights movement gained force. In some ways there was greater acceptance in camp since there was more equality of means among us, but there was also less consciousness of the growing implications of inequalities.

The result was a loss of flexibility to meet changing times. Now we became a predominantly white organization at a time when the demands for equality and attention were coming from the community of color. Women were less available as volunteers in the local churches, and more married women were available for staff positions but on a different basis than single women who poured out their time and energy without the constraints of domestic responsibility for raising children.

Requiem

Some of us watched from within, then from the sidelines—as we left, one by one—and saw what had been built over the decades begin to change. From one point of view, the philosophic structure seemed to have toppled, and gradually became unrecognizable. For others who remained, the changes instituted seemed to be the only ones available. And for others, who saw the challenge of shaping things anew, the changes seemed both necessary and rational and as signaling improvement**.**

At this point it must be said clearly that I am not in a position to make a case for what happened to the organization in the years following 1966 when I left. I removed myself from contact with the organization as such, though I retained ties to staff members who had been close friends. I am not writing this piece as a critique of what transpired at Pioneer Clubs, but rather it is my eulogy to Pioneer Girls as I knew it as a young girl myself, and as part of the staff for sixteen years. It had shaped my life powerfully, something for which I am thankful to God.

Those in charge of the organization after 1970 had reasons for each successive decision they made, and took responsibility for creating their own new vision and its outworkings in program. I had gone on to a new life outside of Pioneer Girls. So when I heard about field staff being fired, and some of the camps dissolved their connection to the organization, I was stunned and shocked. I felt this gutted the heart out of what had made Pioneer Girls dynamic, and I did not see how it could retain the power that these two elements contributed. But when the organization decided to abandon its all-girls identity and take in boys, I felt it was the last straw. I had always been equally supportive of Christian Service Brigade and the principle upon which both organizations had decided to retain distinct programs for boys and girls. I felt the existence of two same-sex programs was just as essential in the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st, as in the beginning in 1941.

At that point, for me at least, Pioneer Girls as I had known it had died, and something new had arisen in its place. I was silently acknowledging that when I wrote *The Slender Thread* by subtitling it *Stories of Pioneer Girls' First Twenty Five Years.* I knew those were the years I wanted to chronicle, etching those wonderful memories in stone. Louise was the one to suggest the title, and now I can wonder if she intuited that the thread had proved more slender than any of us had imagined?

I am proud to have been a part of the story. I was there with Betty in 1939 as well as with Carol and Louise from 1942 on. The retrospective reflection contained in these pages has helped me unravel the slender threads that bound us together in an extraordinary venture—women and girls together—finding that *all of life* can be suffused with the presence of Christ. I am paying tribute to a quarter century of spirited adventure for me, and for thousands of others, some of whom still cross my path occasionally. We continue to resonate joyfully with those memories.

PART 2

Three Key Strands of the Original Vision

--interpreting, explaining, figuring out. . .

1 - Camp Cherith—Carrier of the Lifeblood of Pioneer Girls

an experiential laboratory for applying Pioneer Girls' philosophy

2 - Field Representatives—the Personal Touch, a Key to Effectiveness

making the vision real at the local level

3 - An All-Girls Movement Led by Women in an Era of Societal Change

women developing the distinctive capacities of girls

Unraveling the Key Strands in 1995

It was 1995, and we were women in our 60s, having lived through three more decades after leaving the organization. Our point of viewing was removed. We were no longer a part of an organization that had taken on a dramatically different form than what we had created and known. As we sorted out memories, and told stories, we began piecing together a narrative that might explain the changes in the Pioneer Girls we knew and loved. I wondered, were we just middle-aged women poking around the ashes of a dream, wondering aloud with each other what might have been done differently to preserve something we thought had been lost? There were certain criticisms and disappointments lurking in the background as we talked. As these surfaced, trenchant questions were raised: What had made Pioneer Girls the remarkably dynamic and effective work that it was? What pieces of the original vision were essential and had needed to be preserved? What changes were inevitable, and which ones were deliberately chosen to give flexibility? Which ones came from the *internal* needs of the organization? Which ones seemed to be necessitated by *external* changes in the rapidly changing culture of the 1960s and 1970s? And of great importance to me, what part of the vision of an organization remains timeless, rooted in eternal verities?

This inevitably led to examining the causes and results of the major shift that took place in Pioneer Girls after all of us had left the organization. Our conversation focused on three elements: Camp was no longer as central. The field representatives were gone, concentrating everything at national headquarters. Most crucial of all was the change of its name, reflecting the shift from an all-girls program to one including boys.

I needed to explore the effects of these losses on the sustaining of the original vision. What can I learn for my own life work—past and present—and its direction for the future?

1. Camp Cherith: Carrier of the Lifeblood of Pioneer Girls

I begin with camp, noting how constantly the conversation veered back to camp as being central, no matter what other issue we were talking about. Everyone had memories of hilarious moments, stories of disasters averted, of risks taken, of transformative changes in the life of camper or counselor. Clearly this was the key part of Pioneer Girls where the organization's philosophy was most comprehensively conveyed and where we realized lasting results. Three of us had been deeply affected by our own experience as campers at an impressionable age, and all of us had been counselors and directors and seen other girls and women changed. There were stories to tell.

Camp—Where the Philosophy was Lived Out

We used the phrase *"Christ in every phase of a girl's life"* as our shorthand to express Pioneer Girls' philosophy. It was full of meaning from the day founder Carol Erickson Smith coined it in the midst of a biology class in college. From the beginning, camps were run in a way that communicated the reality of "Christ in every phase of a girl's life," by integrating spiritual goals with everything that took place—hiking in the woods, canoeing on the lake, shooting arrows on the archery range, singing around the evening campfire, and sharing each day's experience in an intimate cabin group. For Carol Erickson Smith, it also meant basing the program on a system of achievements that covered a wide range of activities considered important for developing a girl's sense of her capacity in every aspect of life. It was a seven-days-a week Christian life—a direct challenge to the church of the 1940s that only offered contact and teaching on Sunday.

Camp as Experiential Education

As adult educators, we all espoused the principle of "learning by doing" as foundational to the way we developed materials and conducted leadership training. Camp was a place where guides saw a new way of relating to kids and helping them spiritually; the girls were not lined up in chairs waiting for a "teacher" to show up and give instruction. Rather counselors and girls walked together along the trail, swam at the waterfront, and learned to build an open fire and cook over it before ending the day singing around the campfire and listening to a story as evening fell. The Bible was explored in the close-knit cabin group sitting in a circle together outside under the trees,

with girls free to ask questions and share their uncertainties and troubling doubts.

> *Phyl: What's more, camp is a temporary social system. It lets all kinds of things happen that produce changed behavior.*

We often said, "more is accomplished in the lives of both girls and guides in one week at camp than is possible the entire year in club." A field rep might visit clubs during the year, but coming to camp to counsel for a week had "teeth"—achieving real change. We saw the results in their clubs afterwards.

Camp as a Laboratory for Training Leaders

Beginning with the girls. Leadership training began with the girls themselves throughout the program, where girls were given responsibilities in local clubs. But at camp, this was amplified, especially for the high school age division of Explorers.

It was easy for me to feel there was a place for me in leadership even while young. Soon the CIT (Counselors in Training) program was standard in all the camps making teenage girls prefer this camp experience to attending coed camps run by churches. It filled us with pride to watch how these adolescent girls rose to responsibility and developed genuine skill in leading younger campers.

Professional training for club leaders. It helped that camp was under direct control of professional staff who were immersed in the philosophy of the organization, and understood its implications, and so were adept at translating that into meaningful program at the local level. Guides who came to camp as counselors benefited from the wisdom that "one learns more by contagion than instruction." Fortunately, Pioneer Girls in its early years easily had both. Experience at camp provided the contagion. Guide retreats and workshops in the towns and cities provided the instruction. What guides experienced in the camp setting was reinforced at fall guides' retreats where women gathered to share stories and experiment with new tools of leadership.

North Star Leadership Training Center in a Camp Environment

Our appreciation of camps and retreats as appropriate settings for experiential leadership training made it natural for us to place our international Leadership Training Center in an outdoor camp-like location in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the 1960s. Phyl Cunningham was in charge of its development, and she was responsible for making sure that expanded attention was given to substantive content. She made a concerted attempt to honor women's intelligence.

Phyl: Women came to the Leadership Training Center and were given the opportunity to think. One guide came dancing down the path and stopped me and said, "I haven't thought for five years!" She had been busy raising children. We offered bona fide courses in academic approaches to group dynamics, counseling, leader training, and philosophy.

North Star Intern Group, 1966

The intellect was honored, but it did not overshadow the core emphasis on the experiential that is equally a part of the educational process. Just recently, Phyl Jensen, a field representative on the East Coast in the early 1950s and later a missionary in Japan supported by Pioneer Girls, spoke to me about her experience at North Star while home on furlough one year.

> *The time I spent at North Star was life changing for me, for it set me on the path of desiring – above all – to be a woman of God. Nothing more. Of course that was quite an order to me, to allow God that place in my self-centered life. But it has remained. Who said what or when, I have no recollection. Undoubtedly it was God's Spirit.*
>
> *Then there was just table conversation one day – long after the meal was gone – about what happens when a person becomes a Christian. What does God really do – change, transform, overhaul? Am I left as a recognizable Phyl Acken Jensen or something of a different sort. I had never been led to* ***thinking*** *like I was that day. And, it startled me that I could think, because much of my life was spent on my own —not in a hotbed of thinkers, but alone on a mission station, with my Bible, and thinking husband. So I was changed, transformed from Phyl Acken Jensen into the same recognizable person, and yet new to be the person God had in mind.*

Women and Girls Together in "a Place Apart"

All of us acknowledged that an aura developed around the intensity and vitality of the camp experience for women who came as counselors. Especially in the 1950s, I sensed that suburban women were hungry for the feeling of being away from domestic responsibilities for a week or two, kicking their heels back a bit in the adventure that

camp counseling provided. After hours at night, women would gather in the dining hall at camp and talk together—perhaps reminiscent of college dorm days. There was a relational quality often associated with women that enriched the atmosphere at our camps and guide retreats. Women cherished the freedom to express themselves, at the same time that they were learning and growing, and giving to others.

Girls looked up to these women who expressed their energy differently there than in the home setting where their mother roles were dominant. They became role models for the young.

Inclusion of the Family

A key characteristic of long-term camps was the inclusion of husbands and other family members related to the counselors, knitting the results of the camp experience into the home life of campers and counselors.

Phyl: In Buffalo camp one year, we let mothers come with their kids, and provided baby-sitting! At the Leadership Training Center at North Star, guides brought husbands up with them to help in various ways around the site.

A counselor's mother and friend became camp cooks at Colorado Camp Cherith

Camps Separated from the Organization

Camps are still a part of the organization after 1970, but necessarily less integral, with loss of field staff whose presence integrated leadership training for both camps and clubs. We especially mourned the loss of some of the larger more well-developed ones in the Northeast we knew well—like Camp Cherith in the Poconos and others with their historic summer-long programs engaging college students as counselors. These were "banner" enterprises typical of the forceful dynamic centering around our memory and interpretation of the Camp Cherith experience.

We thought cutting camps loose—however it was accomplished—was strange since they were places where Pioneer Girls' philosophy was most fully expressed. Although some camps remain and others incorporated independently, it would be hard to measure the substantive impact of the organization losing such a central venue for expression of its philosophy.

2 . Field Work: The Personal Touch, a Key to Effectiveness

Field Work: the Heart of Pioneer Girls

The field staff women were the vital carriers of Pioneer Girls' philosophy into the corners of the country, including Canada—from the very beginning. There was no way that printed materials, like the first tiny slim Trail Book listing the ranks and badges, could convey the dynamism of what took place in the clubs and in camp. It required the presence of a field representative to animate the ideas and give flesh to the plans.

You could say that Pioneer Girls was basically a field operation from its inception. When Carol launched clubs in churches and communities around Wheaton College, she sent women students out into surrounding communities to become leaders of groups of girls spontaneously springing up parallel to Brigade groups of boys. When these women graduated and went back home, the seed of the Pioneer Girls idea was instantly widely dispersed across the country. "National headquarters" became a tiny office on the 17th floor in a downtown Chicago building where we simply produced written materials, kept a meager store of supplies—the cloth badges, and metal rank pins, and raised support by means of a monthly newsletter.

As a college senior—and volunteer campus representative for Pioneer Girls—I sent out fellow students to continue leading these clubs in surrounding towns. I already imagined myself joining Pioneer Girls staff after I graduated. For me, this meant a field staff position, for that is where the action was in everyone's view. When that time came, the only position open for me was Publications Manager. I was overjoyed to be part of the organization in any capacity, and it was easy for me to see this as biding time until I could become part of the "real work" out on the field. In retrospect, I see that my abilities lay more appropriately in writing, although I was eventually assigned a part-time field post in Colorado—something I relished.

Why were field staff so central? Why did I hold them in such high esteem? Because, literally, they WERE the organization to the young women like me who aspired to be part of what was going on—in camp, and in the whole enterprise. If someone had asked me in those early days, "What is Pioneer Girls" I might have simply pointed to one of these women who served as field reps. They embodied the core idea; they lived its ethos; they were role models. The personal touch was basic, and what each representative conveyed through her person was solidly three-dimensional, and irreproducible in the written materials I was busily crafting in the home office. And, face it, there was *charisma* attached to them, creating a kind of subculture.

One factor in creating this lay in the fact that field reps often covered large territories (one had the entire West Coast) and so when they came into town to visit clubs, they were an "item" and women and girls clustered around them, eager to learn

new songs, new crafts, share ideas, ask questions. The field rep would sit down with the pastor as well, so the status attached to clergy easily transferred onto these lay women.

Add to that the reality that not every kind of woman was adaptable to living out of a suitcase for periods of time, arranging her own schedule, setting her own goals, running and maintaining an aging car, and keeping a full supply of resources and ideas—both for her own refreshment and for local leaders—and you have a particular kind of pioneer woman. The variety that was maintained among field staff was in itself remarkable. All of the field staff were of a distinctly marriageable age as well, and field work did not easily lend itself to a private social life.

As I describe the field work phenomenon, I dip into a little of our conversation in 1995 to give you some of the flavor of how some of us perceived this unusual lifestyle.

Finding Field Representatives

Gathered around the table were two women who had occupied the position of field representative: Phyl Cunningham, and Mary Ann Lindblade Mackenzie. They represent two resource streams for hiring new field representatives. Mary Ann had begun association with Pioneer Girls as a camper and member of a local club in her home church. She had been influenced by women in her church and counselors at Pioneer Girls camp to choose to attend Wheaton College. The subsequent path into a staff position was a natural flow, and she clearly had the necessary abilities.

Phyl Cunningham's history was colorful in a different way. Her introduction to Pioneer Girls came through coming to Cleveland after college graduation for nurses' training and meeting Louise Troup, one of her clinical instructors. That contact blossomed into a lifelong friendship, beginning with Phyl's decision to become a Christian, and subsequent involvement in Pioneer Girls clubs at a church in Cleveland, then counseling at Ohio camp—and finally becoming its camp director. While this was taking place, she completed three years of schooling in a Bible Institute, and a Master's Degree in administration at Western Reserve University.

Phyl Cunningham in 1955 just prior to coming on staff

In the eyes of her nursing colleagues, it was not a logical step to join a fairly embryonic and unknown enterprise like Pioneer Girls, with its markedly low salary levels. It required a reorientation of her career expectations when she was asked to become the Ohio, Western New York and Ontario area representative; she had imagined staying with nursing administration in some capacity. Pioneer Girls was wise to take advantage of her extraordinary skills for soon

after taking her post, she was instrumental in the development of the independent Canadian branch of the organization. In recognition of her organizational vision and skill, she was later transferred to California to become West Coast field director, a position giving her influence on the concept underlying field work everywhere. Her climactic achievement was her return to Chicago in 1960 to develop Pioneer Girls Leadership Training Center at North Star. When she left, it was to pursue a doctorate at the University of Chicago in the relatively new field of Adult Education, a field in which she rose to prominence internationally, based at Northern Illinois University as a Professor. It was characteristic of her to always be on the cutting edge of her field, and to apply her learning to communities of greatest need—often persons of color or disadvantage.

Training for Field Work

Formal training was haphazard at first, because we relied on oral transmission to prepare new field staff members for their posts. There were little black notebooks famous for their wealth of arcane ideas and resources that the first persons involved in the organization carried. This personal exchange flowered, carrying with it the sense of creative freedom, being allowed to contribute new ideas, yet maintaining the core of the organization's purposes.

What the staff assembled for this conversation remembered was the requirement for new field staff to spend a week of training at the home office. This memory provoked much laughter, and perhaps a touch of irony. "We learned how to use rubber fingers to collate newsletters!" Formalized training had not developed. It was more a case of getting acquainted with office procedures, and engendering mutual understanding between office and field staff.

There was some oversight of field work, with monthly reports and expense accounts. Although there were monthly reports listing goals and accomplishments, Phyl's take on the value of those reports was mixed.

> *Phyl: I hate those reports. I would rather mow the lawn. When I was transferred to California, I got a secretary who was good at typing.*

Of course Phyl was the person whose skills in the work produced enviable results, and she needed the freedom to develop her own operational structure. This became evident when she talked about the restrictions and guidelines given field staff about expense accounts, and how these proved elastic in some cases!

> *Phyl: At my first staff conference, Millie McConnell and Jean MacRae came up to me and asked, "Who told you that you could spend more than $45 a month?" We were getting seven cents a mile. I said, "No one." I was sending $100 and $120 fuel bills. They felt they should not go above their allotted $45. They asked, "You just did it?" I told them, "Yes, I just did it." No one ever reprimanded me for going over.*

Eunice: Joy Mackay was trying to rationalize finances. It was under her leadership that a headquarters building was bought. She felt she had to set limits. That was her way.

I reason now that we compensated for the lack of formal training by hiring persons who were able to function autonomously—maybe even preferred such a context lacking strictures on their creativity. On the other hand, single-pointed dedication to a task may subtly produce a lifestyle lacking the essential "margins" required for following personal pursuits.

Phyl: And for eight months of the year until camp. It was a wonderful freedom. You just went out there and were autonomous.

Empowering Leaders Locally

Field representatives knew that their influence and success depended on others in the areas they served; they could not do it all. It was Phyl who recognized this immediately, discovering what a treasure trove of helpers was already built into the structure of the local organization. They were called Fort Captains—using pioneer terminology—and served as volunteers. Right away, Phyl saw the need for writing a manual as a training tool. The appearance of *A Fort Captain's Manual* coming from a new field representative was initially disconcerting to Joy Mackay, executive director.

Phyl: Actually, though, Joy brought a copy out in staff meeting for all of the field staff. She took the idea and liked it.

Eunice: She wasn't used to the idea of the diffusion of innovations.

If anything was foundational to Pioneer Girls from the beginning, it was its reliance on local volunteers. This concern for developing leadership applied to the program in the local church too, with the structure of a sponsoring committee that recruited the guides and raised financial support—first for their local club, and also supporting the national organization with prayer and money by women becoming "Pals" to individual girls.

Another aspect of field work was the status representatives were given in the local churches they visited, remarkable because opportunities for women to have upfront leadership had limits. Somehow we became an exception. They could call us "missionaries" as a cover for allowing us to stand in the pulpit and speak to the congregation during area visits.

Life on the Road

Much of a field rep's time was spent on the road, traveling from city to city. Some areas were large, covering much territory.

Louise: Even though field reps didn't get much money, there were other rewards in the traveling. I would travel with the field reps and we would do the business but in between contact work, we would see the scenery and visit historical sites of interest.

Phyl: A field rep could get around and see a lot of things. I lived near San Diego but I found this guy in San Francisco who could cut my hair in seven minutes (my hair was quite curly when I was young). When I was in the Bay area, and there would be down time in the middle of the day because my meetings were in the evenings, I could get my hair cut. I would also go to the park and drink tea in those Japanese gardens.

Traveling long distances alone in the car was another challenge. Phyl, whose territory was especially large, covering much of the West Coast, mused about her own experiences.

Phyl: One of the things I entertained myself with was imagining I was on a quiz show. I would ask myself questions and I would wow everybody. I would answer a question like "How does ontogeny recapitulate phylogeny?" and they would say, "You won!" And I hit a million dollars and I had to think about what I would do and I'd know because I began to realize if I had money it would make a big difference because I know for sure I would get a campsite for southern California so we could have camp more than five weeks a year.

We didn't have radios in our cars and sometimes I'd sing and then I would be very aware that somebody was over there beside me on the road, eyeing me. I loved those evening gospel songs. I can't even remember them now. But we were singing 'em, "remember? We'd sing them at Zondra's Christmas dinner and she's saying we don't sing 'em any more!

Being a field rep for Pioneer Girls meant living frugally, and depending on others for hospitality.

Phyl: I was asked once, "Do you have a budget?" I said, "No, because you can't use a budget because you don't have enough money to live on." You just take invitations to dinner every time you can. We never stayed in a hotel. I had a gas card. Once I drove from San Diego to Santa Barbara and forgot my toothbrush. I was trying to see how I could get a toothbrush because you would never say, "I forgot my toothbrush and I don't have any money." You would never say that. But I knew I was going to have to own up that I didn't have one. "Oh." I said casually, "I guess I forgot my toothbrush," after we were in for the night. Then this woman opened up a drawer and there before me were a dozen toothbrushes!

Field and Office Staff Relationships

Even though a subtle hierarchy between office and field staff lurked in our minds to some extent, I quickly saw that the office staff had its own coherence—lying in our heartfelt dedication to the work. We looked forward to the yearly influx of field workers from across the country for staff conference. They came with stories to share, making our own attention to addressograph plates and mimeograph-ink-smeared fingers and bulging correspondence files worth it. We knew our work was serving them, and that they made the greater sacrifice while also being closer to the rewards. Their stories were important, putting flesh onto the letters arriving in the office from guides.

Field reps had to depend on office staff in some vital matters, like ordering supplies. Phyl Cunningham remembered her first experience in this after being asked to direct Ohio Camp Cherith.

> *Phyl: They told me I had to have a budget. They said they would help me. I ended up with Rusty because as business manager, she sent out goods to sell. Only problem was the packages came when I wasn't there and the boxes got put behind the sofa and I didn't know it. So they sent another set. A week later, we found the ones behind the sofa!*

Unforgettable Rusty, Ruth Bergren

The interchange of ideas between office and field staff was even more fundamental: the national office provided materials that became a constant source of innovation, and those materials were fed by field staff who contributed ideas from their site visits. As in other areas of the work, the natural inclination for women to get together and to share provided a continuing inflow of creative ideas that we then shared with others.

> *Eunice: How well were we listening? How well was that communication channel working between what was happening with staff and out in the trenches? I realize it was a subtle—and maybe not so subtle—competition that developed between office and field. I don't want to overemphasize that, but the out-of-touchness with what was happening in the world might have insinuated its way into the thinking at headquarters, widening the gap between the two groups. It was a small world in which many of us lived.*

Losing the Vital Core

Amid the dramatic changes that took place under new leadership, the field staff were gradually let go. I found it hard to imagine effective leadership development with only printed materials—even with the advent of audio-visual electronic technology—which presents an opportunity with mixed efficacy, and different challenges. The personal touch continues to feel essential, and in 1995, we all mourned its loss.

3. An All-Girls Organization Led by Women In an Era of Societal Change

Of all the changes that transpired after we left Pioneer Girls, the most unsettling to me—because it felt most basic—was making it coed. I am astonished at how elemental this still feels. To me it changed the intrinsic power at the core. The name linking *Pioneer* and *Girls* was not an accidental choice. Carol Smith was ahead of the times in her concept of women's place in the family, the community, the church, and the world. She came by it instinctively, but around the table that day, we fleshed it out conceptually—sociologically, psychologically, spiritually. We did this by narrating the experiences that had shaped us and that we had helped create for those under our care.

Quality of Relationships

What is the special sense women develop as they work and learn together? We were feeling it that day as we talked. The conversation was animated; laughter erupted; and there were moments of deeper feeling. We knew the interesting dynamics that took place when women got together—the intimacy and intensity, the spontaneity for playful ventures. Strong friendships were forged.

I had observed the way the male staff in Brigade bonded strongly, yet sensed the difference. In both cases, older men and women were providing role models for relating for younger persons at formative times in their youth.

We talked about the built-in sense of equality and partnering that seems natural to women when working with one another. Contributing to this attitude was the way program materials were devised at headquarters. Guides sent in their ideas for dissemination to others in the first crude publications. Eventually a corps of writer emerged, guides sharing ideas from their firsthand experience.

Alison Short Miles, writer of program materials, Northwest Camp Cherith counselor, Oregon camp director.

Phyl: We had a democratic model that allowed innovation in because we set it up so that we had communication across the base, not all coming from on top.

Independence and Empowerment

As staff, this spirit of autonomy came naturally. Because the movement had been birthed as a parallel role beside Christian Service Brigade for boys and young men, identity as an organization run by young women was taken for granted. None of us questioned our ability to do it all—to envision a program, implement it, train others, procure the resources necessary to sustain it, and keep it relevant to the rapidly changing

times. Pioneer Girls tapped into the rich mine of single women recently graduated from college who were dedicated to Christian service. We were given the freedom to initiate changes in organizational structure ourselves, and just as attractive, to encourage innovation among local leaders.

Camping promotes a natural inclination toward independent thinking and functioning for girls, and before they have become conditioned to expect a role division that limits the things girls can do. Girls had the delightful freedom to take on a full range of skills and activities, and did not have to sit on the sidelines cheering while the boys were playing in the "real game."

From the beginning, this was the way Carol Erickson Smith thought. As director of the first camp, she took it upon herself to bring all the cots and tents in her borrowed jalopy and set them up on her own. She got proficient in fixing flat tires, so skilled that on a trip into town to get supplies, she prided herself on being able to remove the tire, patch the inner tube, and replace the tire, all in less than 20 minutes! We observed that a sense of empowerment seemed natural for women who are invited to take on responsibility.

Independence was a hallmark, but this did not rule out the development of a collaborative attitude toward group effort. In both eras, we were conducting camp in a way that developed girls' independence as women without excluding the participation of men. Setting up camp sometimes involved whole families pitching in to help. Women's independence was interwoven with communal effort.

Inclusion—Across Generations, Race and Class, Denominations

Built into the program was healthy *intergenerational contact,* an important element in a girl's development. In the local church older women were invited to become "PALS" to individual girls, taking a special interest in their development. At camp, older women often helped in the kitchen, or with parts of the program where their knowledge and presence was highly valued.

The instinct of those who pioneered the organization was always toward *race and class inclusion*, as well, something women often instinctively promote finding it easy to relate to disempowerment in any form. I remember a conversation with Jean Neely, the first New England field representative serving in the mid-1940s. She exhibited a hardy New England variety of no-nonsense authority and was ready to challenge anyone who dared question her inclusion of an African American woman on camp staff. Many of our early clubs were conducted in inner city missions and churches—Cleveland, Toronto, Detroit, for example—reaching a diverse ethnic mix of girls.

> *Eunice: I remember in 1944 at Camp Cherith on Gull Lake Island, sitting at supper the first evening, and in trooped a group of six or seven 14-year olds who had come in late. They had come in by train from Cleveland City Mission, and then by boat to the island. They had these big purses we carried then, and were in high heels, no hose, and wearing bright red lipstick. They bragged about flirting with sailors all the way up on the train. We were kids from Wheaton and they were the Mission gang. They were not necessarily tough kids at all, just more sophisticated in having tasted more of life than those of us from suburban Christian homes. They were just as needy and vulnerable in the camp experience as the rest of us. Camp broke down barriers for all of us.*

By the 1960s, discriminatory racial attitudes were more pervasive in the conservative churches we served.

> *Phyl: There was something called 'the suburban captivity of the churches'. We talked about the concept of the urban environment and how we were not serving the needs of urban people. When I discovered there were black evangelicals who ran camps in central Michigan, I sent some of my North Star work crew to go there and assist. This posed a problem to the Pioneer Girls board. Louise had given North Star its own board as well, and they were more in touch with the reality of the times, and understood the importance of the racial issues.*

Another kind of inclusion related to our status as an *interdenominational* entity. This may not seem to be directly related to single sex status, but it often interlaces with the larger issue of the place of women in society, as relevant in the Christian community as the secular. For example, we wanted girls to develop a sensitivity to missions abroad, so we instituted a program of supporting several women who felt called to become missionaries. Girls brought their offerings—called "shares"—to club each week, and a portion was set aside for missions. The response was so hearty that we were able to provide total financial support for several women missionaries over the years. This meant persons who were serving under nondenominational boards, a practice that could be considered suspect by denominations eager to tout their own mission board. Yet we saw the value—and necessity—of being inclusive here in order to emphasize the heart of the work the missionary felt called to do, rather than her denominational identity.

> *Phyl: Churches and their pastors didn't like the fact that we asked girls to support the Pioneer Girl missionaries because they were outside the denomination. You see, the larger issue had to do with the place of women—their desire to do more than preparing and cleaning up after the communion, taking leadership on the church governing boards or committees, or contributing new kinds of music.*

> *Louise: This little Pilgrim sat next to me in British Columbia at a bean bag banquet and she was talking away at the rate only a Pilgrim could talk. "And Sandy, we have these missionaries from our church too, but they aren't* ***our*** *missionaries like you are, Sandy."*

Women's Place in the Church

Changes in the culture in the 1960s unleashed women's increasing desire to express their *newfound authority*. That in turn created tensions because churches were not receptive to women taking a more influential leadership role. In addition, the contemporary cultural overtones were sometimes suspect as departing from what had been sanctioned by the church of the past.

Phyl: We were ahead of our times. And the church wasn't in touch. Women were coming back to their church after being at the Leadership Training Center, having gotten stimulated and ready to lead. People at home did not want them coming back and being leaders in the church. One woman from Binghamton interested in music went back home and tried to do something with music in the church. She had learned from one of our staff, Jean, who taught the guides how to sing psalms, and put music to psalms, using her guitar. When this woman from Binghamton tried to introduce this in her church, she was told that the guitar was "an unholy instrument." She had felt free, thinking about kids making up their own psalms as a self-expression of their spirituality.

Another thing was taking place. Back in evangelical churches in California, they were encouraging their kids to bring in all their records and staging record-breaking parties to get rid of "that unholy music." The church leaders recognized these are cultural issues and music becomes a form of expression. We never did this analysis then, but as I look back on it, I can see why the leaders in the church were upset about some of these things.

At this point, it is relevant to talk about Pioneer Girls' adoption of the principle of church sponsorship. Although many of the first clubs were community-based, it was early recognized that the program would fare best if supported by a church responsible for the club's continuance, and integration into other parts of the church program. This produced a happy, if unexpected, outcome for many churches since it sometimes brought whole families into the full life of the church through the daughter's attraction to the club.

But church sponsorship was a flexible principle for some time, since inner city missions and missionaries overseas found the program well-targeted for their constituencies. Slowly, church sponsorship—and by extension, its financial support to headquarters—became more encased in "law." This produced mixed results. The inherent conservatism of the church as an institution would make it more reluctant to adapt to changes in the contemporary culture, especially those pertaining to women in leadership roles.

Phyl: There was a subtle pressure. Some people wanted to keep Pioneer Girls free of the church, but it moved the other way and became institutional within the church. There were some good reasons for that, too, but there was a contradictory effect.

The contradiction came when Pioneer Girls became identified with an institution that tended to be looking backwards, not forward. Churches were moving away from the city, and this was often linked with a reaction against a change in attitude toward racial equality, toward social justice, and toward giving women more avenues of participation in decisions and programs within the church.

The Inner Masculine and Feminine

Some of the group being academically oriented, we began talking about studies we had read that assessed the ways women are different from men—how much is enculturated and learned and how much is basic and inborn. We had a conversation back and forth about this, including that subtle inner blend of the masculine and feminine in each individual person.

> *Eunice: We are all girls in the beginning—it takes a Y chromosome to make one male. The masculine and feminine are present in us all. An all-girls organization forces both characteristics to develop in equal proportion.*

We recognized why all-girls colleges and high schools see the advantage in allowing one's masculine and feminine qualities to develop freely and in harmony within. It is beneficial effects are experienced for both girls and boys to have environments where they can develop separately for certain activities and experiences. We recognize this must be a carefully nuanced enterprise, involving a mature mentor with a healthy self-concept.

Preserving A Woman's Voice

From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, one can argue today that Pioneer Girls was pioneering in the rising women's movement, though we acted somewhat unconsciously. Some of us had read Betty Friedan in the 1950s, but we would have been naive to ignore the longer history of women's struggles to find their place in society in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, including some remarkable examples among groups like the Wesleyans and Quakers. We were affected by currents rippling through the culture, and some of our program adaptations mirrored some of the changing attitudes toward women's place in society.

We were a voice *within* the church—not shouting at it, but speaking from within it. The bond that developed between women and girls felt natural, and something worth preserving. We intuitively knew that a woman's sensibility needed to be nourished in environments apart from men and boys for a season. Separation was not meant to either demean men or exalt women. It was simply necessary to preserve the rich flavor women add, so that the table fare was balanced, enriched by what both men and women contribute.

PART 3

The Legacy That Endures

--unleashing, loosening, freeing!

Looking at the Threads in 2014

I want to plumb the depths of what we found. By unraveling the threads of the story of the past we were remembering, I am set free to find meaning and wisdom for my present life and work. I start by examining my own experience as an integral part of Pioneer Girls during its formative and rapidly expanding years. Not only do I have a keen interest in its welfare, but I share a sense of responsibility about my part in its formation.

One remark stood out in the conversation that day. We were talking about how a vital part of the organization's program—several of its camps—had been "cut loose" by the new leadership in the 1970s. As we asked, "Why?" Zondra murmured, *"That my have been part of the routinization of charisma."*

It was just tossed off, almost said under breath. But that phrase,*"routinization of charisma"* lodged in my mind. It sent me into a review of my sociological studies of organizations I had researched at the University of Chicago years ago:

> There is a common sociological wisdom about social institutions: that they begin as vibrant young movements arising to challenge the status quo in a society and are often launched by a single visionary with an impelling idea. When enough followers gather to support the leader during the initial phases of the movement's existence, enough momentum is generated to allow it to continue in an orderly way for a time.
>
> But charismatic leadership in such a venture is inherently unstable, depending on the energy emanating from the pioneer of the new vision. In order to produce substantive change in society, there needs to be an orderly succession of leadership to carry on the vision and embed it in the culture. The hope is that eventually the culture will change in ways that embody the pioneer's vision and meld it with existing institutional structures providing a degree of permanence.

A charismatic element existed in the initial stages of Pioneer Girls' birth, and continued in its formative years when we had been actively involved. Some of our conversation centered around this phenomenon. All the laughter and nostalgia, the tender and impassioned zest in that conversation twenty years ago were expressive of a gemlike quality of an unforgettable slice of my life. We had been an important part of Pioneer Girls' growth in the 1950s and 1960s. We didn't recognize the organization in the form it had taken by 1995. We were struggling to discern whether or not this process had taken place in a way that had allowed the original vision to crumble, or become distorted, or even disappear.

This raises serious questions for me now: Is there something about organizations pioneered by charismatic leadership that leave it vulnerable to deterioration, or subversion, or at least dilution of its original vision? Had I failed to see that something was eating at the roots of this organization to which I had given such total energy and dedication? Had I inadvertently participated in the balloon of "charisma" that all of us around the table acknowledged was present, especially evident in the intense camp setting? We had talked about the playful staff subculture that evolved in the early years—little habits of language and attention that marked our camaraderie as young staff members. Underneath the harmless humor of all our cherished traditions, was there a seductive tendency to elevate the aura of charisma that easily surrounded us? Why had each of us been drawn to this work in the first place?

Having been part of the shaping of three different organizations in my sixty-year career, I am sensitive to how easy it is to be carried along on a wave of idealism and enthusiasm in a new venture under charismatic leadership. My seduction to quick surface success can delude me into thinking that enthusiasm and idealism are enough to hold the center over time. I took the continuance of these organizations for granted. It forced me to examine the roots of my motivation for involvement in any enterprise—those I helped create or shape.

Setting Free the Past

I started unraveling the slender threads in Part 1 by retelling the story as I knew it in experience, *illuminating* the pathway of Pioneer Girls' original vision—in its ascent and its diminishment.

By identifying the key elements that constituted its strengths in Part 2—elements that faded from view—I was trying to articulate a more comprehensive *interpretation* of those threads.

But unraveling also connotes the idea of *setting free*, loosening the taut threads. Suddenly—zing! A shaft of light illumines the scene and I suddenly began to *see* my early participation in Pioneer Girls in a new way. What I thought and said in 1995 about

my past experience had validity, but also its limitations. Today, twenty years later, I am reaching for a larger perspective. I want to embrace a deeper truth about the slender threads holding a vision intact.

I had an overwhelming realization: what I did not receive from my early days and years in Pioneer Girls as a camper and fledgling young leader. I have sugar-coated my memories—because the over-arching truth is that Pioneer Girls saved my adolescent years in many ways, and it seems right to attribute that redemption to Pioneer Girls' influence.

I came to Pioneer Girls grounded in my faith and the Scriptures, but disconnected from healthy peer connections apart from Sunday church. Daughter of a minister, I spent much of my childhood moving from town to town and across the country, never locating in one place long enough to establish a secure footing socially. I was encased in my nuclear family of four—whether in rural New Hampshire, or on the teeming streets of Kansas City, and later in Wheaton, Illinois. Suburban social life and interaction were mystifying to me at the age of eight. Pioneer Girls became a life preserver for me, offering connection to peers and to youthful college women role models who took me under their wing.

But there is a shadow side to the story that I was sometimes blind to. As I plunged in eagerly and found an easy pathway forward, I was quickly drawn into the echelons of leadership. Too quickly? I might ask now. I responded with alacrity, taking on the cloak of the liberating Christian philosophy on which Pioneer Girls was based. It was easy and natural, as a 17-year-old junior counselor, to stand before girls around the campfire and proclaim a message I sincerely believed to be profoundly true—that life in Christ was intended to be an abundant one, full of joy. I exuded an irrepressible liveliness as I led the singing after meals in the dining hall, or around the evening campfire. I created an atmosphere full of electricity with my animated gestures and lilt of the music. And girls responded, caught up in the magic of the moment.

I am not critical of what I did. Those were life-giving years. But now, taking a deeper and more penetrating look, I can detect the shadow cast by my being catapulted into front row status. To some extent I was preaching what I was unable to practice in certain obscure areas of my life. I did not come to terms with this until after I left the organization in 1966. The last six years on staff had been more difficult than I like to acknowledge, and I knew no way to process the dis-ease I felt at a time when the organization itself was in the throes of change at the top. Partly this was because I was blind to my needs. I was ill-equipped to supply the strength and qualities of leadership

and new vision needed. It would take a deep exploration of the roots of my underlying discontent and limited absorption of the truth of God's unconditional love of me *as I am* to embark on a period of transformative change. It is a story I have told elsewhere, and the lifelong growth it fostered remains basic to the unstoppable joy that got uncorked through that deep inner journey.

Redeeming the Treasure Today

So what can I redeem from all of this experience and remembering? What is its relevance now? My husband's question startled me: "Suppose Pioneer Girls had only lasted those first twenty-five years? How would you feel about that?" I stopped in my tracks, and a new image formed instantly: I was holding in my hands —and heart—a treasure, like a rare gemstone. I saw those years as something precious and irreplaceable. All the laughter and nostalgia, the tender and impassioned zest in that conversation twenty years ago were expressive of a gemlike quality of an unforgettable slice of my life. I want to honor the rich legacy those years provided for me and so many others.

Then I turn to look at the work Don and I created thirty-three years ago—Life/Work Direction. It has its own unique story, which I told in writing *Intricately Woven,* where I pulled apart the threads of its origins and history. It too has gone through change in leadership, as a younger couple—Scott and Louise Walker—joined us in 2005. Their vision has been sensitively interwoven with the fabric begun earlier. The core purposes remained strong, and new colors and texture were added.

We were very deliberate about this. During the past year, my colleagues and I at Life/Work Direction, together with our Board, have engaged in a lengthy process of redefining our own ministry's vision, reaffirming our core values, examining our relationship to a changing 21st century clientele coming for our vocational and spiritual guidance. In the process of writing this paper, I realized I could hold this work also as a treasure—something of value in the present, with a spirit of openness to its enduring or ending as God leads.

Something deeper has unfolded for me. I have recently delved into Jean Vanier's book about the "mystery of Jesus in the Gospel of John" and become aware of the issue I am dealing with in this writing reverberates with the early years of Christianity. John was writing his gospel at the end of the first century when the vibrant pulsing message of the

risen Christ and the charisma emanating from the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection had spread throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and other parts of the world. How would the purity of Jesus' message and vision be maintained? As Vanier writes,

> *Followers of Jesus were becoming more numerous.*
> *The structures of the church were being put into place*
> *and the theology of the church was developing.*
> *History has shown that as a group grows larger,*
> *discords and conflicts arise,*
> *rules and regulations become necessary,*
> *and then structures can take precedence over spirit.*
> *The mystical and the spiritual tend to take a back seat.*

It is significant therefore that I "hold these treasures in jars of clay" so that the *mystical* can be *embodied*. "The Word became flesh." We are keenly aware of this integration of the inner life—as people come to Life/Work wanting to examine their gifts and calling—with the outer expression. Our quotation from Frederich Buechner says it well. One's calling is "where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Pioneer Girls, so formative for me when I was young, introduced me to my soul's deep gladness. The Urban Life Center (Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture) in the 1970s, formed at the same time that I moved into marriage, moved me and others toward addressing the "world's deep hunger."

In these past three decades in Life/Work Direction, we have sought to focus on the calling to *weave the meaning of one's inner life with its outer expression in the world of work!*

No wonder I have been so engaged in unraveling these threads of my life. I am knitting together its more comprehensive meaning. I am left with a deeper personal question as I navigate my "fourth chapter of my life" as an octogenarian: *What is the enduring legacy I want to leave behind in any work in which I am engaged?* The words arise spontaneously from within, expressing *what matters to me:*

The Legacy That Endures

I want to be part of something precious,

where I both give and receive—all by God's mercy.

I like being part of something requiring courage and pluck,

so that I must develop trust.

I savor an enterprise full of vitality—and humor!

It must be something worth doing, having objective value.

I want to see good outcomes for others.

I want to be a part of the times—whether consciously or unconsciously.

I want what I help create to leave an indelible mark.

I want to leave a sweet aftertaste.

Acknowledgment of the author:

When I write, I have an angle of viewing that results in a certain "take" on historical events. I relied on my memory rather than written documents. My writing was reflective, and can distort the accuracy of historical detail.

I also relied on a transcription of a conversation where opinions were sometimes stated as fact. I take responsibility for any *errors of fact* that you may find, and ask for compassion if I have inadvertently misconstrued intentions of others whom I quoted.

May this piece be celebrative, and also may it stimulate further thought.

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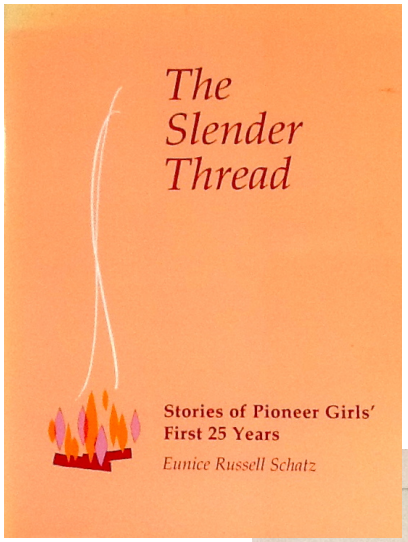
Unraveling

the writing process

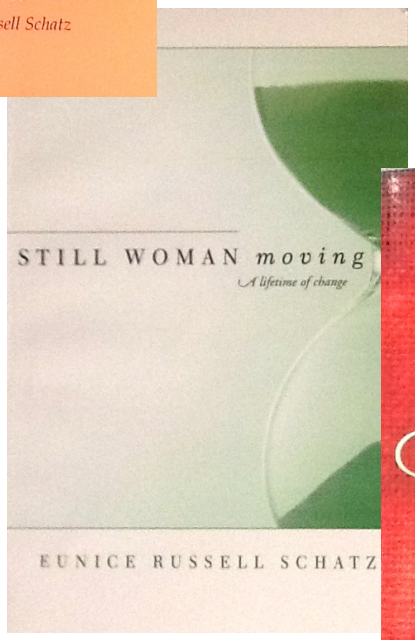


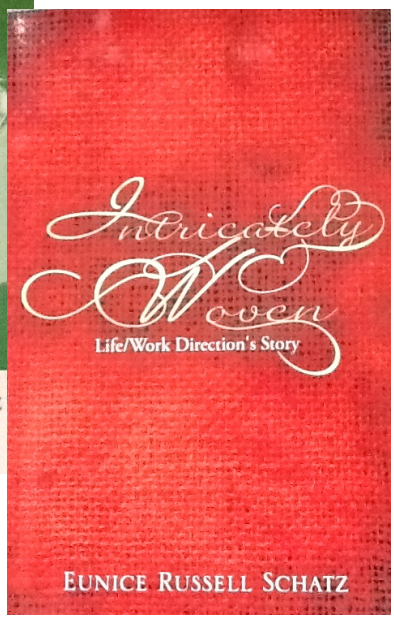
Writing my life has been an unraveling process, for I twice used themes connected with the fiber arts.

The Slender Thread:Stories of Pioneer Girls' First 25 Years, 1996.

Still Woman Moving: A lifetime of change, (a memoir) 2001.

Intricately Woven: Life/Work Direction's Story, 2011.





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