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Dresses, Ice Cream, and Life-Long Friendships

Every girl likes to dress up. Therefore, when I got invited to join a club in which you wear dresses- formal dresses- to every meeting, I jumped at the chance to attend an open meeting. What I learned that night- and countless other times throughout the years- changed my view on life, patriotism, and service towards others forever.

The International Order of the Rainbow for Girls is a Masonic youth group for girls ages eleven to twenty. It places a great importance on religion of one's choosing, patriotism to one's country, and service and charity in one's community. Each jurisdiction- usually determined by each state or country- operates equally and dependently from the other, yet all under the authority of the Supreme Assembly, our governing body. The jurisdiction of California raises money for a different charity each year, which is called our Grand Service Project, and that charity receives a check for the amount that we were able to raise at our yearly convention, Grand Assembly. In the last fourteen years California Rainbow has donated over a million dollars to charities such as Canine Companions, Camp Sunshine Dreams, and Jacobs Heart Foundation.

The girls of Placerville Assembly #19, International Order of the Rainbow for Girls, floated in through the two doors of the room to the tune of "Onward Christian Soldiers" and performed beautiful floor work that first night at the open meeting. I was amazed that under those big hoop dresses the girls really *weren't* wearing roller skates, only dainty slippers. At that first meeting each officer had a speech- am *memorized* speech, nonetheless- explaining a bit about their office and its importance to Rainbow. The seven girls representing the seven colors of the Rainbow explained how important the lessons of Love, Religion, Immortality, Fidelity, Patriotism, and Service are in our everyday lives. The Sister of Charity explained the Grand Service Project for that year, Jacob's Heart Foundation, and the importance of performing charity everyday in your own community. The Sister of Faith made me realize the importance of having faith in God and in every righteous thing- that through faith all will turn out all right in the end. I

learned these lessons and saw those beautiful dresses and *knew* that I had to be a Rainbow girl. Besides, after the meeting they gave me ice cream and that sealed the deal. Six weeks later (the time necessary to “process” a petition) and it was time for my initiation. My excitement had waned slightly because the only dress I could wear was pink- and I hated pink. Also, the girls had just told me a piece of information that they so conveniently left out at the open meeting- I had to ride a greased pig, *in my dress*, as a part of my initiation. So, when I was brought into the Assembly room, I had my eyes peeled for any signs of livestock. Initiation was a long, drawn-out re-explanation of the lessons of Rainbow- and it was incredibly boring to a person who had just decided to join the Order. No pig though, so that was a plus. I was really beginning to second-guess this whole thing, but then I got ice cream again, and all was right with the world.

Throughout the Initiation, I became impressed at how these girls could do all of these things- memorizing speeches, speaking in front of so many people, and floating- and I made these girls into my role models. The Worthy Advisor, especially, because she just had so much to say.

Now that I have been in rainbow for nearly four years, the tables have turned and it is my turn to be the role model- a role I never could foresee myself playing. Being Worthy Advisor in the summer of 2002 brought me awe from the younger girls because now *I* had so much to say. So many of the girls thought I was a good lesson of what Rainbow is and what its lessons are that I was nominated to write an essay for the title of Miss Service, and I won. Marching in a parade last summer in formals and having little girls look at me with their mouths gaping and asking if I was wearing roller skates brought back memories of my thoughts when I was just learning about Rainbow. It is amazing to now be the girl that, just four short years ago, I would have looked up to.

The biggest impact Rainbow has had in my life is not the admiration, recognition, or even the ice cream. It is the changes that have occurred in myself. In 1999, I was the shyest fourteen-year-old on the face of the planet, but through my years in Rainbow and *hours* of public speaking, 2003 Krista is completely unrecognizable from 1999 Krista. Not only have I become less timid, but I have gained confidence in myself that has seeped into other aspects of my life including my writing, my musicianship, and my relationships in the “real” world. I now place a greater value on the happiness of others,

regardless of our differences. Through bettering my community, I have bettered myself in ways that no book, seminar, or lecture could have. The biggest gift I have received from Rainbow is the life-long friendships I will always have. The fraternal feeling of belonging that I will always have. The connection I will have with a total stranger when she mentions Grand Assembly is irreplaceable. I will always have these friends- these *sisters*- to lean on, and I will never have to look very far for someone to eat ice cream with.