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Pearl Comfort Fisher, A Wrightwood Woman

her words from her book
"The Wrightwood Women"

Of me, Gil -- my dynamic Aryan husband -- says, "Pearl's really a feminist at heart. But married to me she's never had a chance!"

Well, be that as it may, my twin sister Betty and I were both born in Chicago, Illinois 10th generation Americans. When we were five years old our father resigned as an auditor for the Illinois Central Railroad to move to New York City with the position of Auditor of Agency Accounts for the American Railway Express Company. This position kept him traveling extensively. It also entitled Betty and me to our own railroad passes and we traveled all over the nation. When we were twelve we were permitted to travel on our own with the train conductors being held responsible for our safety.

I was a sickly child, spending several months a year in bed and keeping up with my school work at home. I read voraciously, everything I could get hold of. My first published story appeared in our Mount Vernon High School magazine when I was thirteen.

Then our father went to the Burlington Adding Machine Company to pioneer in transferring railroad payrolls to machines, the forerunners of computers, The Great Depression put an end to that and we moved back to Chicago. I hated the 3000-pupil school we attended there and made little effort to adjust to it. We graduated when we were sixteen and were lucky enough to get jobs when millions of men couldn't. Mine was as a Christmas extra at Dennison's. I climbed the ladder and when I left ten years later I was executive secretary to the manager.

Meanwhile I married Gilbert William Fisher, a giant of a young man who introduced me to an exciting new life. After our children, Janis and William John (Fish), were born we moved to the alien, incredible world of Southern California in 1945.



"Wrightwood Women"

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Pearl Comfort Fisher

We built a house in Bell Gardens and for 15 years were actively involved in community leadership, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, PTA, Sunday School teaching, Y-Teens, and so on and so on and so on --.

In 1956 I became Associate Editor for Nelson R. Crow Publications and spent a fascinating three years there until ill health forced me to leave it.

Then the City of Commerce came into being and our strip of Los Angeles County was incorporated into the City.

We got into politics. Gil was Chairman of the Recreation and Parks Commission and dedicated himself to having the City Council purchase a mountain camp so its young people could get off the streets at least once a year. I was Charter President-of the Women's Club of Commerce.

The City acquired the lease of Camp McKiwanis in Big Pines, the summer camp that had been Harry James' camp in the 1920's. One day in February of 1962 Gil asked me, "Want to move to the mountains?" He had retired from his job in Los Angeles and was to be the camp manager.

I was busily involved in my own life and definitely did not want to be rooted again! So I answered, "No!"

I should have known better. Every time I say "No, I won't!" I end up doing exactly the opposite. But I looked at the stars shining in Gil's eyes. And lost. It was a hectic week, trying to clear out the 7-room house in which we had lived for 15 years. Luckily our daughter and son-in-law Jan and Ron Barton agreed to move in and manage our rentals so I could leave the furniture and myriad other things. I had no idea what to take up to the mountains with me. Our son stayed below until he finished out the balance of his senior year at Bell Gardens High School.

So - on February 19, 1962, we moved during a blizzard into a dilapidated 12' x 30' summer cabin. No heat, no water, a minimum of electricity that kept going out. And snow, snow, snow! We melted it for household water, went into the Village gas stations to fill up jugs of drinking water, and had our showers at the Evergreen Motel due to the kindness of Fred and Florence Marshall, the owners. Six weeks later the Forest Service could dig down four feet through the melted snow banks to open our water valve.

Gil had two months to get our cabin habitable and another two months to rebuild the entire camp into an all-weather camp for the use of the children and families of the City of Commerce.

We knew no one when we moved up. But I have never known people who were so friendly and helpful. Every available man in the entire area came to work on the camp. And the women, bless their hearts! Gil joined the Timberline Lions Club and I, the Wrightwood Woman's Club. Our new friends kept us busy with dinners and bridge parties.

Our first campers were a group of teen-age boys with

juvenile records. Their leader resented everything he was asked to do that week. But Gil had been a Boy Scout leader for eight years and knew how to handle boys. By the end of the week the boy's shell of antagonism was cracking. Two years later he came up to see us, bringing his wife and baby to show to us. And he told us that when he had gone home after that week in camp he had got a job, married and never had got into trouble since! The stars shone again in Gil's eyes.

I had plenty of time to myself. And I started asking questions about the history of Big Pines and Wrightwood, questions that resulted in "The Mountaineers" being published later on. ("The Mountaineers" was the catalyst that influenced this editor to seek further information on Wrightwood history.)

In 1966 Gil left the camp and we moved into the Village and built our house. He became the "Village Plumber" and I worked on my "Historical Tours." For eight years I took the 5th grade on this 6-hour tour every October. When I became physically unable to do it any longer I wrote "A Trip Into Wrightwood 's Past" as a self-contained tour.

Meanwhile Gil was, in turn Secretary, Treasurer and President of the Lions Club. For eight years, also, he was chairman of the Directory Committee for the Lions and I did the editorial work. This literally took three months a year, full time to complete. We helped organize both the Episcopal Mission and the Lutheran Church in the Village. And our five grandchildren were born. Shelly and Ron Barton live in the Village. Holli, Misty and Stacy Fisher live in Troutdale, Oregon.

I've managed to drop out of most of my activities by now. My present memberships include the National League of American Pen Women of which I was the Founding President of the Wrightwood Branch; the Colonial Dames of the XVII Century, the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Wrightwood Area Cultural Organization. I also study with Marge McDermott on Wednesday mornings. And I'm honored to be listed in the 4th Edition of "World's Who's Who of Women" and the 11th Edition of "Who 's Who of American Women."

Oh, dear! I meant to write just a short "About the Author" (of "The Wrightwood Women") thing and got carried away! Sorry --