

Clute W. I. celebrates diamond anniversary

by Peggie Fitzpatrick

Members of the Clute Women's Institute had reason to celebrate Wednesday as many members gathered for a special dinner and social marking the club's diamond anniversary.

To celebrate the occasion, the regular monthly meeting was followed by a turkey dinner and social attended by 25 from the Clute Women's Institute and the visiting Hunta Women's Institute at the Northern Lites Motel.

Edith Stiles, the only member today who was present at the club's inaugural meeting 60 years ago, recalled, "It seems like such a short time ago when 15 women in the neighbourhood gathered for our first meeting in the old school." Reading from the first meeting's minutes September 2, 1924 prepared by her sister Vera, she described the purpose of the Institute and the installation of its first president, Mrs. R.A. Dodds.

Guest speakers

Following the dinner, two guest speakers spoke on topics of interest to Institute members. Northland Post editor Peggie Fitzpatrick spoke on communication and how members could publicize their activities through a regular press release following each meeting. "When writing a story for the paper, write it for everyone to read, not

only members," she urged. "Get the most important event of the meeting in the first sentence regardless of where it appeared on the agenda."

Following Fitzpatrick's talk, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food rural organization specialist Rita Vanden Heuvel spoke on nutritional problems in Ethiopia. Using a slide presentation prepared while she served in that east African country from 1980-1982, she profiled the primitive Gedeo tribe emphasizing their dietary deficiencies, diseases, and social customs. "There's no women's lib in that country—in fact there is little liberation of any type," she said.

Vanden Heuvel said she and two Canadian nurses were there to find out what diseases were prevalent and set up nutritional programs for young girls and the women to follow. After much work with native people to find out the best approach to changing habits, she said she experienced a great amount of success showing a group of young girls and some women how to use available leaves, meats, and spices to their best advantage. "At first they seemed more interested in the sewing part of the program and I had to use this as an incentive to get them to look after the nutritional part first."

Staple foods

The country's staples are the wasa leaf which is about 99 per cent carbohydrate and coffee served with salt and ginger.

Before the wasa is eaten, it is made into a flour-like substance and either eaten plain or mixed with other foods.

When the Canadians arrived, there was a period of 'socialization' whereby they, and two Italian missionaries, worked to blend their ideals with the primitive culture.

The Gedeo culture is patriarchal whereby the sons build huts around that of the father. "The daughters are not considered valuable in a family because they move to their husband's area and start a family there." Vanden Heuvel said girls marry at about 12 years of age and are often one of many wives for a man.

She said the elderly are looked after by the sons. "If an older person has no son and can't look after himself, then he starves." It is for this reason many families give away their extra sons as babies so as few as possible elderly people will end up with no one.

Certain taboos prevent men from watching women cook meals. "All food is prepared in a secluded area and served to the men who are viewed with respect." Because the women do most of the hard work, the men sit around and make peace. "The tribe hates war and much time is spent bargaining and negotiating when they disagree over something." Other work they do is build the hut and maybe plant the garden. Preparation of the land is done by the women and also the care required by the garden.

Wishing well coming

Vanden Heuvel said tuberculosis is rampant because of the dampness and improper preventative measures. Scabies and leprosy infect many as well. To combat these diseases, the nurses found themselves working closely with local witch doctors in whom natives place their trust. "Often the patients would come to us on their own after they realized the witch doctor's method didn't work."

She said she went to Trinidad for a three-week crash course in the problems of third world countries before going to Ethiopia. Now, Vanden Heuvel works with 4-H groups in the northeastern area teaching nutrition and other elements of homemaking.

Following Vanden Heuvel's talk, Charlotte Johnson presented a brief slide show on the history of Clute.

At the meeting preceding the dinner, Johnson said they discussed local participation in a United Nations project, "Clean water for all". She said the world organization of women's institutes is dedicated this year to helping improve water supplies and sanitation in third world countries. "We will soon be setting up a wishing well that will move from one location to another in Cochrane and encourage anyone to throw in coins," she said. The locations are not yet known but Canada's institutes are asked to contribute a total of \$50,000.