



Mrs. Herbert K. Maluske,
President the
Federated
Women's Institutes of
Ontario

The President's Corner

Dear W.I. Members:

On the western prairies in the old frontier days fleetness of foot was a highly prized skill among the native Indians. Not only did swift running win honours in tribal games, but it was a proven asset in the Indian way of life.

Young boys eager to attain speed and endurance asked the older men of the tribe how best to achieve their goal. The old Sioux told the youngsters to go out every summer and cover their hearts with the colourful dust of butterfly wings. Yes, it was that simple—but the one thing the elders would not do was to supply the wings. Each boy had to catch his own butterflies.

Any one who has ever spent part of his childhood in a neighbourhood where he, too, chased butterflies across the fields knows what that meant. Those who caught butterflies summer after summer became excellent runners.

For two weeks this summer many of us sat enthralled as the feats of the Games of the XXI Olympiad evolved before our very eyes. I could not help but marvel at how those athletes and participants had covered their hearts with the colourful dust of butterfly wings in order to achieve their goals and win the coveted honours.

Somewhere here, I thought, must be an applicable lesson for everyone. Aren't we all in a game—the game of life? How do we run our races or perform our feats in order to achieve? I agree there is only one Nadia Comaneci or Kornelia Ender or Nancy Garapick or Tatiana Kazankina. But each one of us likewise is an individual, unique in her own personal way. Each has her own standards, her own goals and her own code of ethics. How she trains, disciplines and prepares herself makes the ultimate difference.

What about those who seem to get so much zest out of living—so much enjoyment out of an Institute Meeting, a District Annual, a Food Forum, a Tweedsmuir Tea, a Workshop, a Senior Project, an Area or National Convention? Is it because they have given so much that they seem to be always on the receiving end? Or have they been catching butterflies day by day dusting their hearts with the fruits of friendship thereby reaping the rewards of their benevolent giving?

How do we give? Wilfred A. Peterson expressed it thusly in his article on *THE ART OF GIVING*

We give of ourselves when we give gifts of the heart: love, kindness, joy, understanding, sympathy, tolerance, forgiveness.

We give of ourselves when we give gifts of the mind: ideas, dreams, purposes, ideals, plans, principles, inventions, projects, poetry.

We give of ourselves when we give gifts of the spirit: prayer, vision, beauty, aspirations, peace, faith.

We give of ourselves when we give gifts of words: encouragement, inspiration guidance.

Emerson said it well: "Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only true gift is a portion of thyself."

I've heard the sentiment expressed so often, "No one ever wants to go to anything beyond the Branch Meeting. We have such a problem in our Branch trying to get a delegate to attend a District Annual or a Convention."

When I hear this I am always reminded of the story, The Worm that lived on a Persian Rug. It is from a Sunday School textbook, The Old Testament For Us, written by G. K. Wiencke and C. M. Cooper and used with permission of Lutheran Church Press.

"This worm was very susceptible to changes in colour. Yellow made him feel glad and gay; red made him angry; green turned his stomach upside down; purple aroused feelings of deep sadness; blue tapped the sources of courage inside him. As he wandered over his rug-world, the worm's feelings changed often, but he never knew why.

Then one day the worm spun around himself a cocoon and went to sleep. When he awoke, he found himself no longer a worm; he was a butterfly. Nor was he limited to crawling over his rug-world; he could fly above it. And when he did that, he discovered his old home was not a senseless succession of hues that alternately made him sick or well, sad or glad. The hues combined into a single, beautiful design."

Something like that can happen to Women's Institute members too, once they find a way to look over the whole setup of the organization and discover that the many parts and projects combine into a singularly attractive pattern.

So besides catching butterflies let us also become butterflies and leave our restricting rug-world to experience the great view we can have while serving others not only at Branch level but also at the higher levels of District and Area.

William Wordsworth, "To A Butterfly".

"Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days
The time, when, in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey:—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her, feared to brush
The dust from off its wings."

It is my earnest desire that it never be said of any Women's Institute member that she is reluctant to cover her heart with the dust of butterfly wings as she seeks the common weal, the good of all mankind.

Verna A. Maluske