

It was a happy November day in 1968 when I became President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. The opportunity was now there on behalf of the Women's Institute members in Ontario to work with Miss Helen McKercher.

The members were urging FWIO to purchase the Erland Lee Home, which meant the \$40,000.00 purchase price must be raised; the handbook was to be rewritten; the Ontario Women's Institute story would be published; plans had to be completed for the 75th Anniversary, so all would be in readiness for the succeeding president. The work load was heavy but the burden was lightened because Miss McKercher was always there.

Many hours were spent in her office, discussing the best methods, really "talking things over." One thing I learned so quickly: "no man is an island", nothing is gained working alone. Just as many hands make light work, many minds make wiser and better decisions. Miss McKercher constantly challenged all to use their minds.

She was always anxious that the members present a good image, continually motivating and constantly prodding us to raise our personal standards and in turn the standards of the Women's Institute would benefit.

The familiar words after attending a Convention, "Let's keep that speaker in mind for Officers' Conference" or "that standing convener would make a good Provincial Board Director or Standing Convener some day." And invariably, "Weren't you proud of the way the Area executive handled the Convention?" However, at times I've heard Miss McKercher say, "that's not good enough, nobody put any work into it." You could bet on it, next year everybody tried harder.

Her philosophy was so basic. Take time to do things now, don't put them off. How often we stopped to pay a short visit with an Institute member while travelling from one Convention to another. Miss McKercher always said, "Margaret, we've got to do these extra things now, we've got to take advantage of every opportunity every day of our lives." She always felt there should be enjoyment in connection with work.

She knew all about the workings of the Women's Institute and would take time to tell about the background of FWIO, the scholarships, investments, anything to help a Provincial President, with an interchange of ideas. She personally knew all the FWIC Presidents, ACWW's Mrs. Drage (the instigator of Pennies for Friendship) and Mrs. Alfred Watt, so it was little wonder that she was a tower of strength to me as President.

Now with the new luxury of time to enjoy your home and friends, may your retirement be as meaningful and rewarding as you have found life to be during your working career. Happy retirement!

*Margaret Zoeller*

What a grand lady.

When I look back over the past 26 years as a Charter Member of Bloomingdale Women's Institute, the name of Miss McKercher has been one that our Branch has held in high esteem, especially when she consented to come to our 25th Anniversary and speak to us. Yes, she is a person, when you heard her speak, you perked up your ears and listened, and remembered.

I can recall Miss McKercher saying the following at a Guelph Area Convention, "Young women today want to start out with so many things when preparing for marriage. They want their crystal, the best china, and sterling silver. When you drop in for a visit and a cup of coffee, they serve it to you in a mug." Her point, of course, was "Where are our values".

Believe you me, when she came to my home, I got out my best china to serve her that cup of coffee, and her graciousness helped you enjoy her company.

The reason we often had a cup of coffee together, is because we held many Officers' Conference Committee meetings at my home. There were three reasons for this. 1. There were fewer miles of travel for the executive, and this saved us money. 2. All Officers' Conference records were kept at my home (a room full, as the present Officers' Conference Secretary-Treasurer, Grace Campbell will vouch for), 3. We had a bit of fun too.

Out of these meetings came your Officers' Conference. To me, it is one of the most valued learning experiences that we have provided as a Provincial Organization.

It has given thousands of W.I. members an opportunity to learn, share, and gain enthusiasm to carry on in their local Branches. In other words, a renewal Conference.

Miss McKercher made many things possible for these Conferences, with her knowledge, her willingness to always lend a hand, and know the answers when I had a problem. She added that extra spark that you need to kindle a project.

She believed in developing leadership. "A good leader does not do everything herself" she would say.

My first executive meeting held at the F.W.I.O. Office, in Toronto, six years ago, was an experience I will never forget. There sat Miss McKercher, Margaret Zoeller, Mary Miller, Florence Diamond, Ilda Holder (Past Officers' Conference Secretary Treasurer) and myself (Eileen Small was unable to attend).

WOW, was I scared.

But with that look from Miss McKercher "You can do it", and "I have confidence in you" attitude, she helped me to develop and carry on for those six years.

As we worked together so closely, these are some of the things she passed along to me.

1. You can do it—NOW (promptness was a real thing with her)

2. I'm here if you need me attitude (and I did)  
I will always treasure her friendship, and wish her the best in her retirement. Yes, Miss McKercher, as I have said many times "That's the way it is."

*Irene Weber*