

Transitions are never easy

We've barely said "hello" and already it's time to say "good-bye."

My four months as Acting Editor of **Home & Country** come to a close as Carol Stewart-Kirkby returns from her maternity leave on January 6.

It didn't seem right, however, to leave without a few parting words. Preparing the Fall 1985 and Winter 1986 editions of **Home & Country** have been enjoyable challenges for me. Should the truth be known, I have found reading and writing about WI issues to be both educational and exciting, and I shall follow your progress with great interest in the coming years.

In light of the many changes that were recommended by the Committee on Women's Institutes of the Future, it might be appropriate to pause and reflect upon the positive side of life changes, in general.

Last summer, I took a course at the University of Guelph entitled "Forks In The Road: Life Transitions and Choices." The course was led by Dr. Sam Luker, a family life and adult education specialist, and I will remain forever grateful to him for helping me understand the process of change — and why endings and a period of transition are necessary before we can get on with our new beginnings.

Being a journalist, I naturally made extensive notes during Professor Luker's lectures. A classmate (Holly Andrews of Puslinch) and I later combined our notes into manuscript form. The following are excerpts from that manuscript, which I hope you will find helpful as the WI enters the period of transition that is so necessary between endings and new beginnings.

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"Transitions are those key moments when we seem to be on the threshold of something new in our lives. We are filled with a strange mixture of sadness, disorientation, impending doom — but also a promise of a new and exciting life... With every change, there is a natural process of disorientation and reorientation that marks a turning point in our lives. Why then do we have such difficulty in making changes when we

Editorial

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know that change is inevitable? Why do we flounder and fumble so much? Must there be so much struggle and pain? After all, the only constant is change.

In Chinese, the ideographs for danger and opportunity are combined to form the symbol for *crisis*. Almost always in a transition — in any major life change — the two components of danger and opportunity are present. We must be sure to look at both sides...

Too often we try to rush headlong through a transition (often doing unhealthy things) or we try to hark back to "the good old days." We simply do not allow the *process of transition* to occur.

What is the process of transition?

One of the reasons we are so puzzled by transitions is that each one starts with an *ending*. Remember: we cannot have new blossoms in the spring without the fall and winter. Each transition begins with the death of an old way of life. We have so much trouble because we don't fully accept that the process begins with an ending and we cling fiercely to old habits. You cannot, however, hang onto the old and grasp the new at the same time!

Professor Luker calls the next part of the change process "*the neutral zone*." This, he says, is a period of confusion, anxiety, doubts and stress. We are in transition! There is more

than the negative side of pain and anxiety, though. There is also a necessary period of growth — without it we cannot make a healthy new beginning. Transitions take time. Unfortunately, a lot of us have a somewhat confusing view of the process of transition. We tend to look upon it as something akin to crossing Highway 401. Once we get to the median, we are frozen in indecision. Do we go back where we started from? Or do we risk the danger of oncoming traffic and complete the crossing? Some of us will dart across, some will cross more cautiously, but we will cross eventually. We can take our time and take stock of the situation, but we *must* go on. We *can* prepare for it, realize what's going on, retain our optimism, and learn to handle things in a more positive way.

Only after we have worked through the endings and successfully traversed the neutral zone can we *begin* in a healthy way. While we are stumbling around in "the neutral zone", we are actually clearing the way and laying the foundation for our *new beginning*. This is a more tranquil stage — where we move from a rough passage into some smooth sailing..."

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I am confident smooth sailing lies ahead for the Women's Institute. My parting wish for you in the transition from the old way to the new is that the passage in between be a positive experience from which all will grow and benefit.

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INSIDE JWI- FWIO Dialogue



There seems to be a lot of confusion about the similarities and differences that exist between the JWIO and the FWIO. In an attempt to help readers better understand the two WI groups, **Home & Country** interviewed JWIO president Marion Koepke and FWIO president Charlotte Johnson. The results appear in dialogue format on pages 12 and 13.

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