

WI catches the clean-up bug!

It was a handy place to throw out garbage, just toss it into the scrubby ditch and our dog would sniff out any edibles to bring to our lawn for a leisurely pick-over. Originally, as was the way with roads laid out with regard to nice rectangular fields, this was a right angle. While still a gravel road, it was rounded a bit, for cars, and again when it was called a highway, it was rounded even more and cement covered.

Would you believe the highway was redrawn once again, this time leaving a whole triangular field, and this mess of neglected corner, half a mile west of Renfrew!

Then came centennial year, 1967, and all groups and individuals were behooved to do something memorable to mark the occasion. Our Women's Institute (Bonnechere Valley) cast about in vain for a feasible project until finally, partly in jest, I wished we would clean up this rejected spot, so our dog would stop presenting us with packages of used tea bags and eggshells — dead groundhogs were already more than we wanted on our doorstep!

It was a measure of our desperation that the suggestion was adopted. A meeting with the township council gained their approval and encouragement.

There was a fair bit of undergrowth and shrubbery, so some of our "auxiliary" (husbands) brushed this our beneath the trees, and there the project rested for some time, disturbed now and then by a guilty twinge on my part. After all, I could see it, when I could bear to look.

Jean Elliot



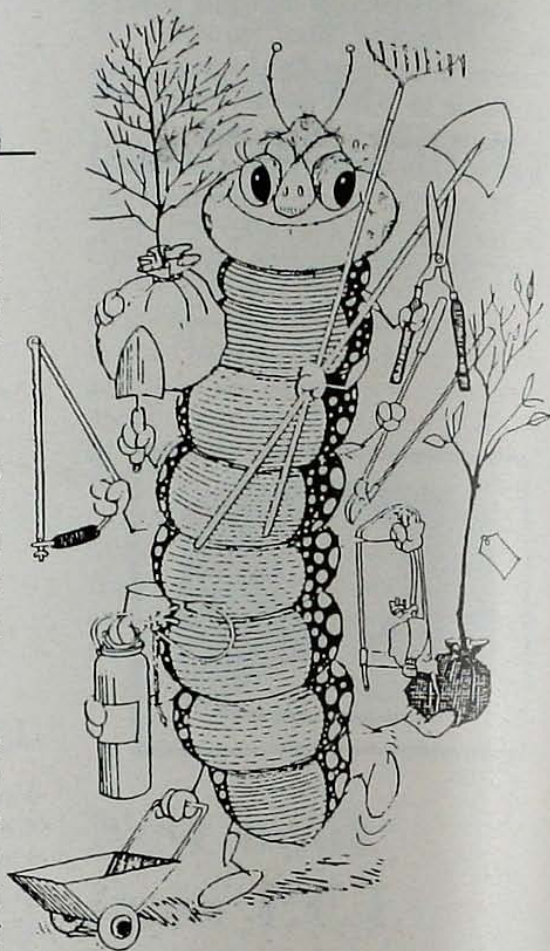
The difficulty was we needed a lot of fill and hauling fill costs money and Women's Institutes are not noted for their affluence.

Oh, a few stray loads looking for a home were dumped, weeds and grass cut once a year, and the corner seemed to forget it was supposed to mark a centennial.

Then, along the lines of the "ill wind" epigram, the hotel in Renfrew burned down. Time passed, until a trust company bought the site and proceeded to build. There was a lot of rubbish, bricks, cement slabs, pipes, wires, whatever, and a large amount of hard clay that was dug out. One member was quick enough to ask them to dump it in "our corner", beautifully free, and everybody happy. There were some derogatory remarks from passers-by, but they lacked the vision!

We hired a small bulldozer that pushed and flattened the wreckage into some order, had some sandy loam spread on top, and we were in business.

About this time, just to check, we wrote to the department of highways asking if they had any claim or interest in this cast-off corner. They assured us it was a worthy project, no objections, but no picnic tables or trash cans either from them.



Four picnic tables were set up, a lawn mower bought, and a person hired to keep the grass cut and garbage removed. Our project, started 20 years ago, has been used by many tourists, by truckers having lunch, and by people just stopping at a quiet, shady place off the highway.

Our present dog has, I'm sure, discovered the garbage can, but contents herself with scattering paper containers about. Or would it be raccoons?

Jean Elliot is a member of Bonnechere Valley WI.