
A Message From Your President

It is now 1990, and we stand together on the brink of the 21st Century. As we peer out into the unknown, as Women's Institute members we should have no fear of the future, for we stand firmly on the foundations of our past.

As your new Provincial President, I am keenly aware of the long line of women who have worn the badge of this office and served with courage and distinction. Through two World Wars, the Great Depression, the dawn of the Atomic and Space Ages, they led us with foresight, confidence and wisdom. A proud tradition, which as the first President to come to office from the chair of President-Elect, I shall try, in my own small way, to continue.

Where I live, in close proximity to Lake Ontario, wedges of Canada geese are already winging their way overhead on their spring migration. As I watch, I wonder if there are lessons for us. For like us, Canada geese have a system of organization with lines of strength and communication. They choose the direction in which they will move, trust their leader to have vision and the ability to guide them to new goals beyond the horizon, and then, they harness all their collective energies to accomplish what they set out to do. Although they adhere to age-old flight paths, they still allow each goose-family the freedom to choose their final destination, and how they will fit into their new environment.

The flock wisely knows when to rest and replenish their energies, where to nourish their bodies, and how to gather their strength.

Although the greatest responsibility rests with the leader, at the apex of that beautiful flying wedge, it is also a shared leadership. Ornithologists tell us that each goose in the flight moves up by turn, leading the way and breaking the

Peggy Knapp



wind. Strength is necessary all along the line, but provision is made for the young and the weak to play an easier, yet essential, role. Each is allowed to develop perseverance and leadership skill, until they are ready to move to a more responsible position within the group.

Migrating geese are a familiar sight in many parts of our world, and only in Hawaii is there a goose that remains forever homebound on its own beautiful islands. The Nene goose, we are told, is a mutation of the Great Canada Goose. No one knows how its ancestors reached those little islands far out in the Pacific Ocean, nor how long it took for it to adapt to its salt-water and mountainous surroundings. It changed its color, developed claws, and never again sought the long airways leading to the North or South. It developed its own survival tactics; it conformed to new priorities; it set new parameters; it adapted to new conditions; and, it accepted the challenge of great change. It survived. It more than survived; it created a new world for itself.

Are there parallels in our organization? Is the WI — like the Great Canada and Nene goose — a survivor? An innovator? A direction-finder? A closely-knit family? Do we, too, address the needs of the strong and the weak? Do we adapt to change? Do we develop leaders with the potential to reach new horizons?

We have just concluded our Winter series of Leadership Workshops for representatives from each of Ontario's 14 FWIO Areas and the Junior Women's Institute. Leadership development is one of the mandates of

the Women's Institute. And the 1990 Workshops represent Phase 2 of a series of three, that will not only offer training for leadership roles in our organization, but in our communities and beyond. Phase 1 in 1989, "Visions for Volunteers," trained Area leaders in "How to Organize a Workshop." Phase 2, just completed, dealt with the "Forms, Facts and Figures" used to link our organization together through a chain of command. Phase 3 scheduled for January 1991, entitled "May I Present ...," will involve two more representatives from Area level, this time learning presentation and promotional skills.

The Provincial Board Directors are committed to this Leadership Development Program until 1991. The goal of these Provincial Workshops is that the two leaders who attend will then disseminate their knowledge and organize workshops for members at Area level. Area level members can then organize training sessions for District members, who can afterward transfer their training and skills on to local Branches. Be sure to watch for those workshops affecting you. Do attend; not only for "Forms, Facts and Figures," but for Fun and Fellowship too.

Like the Great Canada Goose, our strengths develop through training and the use of our resources. Through our system of networking, we rely on each other, take our turn as leaders, and strike out in new directions, facing the challenges which lie just beyond the horizon.

As your new Provincial President, I look forward to leading our flight into this last decade of the 20th century. But, in the words of the songwriter: "You are the wind beneath my wings."

Peggy Knapp
President, FWIO