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# FWIO President's Perspectives

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"In this very hour, when war drums are beating and the battle cry is heard, no one wants war; all want peace. We have sought it in pacts, in leagues, in alliances, in changes of systems, in economic and disarmament conferences, but all in vain. War has been declared.

Commentators in different countries have said that there is a reluctance on the part of nations to go to war. Public opinion, through the dissemination of information, has been shaped for peace. Common sense demanded it in order to carry out constructive plans for the progress of mankind."

These words are a direct quotation from the Fall issue of **Home & Country**, 1939!. But they might have been written in January 1991, for as surely as in 1939, our country and her people are at war.

As President of a province-wide organization of women, could I have made a difference? Could we have helped to turn back the tide of this new war? Those questions troubled me throughout a sleepless

night. But the thoughts became crystallized upon a call from one of our members. "Do something," she said.

Following telephone calls to each member of our Provincial Executive, I sent the following message to our Prime Minister, and the Ministers of External Affairs and National Defence, on the morning of January 15, as Parliament was assembling in Ottawa:

"The twenty thousand members of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario have been following events in the Persian Gulf throughout this serious crisis, and commend our Government for pursuing diplomatic channels in search of solutions.

May we urge you to continue to search out all possibilities for peace, and with the other members of the United Nations Coalition, extend the sanctions against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, so that the terrors of full-fledged war may not set loose the force of arms again in our world."

We did not change the outcome. But on behalf of twenty thousand women across Ontario, we did do something.

"Women and the Environment," our focus for this decade is all about the three environments of special concern to women: personal development, care for the family and community around us, and preservation of the global ecology that surrounds and involves us in a world community. All three environments seem threatened by today's events. For the first time in our history, fifty-six Canadian women are serving in the front lines with our Canadian Armed Forces. Upon their safe return, they, and we, will re-dedicate our efforts to the pursuit of peace. For when the conflict is over, as it will be, the issues of freedom and justice will need our experienced and skilful leadership and involvement.

As in 1939, our women will rise to the challenges.

*Peggy Knapp,  
President, FWIO*

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## "On A Snowy December Day"

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Eight years ago, on a snowy December day, I made a trip from Oakville (where we were living at the time) to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) Offices at 801 Bay Street, Toronto.

There I was interviewed for a nine-month contract as Editor of **Home & Country** by two OMAF employees and the then FWIO President, Janet Hiepleh. Because of the weather, Janet couldn't make it to Toronto, so I talked to her through a speaker telephone. Needless to say, I remember it being awkward because I kept forgetting Janet was there! Every once in a while a voice would emerge from the box on the desk to remind me of her presence.

On January 24, 1983, I made my first trip to Guelph as Editor of **Home & Country**. Many things have happened

since then. My husband and I moved from Oakville to Milton. As well, we added two boys to our family. Now, some other things have happened to change the direction of our lives.

Some of you already know my family and I moved to Niagara Falls last January. My husband is taking over his family's business there. Because of the distance from Niagara Falls to Guelph, it became very difficult to keep working in Guelph. On December 31, I handed in my resignation to the ministry.

It was not an easy decision. This job has been full of interesting opportunities, exciting rewards, and many wonderful people, including the Women's Institute members I have met over the last eight years. It is hard, very hard, to say farewell.

Fortunately, I have many fond

memories of you and your organization, as well as some more tangible evidence of my time with you. (I have a Halton District and Erland Lee Home plate on the wall in my kitchen, plus several cups and saucers and other mementos in my china cabinet.)

I would like to say thank you for all those times and as well for a lovely book, **In a Canadian Garden**, which was given to me on your behalf by FWIO President Peggy Knapp. I will be interested to watch how your organization flourishes over the next few years, especially as the excitement builds towards your centennial. I would also like to invite you to drop by if you are in Niagara Falls in the future. We are in the telephone directory!

*Carol Stewart-Kirkby*