

# Conference '96 - "Family and Community in Partnership"

By Nola Tait

From July 12 to 14, the Southwestern Area Women's Institute hosted the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) Conference '96 at Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology. About 260 Institute members, including spouses and friends, from across Ontario gathered for the summer conference.

"The Back Roads to History Tour" began on Friday afternoon. Buses left for Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site near Dresden and The Oil Museum of Canada in Oil Springs. For late comers, a self-guided walking tour of the College Grounds or wagon rides around the campus had been organized.

After a beef supper on Friday evening, Conference '96 was officially opened with a parade of flags. Addresses by the FWIO President, Marg Harris, the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC) President, Charlotte Johnston, and the Associated Country Women of the World Area President for Canada, Peggy Knapp, followed. Several local dignitaries also brought words of welcome and good wishes to the Women's Institute.

Irene Tennant, a Junetown WI member from Eastern Ontario, brought laughter to the crowd as "Dizzie Lizzie," her alter persona, presented a monologue about gardening.

On Saturday morning, Mary Janes, Provincial Public Relations Officer and Chair of the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee, along with other members of the Executive, presented a skit introducing the new focus. Members are continually looking for new ways to keep their communities "safe and healthy." Participants were asked to imagine themselves floating above their community. They were asked what they saw, what improvements they would like to see, and what it might be like in the year 2020. The answers to these questions they were told, depends on us.

The Companion Tours to a mushroom plant, an antique display, the John E. Smith orchard and Point Pelee National Park departed Saturday morning. The afternoon was filled with a variety of workshops; each registrant chose two of the ten workshops offered. A great turkey banquet followed the busy Saturday afternoon. And guest speaker Alec Henry entertained the gathering with many funny tales of life.

Pat Milliken, Farm and Rural Resource

*"I will take home fifty pounds of knowledge, and twenty pounds of meals!"*

- Conference '96 Participant

Minister with the United Church of Canada, was the guest speaker at an interfaith service on Sunday morning. She used her gift of story telling to make it a special occasion. Conference '96 closed with a plenary session, with Marg Harris, FWIO President, speaking.

Nola Tait was a member of the Conference '96 Planning Committee and is a member of the Aughrim Women's Institute in Lambton South District.



Joan King (left), Chair of the Conference '96 Committee, and Donna McGuire (right), Conference '96 Committee member and Curator/Manager of The Oil Museum of Canada in Oil Springs, are pictured above awaiting the departure for "The Back Roads to History Tour."



Conference participants are pictured above learning "The Art of Candle Making," just one of the ten workshops offered.

These workshop participants had many questions about car maintenance as they peered under the hood.