



## From the Heart

By  
Marg  
Harris

From the start, my term as your President was thrust into full speed; it began with a flurry of meetings. At all these events, I was well received because I represented you - the members - and because the Women's Institute is a respected organization.

As a leader in our communities, the Women's Institute was invited to attend and provide insight into government initiatives and emerging policies. I participated at meetings with the Recycling Council of Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). Mary Janes, the Public Relations Officer for the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, and I promoted "Safe and Healthy Communities" at the "Sustainable Communities Forum" organized by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Because FWIO was an initial contributor to the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP), I attended the annual meeting of the Foundation for Rural Living, whose key role in support of AALP is fund raising. And, Margaret Eberle and I attended Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's workshop to develop future plans for the Farm Women's Bureau.

The phone lines were also busy. Maisie Lasby was contacted to represent FWIO on

the Strategic Planning Committee of Ontario's Rural Heritage Preservation Committee (ORHPC). This group was recently formed to explore options for the future of the Ontario Agricultural Museum (OAM) in Milton. Our organization has a direct stake in the future of the Museum because of Mountview Hall and the long-standing support of Women's Institute volunteers. For the first time FWIO was asked to have a Director on the Foundation for Rural Living; I asked Laurine McIntosh to fill this position.

I wasn't far down the road, however, when I came to a full STOP! My first - ever - gall bladder attack lasted five hospital-days and did not go away. It resulted in Saturday night emergency surgery and a longer hospital stay. My husband Bud had undergone gall bladder surgery in October. We now have matching scars from the incisions. Although an extremely weakening experience, we are both coming along well.

The FWIO Executive meeting was held on January 15 and 16; it entailed much correspondence, much discussion and much soul searching about what is best for our organization. The eagerness with which the Executive met challenges was wonderful. I acknowledge their time and admire their energy and input. I am constantly amazed and gratified by the work done by all our committees.

You have sent me copies of your letters to the Restructuring Committee. I am grateful that you are thinking about the future of the Women's Institute.

In mid-January, a Proposal Writing Workshop was attended by members who can now use the knowledge gained, for example, to write effective fund raising proposals for WI projects. And in late January, a Personnel Committee and Staff Workshop was facilitated by Lera Ryan, Rural Business Consultant with OMAFRA. She guided us through the steps we must follow to have a harmonious, efficient and effective working environment in our Provincial Office. The process made us aware of the changes in our organization in the last few years. We all appreciated Lera's expertise and guidance and we value the professionalism that our staff shows on our behalf.

As your President, I am aware of the need to promote and market our organization. I know the value of networking and personal contact. I attend, whenever possible, events where FWIO's profile can be enhanced. We are invited to these meetings because we are seen as a viable force. Our opinions are valued. We need to know what is happening, today and in the future. So, we go!

As Branch members we have often asked, how do others perceive the Women's Institute and how can we increase the visibility of the organization? The FWIO Executive and Board of Directors also regularly ask these questions and assess how they can best be answered. Our answer is in self-promotion and in public relations. Women's Institute members willingly lend their time and talents and have rightfully earned their reputations as some of the most forward thinking, active group of "doers" in their communities. I thank each one of you for this.

*Marg Harris is the President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. She can be reached at RR 3, Kerwood ON N0M 2B0, Phone: (519)247-3695, Fax: (519)247-3921.*

## Silver Thoughts, Golden Words and a Nickel's Worth of Stories

The sale of Volume 2 of *Silver Thoughts, Golden Words and a Nickel's Worth of Stories* is going well. In appearance it is identical to Volume 1, except that it bears the FWIO 100th anniversary logo on the cover. It contains more prose than poetry, which makes the two-volume set a great gift.

The money from the sale of Volume 1, made possible by the cooperation of all our members, enabled the Eastern Ontario Area to pay for the printing of Volume 2, donate \$12,000 to the Headquarters Fund, make substantial donations to ACWW and help smaller projects within the Area. Income from the sale of this new Volume will enable us to further assist WI projects at all levels.

Copies are available from Eda Van der Linden: RR 1, Metcalfe ON K0A 2P0, (613)821-1936. The book costs \$10, plus \$3 for postage and handling for one copy; add 50 cents for every additional copy. Make cheques payable to the Eastern Ontario WI Poetry Committee.

*Submitted by Bernice Noblitt, Leitrim WI, Carleton East District.*



*The Eastern Ontario WI Poetry Committee are pictured above: standing from left to right are Vivian Fawcett, Peggy McLeod and Eda Van der Linden; seated from left to right are Venetia Moorhouse, Erma Bennet and Bernice Noblitt.*