



Notes from Down Under

By Valerie Fisher

I lived in Melbourne, the capital city of Victoria, Australia, until I married and went to live on my husband's family farm at Barnawartha on the border of New South Wales and Victoria. Barnawartha is a mixed farming area, situated near Australia's largest river, the Murray. This was in 1952.

During this year a neighbour invited me to attend the inaugural meeting of the Barnawartha Branch of The Country Women's Association (CWA) of Victoria.

Over the years as a member of this Branch, I joined in the various activities - craft, drama and welfare work. I was particularly interested in working with the mentally ill.

I held various offices within my local Branch until being elected President of the local Area, thus becoming a member of the Council of CWA of Victoria. After six years in this capacity, I became President of the State of Victoria, and was then elected to be the President of The Country Women's Association of Australia.

During these years my interest in international work was aroused. I attended the 1962 World Conference of The Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) in Melbourne, Australia. Because I helped on one of the Conference committees, I met the World President and other officers, as well as members from my own South Pacific Area.

At the 1977 World Conference of ACWW

in Nairobi, I was elected President of the South Pacific Area of the world organization. And after six years in this position, I became Deputy World President and Chair of the World Development Project Committee.

Working in these capacities made me realize the wonderful work that the ACWW had accomplished over the years, and how forward thinking it had been in its work to help communities and families - through women and children - raise their standard of living. This has been achieved through education and improved health and nutrition. But also through practical, self-help development projects that are income generating and provide leadership training that could be used to have a multiplying effect.

I have had the privilege of seeing what has been achieved in various countries at the grass roots level, and also seeing the great difference these projects have made in the lives of so many families and communities.

The wonderful friendship and fellowship, the understanding of various cultures and the success of the many projects undertaken by ACWW supported by members throughout the World, the various funding agencies having faith in the ability of ACWW to carry out successful programs with limited funding - these are what bind the membership of ACWW together and has greatly impressed many people outside our organization over the years, including governments.

I believe this is largely because we work directly with people, responding to their needs, helping them to help themselves, building on what they know and have to improve their living conditions.

During my recent visit to Canada, I had the opportunity to travel across the country and meet many of our members. They showed tremendous interest in my sharing of experiences of visits I have made to other countries where ACWW has helped with development projects. Canada has been a great supporter of this ACWW work over a long period of time. I also had the opportunity to attend several conventions in various provinces and learn of the achievements made by the members through their work.

I sincerely appreciated the wonderful hospitality shown me throughout my visit, and greatly enjoyed the honour and privilege of visiting the homes of Erland Lee and Adelaide Hoodless. And I congratulate members for their dedication and care of these historic



Valerie Fisher (pictured above), President of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), is seated at the table where the constitution of the world's first Women's Institute was signed in 1897.

Photo Courtesy of the Farm & Country.

homes. Indeed, it was a great honour to plant a tree on the lovely grounds of the Hoodless Homestead. My whole Canadian experience was a great joy.

"The icing on the cake" was the granting of a wish of my lifetime which was to visit Avonlea of Anne of Green Gables fame on Prince Edward Island. A memory which will never be forgotten.

My heartfelt thanks to all members.

Valerie Fisher is the President of the Associated Country Women of the World.

Hospitality Homes

By Gillian Catto

There are now 140 Women's Institute members willing to host other members and their travelling companions for Bed and Breakfast at a nominal fee of \$10 per person per night. This great service has been in place for almost five years and I still get letters from members who have only just heard about it. Almost the whole of Ontario is now covered by this list.

This year, I have had quite a number of requests for the list from members planning their vacations, but I have no way of knowing how the visits have gone. Please write and tell me about your Hospitality Home experience. In return, I could write more interesting reports!

The list is available to any WI member at a cost of three 45 cent stamps, or you can photocopy it from your Board member who should also have a copy.

Gillian Catto is the Hospitality Homes Co-ordinator. You can write to her at Box 16, Site 14, RR 1, Whitefish, Ontario, P0M 3E0, or call her at (705)866-0253.



As President of the Associated Country Women of the World, Valerie Fisher speaks for eight million women around the world, but the first thing she does when she gets back home from an ACWW related trip is hop on her motorbike to go check on the sheep.