

Reach for the Stars

By Margaret Atkins

For three days the campus of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay was alive and buzzing with three hundred delegates registered for the conference on "Women in Their Environment." From all parts of Ontario, the FWIO members converged to share their personal environment and to attain personal growth and renewal by reaching for the stars. They shared their hopes and dreams with workshop leaders, the media and other WI delegates. They expanded the parameters of their lives by dedicating this time for personal growth and development. Smiles on every face, they departed feeling better about themselves, their future and their own environment.

The following outlines some of the three-day agenda:

☆ Friday, August 7, 1992

The first afternoon dealt with registration, viewing displays and exhibits, and networking in the hospitality suite - renewing past friendships and cultivating new ones.

Friday evening, Conference Chairperson Rose Green officially opened the FWIO Conference '92 - "Reach for the Stars" - by welcoming delegates and visitors from Australia, England and Mexico.

The keynote address by speaker Irby Stewart saluted our theme and invoked pride in all of us as he pointed out the five points of a STAR: Love your spouse; Love your children; Love all other people; Love Canada; and, Love yourself - you are special. He appealed to us to use five keys to success - think, choice, goals, attitude and enthusiasm - in our everyday life to achieve happiness.

A Finnish dance troop in traditional costume entertained the delegates. The first evening wrapped up with a fellowship tea.

☆ Saturday, August 8, 1992

Saturday morning began with a plenary session with Leila Pettigrew introducing the special guest speakers. Welcoming remarks and notes of interest were brought to the delegates by Mr. Joe Comuzzi, Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay-Nipigon, President Marcine James of



Northwestern Ontario WI, President Margaret Eberle of FWIO, President Jacquie Linde of FWIC, and Area President Peggy Knapp of ACWW.

"How High Do I Reach" was the topic of Maggie Milne. As a human resources development speaker, she focused on the needs of women today. She said that change is difficult, uncomfortable and frightening. That's why we resist. Maggie implied that as delegates to this conference, we had taken that first step towards our goal of reaching the stars, and that as willing participants we must embrace change.

After a short nutrition break, the eager participants made their way to the designated workshops. From "Rural Opportunities" with leader Claire Belluz through "Peak Performance Woman" led by Maxine Lorenston and into "Financial Discovery" with Donna Smith, the workshop leaders challenged the members to strive and develop those faculties and powers that reside in each one of us.

"Active Beauty" with resource leader Karen Elliott, "The New, Natural Look" with Donna Carew and "Looking Fabulous with What You Have" led by Joan Kalmala provided insight into the real you. These leaders inspired a powerful, uplifting and creative look at ourselves and stressed the importance of celebrating our differences and our uniqueness.

Following the luncheon, the Honourable Lyn McLeod spoke on "One Way to Reach the Stars." She suggested that as women there are no barriers to hold us back, only those that we construct. She said that we can achieve what we set our minds to do and that we can reach our potential aims with hard work and dedication. The luncheon program concluded with a fashion show featuring Canadian designers.

Afternoon workshops captured the attention of the delegates. For many it was their first experience with a back rub; their first look at themselves in a different light; and their first inkling that they can be and do what they choose in their special dream. They learned that the sky is the limit and that they, alone, are responsible for capturing their special star.

Following the banquet and entertainment of Highland dancing and a musical interlude with the Sweet Adelines, the delegates shared their day's thoughts with each other.

☆ Sunday, August 9, 1992

Sunday began with a worship service conducted by the Thunder Bay Junior Farmers. They reminded us of our youth, our expectations and our achievements. They gave us hope, belief and reason to see and think the best, for ourselves, our families and for our global village.

The wrap-up speaker was Maggie Milne who gave us an inspiring talk on the power of change. She told us of her journey to touch the stars and of her hopes that each one of us will, in our own way, reach, touch and hang on to our special star.

Closing remarks by Conference Chairperson Rose Green sent each one of us on our way, looking forward to the next conference in 1994 in Simcoe Area depicting the Family and Community Environment. We were advised that all possibilities are only limited by our static position and that to make changes, we must first open the door to CHANGE and REACH FOR THE STARS.

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