

Niagara District WI looking for plaque removed from Peace Bridge

By Gail McKinnell

→ A moment of silence was held to mark the passing of Honourary President Hilda Beachin by President Doryne Levere at a recent meeting of Niagara District Women's Institute (WI) at Cook's Mills Hall.

Ms. Beachin served as hostess and curator at the Erland & Janet Lee Museum for over 10 years, and supported Winger-Wainfleet and other WI branches for 60 years.

Members also expressed their appreciation to Barbara Wilkie for her outstanding success in facilitating the Hamilton Area FWIO convention hosted by Niagara District in October.

In reports from the local branches, Mary McCutcheon announced that Crowland WI will celebrate their 90th Anniversary on April 18th with a Tea at Cook's Mills Hall. They hope to release a new Anniversary Cookbook this month.

Margaret Booker, president of Winger-Wainfleet branch, reported that they will host the May 23rd Niagara District Annual at Forks Rd. East United Church.

With regret, Eva Simons stated that Stamford Women's Institute will disband this year, after 80 years of service to the Stamford area. For much of their history, they maintained the Memorial Hall, (now Lion's Hall), on Portage Road. The community centre was built thanks to thousands of dollars raised by volunteer canvassing efforts of the early Stamford WI members.

Niagara District will purchase 10 of the daring and unconventional calendars put out by the Rylstone United Kingdom W.I. Their now infamous calendar has raised over \$800,000 for leukaemia research in Britain.

Marion Egerter reported on plans for an Anniversary fund raiser in support of West Niagara Second-Stage Housing serving rural women and their children fleeing abusive situations. This "Card-and-Games" luncheon will be held at Fonthill United Church at 12:30 on February 18. The event coincides with the 103rd anniversary of the founding of the W.I.

District Lobbying Convener, Betty Macpherson introduced a resolution from Singer's Corners branch asking the Federated Women's Institute of Ontario (FWIO) to request the Education Ministry to reinstate an optional practical "hands-on" Grade 7/8 Family Studies course in the New Ontario Curriculum. Branch Lobbying Convener

Marion Egerter reported there is no longer any separate Grade 7/8 Family Studies Course outlined, yet over 50% of Grade 7/8 students still enjoy this training in centres such as Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa and Peel, served by Boards who have the resources and the will to continue this important program.

District and Area PRO Marion Egerter has been asked by FWIO President Christine Reaburn to continue the search, begun by Bev Jewson in 1966, for the large bronze plaque, placed on the parapet in the centre of the Peace Bridge, which commemorated the ACWW ceremony held there in April 1936, and attended by American and Canadian government dignitaries and rural women of both nations.

It was removed, possibly in the late 40s or 50s, and the Peace Bridge Authority claims they have no record of its whereabouts. Anyone with any information on the plaque removal is asked to contact Egerter at 905-892 2808 or Bev Jewson of Fort Erie.

Christine Raeburn noted that FWIO, which presently favours labelling of genetically modified foods, was represented at a recent International conference on GM foods. She reported that Professor Douglas Powell, of the University of Guelph, has stated that during their 10 years of exhaustive research on genetically modified crops they have failed to anticipate the current reaction, and now realize they should have kept the public better informed.

Marion Egerter tabled her position paper on this subject, which is available to any Branch, in favour of a careful and cautious support of this valuable technology, currently attacked often more for political reasons than scientific arguments.

She also noted that these attacks are hurting our Canadian farmers who can be shut out of foreign markets by protectionist trade partners who use high farm subsidies to support their farmers, and who welcome this controversy to advance their own sales.

The next District Board meeting will be held this month at Cook's Mills Hall on March 27 at 1:30. The annual picnic is set for Erie Beach on June 15.