

Mount Elgin member recalls stories in Institute book

By LINDSAY OLDHAM
For The Ingersoll Times

Verna Hartnett recalls the time she and a friend used some makeshift equipment to go fishing.

"We took a branch off of a tree and some string and went fishing," says the 85-year-old Mount Elgin resident and member of the local branch of the Women's Institute since 1937.

That story is one of the anecdotes related in *From This Place: Recollection of the Lives of Women of the 20th Century*, a book put out by Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO.)

The different branches of the FWIO were asked to find their oldest member and see what growing up had been like before they were married. Then they decided to make a book with all the different stories as a legacy for the members families. The writers range in age from 70 to 102.

Hartnett says her seven grandchildren enjoyed her portion of the book. Her stories about riding in the cutter, playing in the church shed and pushing a wagon down a hill, would be interesting for anyone to read. She says she mostly wrote about "games we played and experiences I

had". She has sent the book to two of her grandchildren whom she can't see very much, and her brother. She got letters back saying how much they liked the book. Hartnett said that she liked writing the book because "it was the only opportunity to record the history in her family".

The book is available through the Women's Institute by calling Margaret Armstrong at 485-3288. If you'd like to read a copy but not buy, there is a copy available now at the Mount Elgin Library.

The institute has been around for 104 years, its 100-year anniversary taking place

in 1997.

The Mount Elgin branch, containing 24 members, meets once a month at the Mount Elgin Hall to discuss and act on law and health issues, bring in speakers and take trips to companies and institutes.

Armstrong, the public relations officer for the London area, says "the FWIO is a non-profit organization and they try to be as active as they can in the community". They cater dinners, take home made and purchased items to the London Children's Hospital, sponsor scholarships to members of 4H and take a stand on issues. In the past, they have helped get full or partial wrapping on bread, white markings on highways, stop signs on school buses and mandatory recycling in many places.



Margaret Armstrong and Verna Hartnett read through the book that was put out by the Women's Institute. (Lindsay Oldham photo)