

Westmeath WI celebrate anniversary

by Evelyn Moore Price

Westmeath Women's Institute passed another milestone in its history when it celebrated its 75th Anniversary in the Community Centre, Westmeath, on Tuesday night.

There were 101 W I members attending from North Renfrew District at the banquet with greetings brought by Mrs Harold Collins, Renfrew, Board of Director of WIO; Mrs Albert Hampel, vice-chairman of EOWI; Mrs James Derouin, District President who presented Westmeath WI with a guest book.

Mrs John Bromley presided and the toast to the Branch was proposed by Mrs William Boisvert, president of the oldest Branch, Beachburg.

The history of Westmeath WI was given by Mrs Reuben Desjardins. It was organized in 1905 by Mrs John Bennie, Beachburg, assisted by a Department of Agriculture representative from Toronto as the second WI in this area. The first president was Mrs James H Bromley. Their first big project was in 1911 when the board sidewalks in the village streets were replaced by sturdier cement sidewalks. This was supervised by the WI, who with Mrs Robert Graham as president, donated \$200 and collected the balance in addition to securing many hours of volunteer labour from male population.

Mrs Alex Fraser was elected president in 1914 and that same year was elected vice-president of the North Renfrew District WI formed in those early years. She was district president in 1916-17.

Mrs Hattie Carswell served in this office in 1906-07. Mrs WF Grylls was a president of the District from 1922-25 and was a convenor of standing committees at Area level for several years. Through the decades, these energetic ladies participated in many projects such as school fairs — Beachburg Fairs — Red Cross work in wartime — and sports, assisting the local hockey teams. One of the largest projects was the installation of a Delco lighting system for Westmeath streets, churches and town hall at a cost of \$1,400 and \$200 per year for maintenance. Money was raised by two monster picnics, bazaars and concerts. Improvements were made to the Town Hall.

An outstanding event occurred in September 16, 1937, when Lady Tweedsmuir, the Governor-General's wife visited Westmeath. Members of the

North Renfrew District Branches were invited to the meeting and reception held in Westmeath United Church.

By 1941 the WI had assumed responsibility for improvements made to the Town Hall, and paid half of cost of inoculations for children. The covered rink, only one in the rural communities, was declared unsafe during the World War II and funds were raised for renovation. These moves restored the rink as a sports centre. They continue their good works by supporting WI projects and sponsoring large 4-H Home-making Clubs and Senior Training Course.

Mrs Michael Wiltshire, Canada Council of Women, was guest speaker and gave an interesting travelogue of a tour the Council of Women made to China. The slides showed development of the changing roles of women in what was earlier known as Cathay, and also depicting changes in the national economy in agriculture, education, transportation, hotel facilities and land use.

The three life members were honored and presented with carnations, Mrs Harry Bromley was unable to attend but Mrs Arndell McBride and Mrs Edward Conroy were present. The anniversary cake, made and decorated by a member, Mrs Greg Levasseur, was cut by Mrs E Conroy assisted by Mrs J Bromley. Congratulatory greetings were read by Mrs Richard Yokale, Mrs Clyde Brown and Mrs Larry Reaburn.

Plaques were received from Provincial Government Premier William Davis, Paul Yakabuski, MPP and Hon Lorne Henderson, Minister of Agriculture and Food, in recognition of 75 years of service for Home and Country and the Tweedsmuir History.

Appreciation was tendered to the caterers, Mrs Roanld Ethier and Mrs Harris O'Brien, for the excellent banquet. Prizes were won by Mrs David Crigger, Locksley-Rankin; Mrs Arndell McBride, Westmeath; Mrs Lyla Rankin, Forrester's Falls and Mrs Mary Chamberlain, Cobden. The Memorial Service conducted by Mrs R Yokale. By 1941 the WI had assumed responsibility for improvements made to the Town Hall, and paid half of the cost of inoculations for children. The covered rink, only one in the rural communities, was declared unsafe during the World War II and funds were raised for renovation. These moves restored the rink as a sports centre. They continue their good works by supporting WI projects and sponsoring large 4-H Home-making Clubs and Senior Training Course.

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The Memorial Service conducted by Mrs R Yokale and Mrs C Brown paid tribute to members who passed away during the last quarter of a century, included the names of Mrs RD Mullen, Mrs James McMullen, Mrs AC Timm, Mrs WF Grylls, Mrs WB Timm, Mrs Dawson Shields and Mrs Walter Kingerley.