

# WI 80 years old

“Happy Birthday” to members of the Women’s Institutes, whose organization celebrates its 80th anniversary this year.

A cairn near the Brant County birthplace of Adelaide Hunter Hoodless records that it was on February 19, 1897 — 80 years ago last Saturday — that this remarkable woman established the first unit of the WI, at Stoney Creek, between Hamilton and St. Catharines.

Today, the Canadian organization has close connections throughout the world, through its affiliation with the Associated Country Women of the World. The Federated Women’s Institutes of Ontario, alone, has a membership estimated at about 30,000.

Mrs. Herb Maluske of Chesley, heads the Ontario group, and Mrs. Earl Morden of Rodney, is secretary-treasurer. Members identify themselves by the wearing of a gold and blue pin including in its design the WI motto: “Home and Country.”

Members of the FWIO are planning an observance befitting the occasion, to take place during the summer.



Reference to the anniversary is made in the latest edition of Home and Country, now going out to members throughout the province. Through pictures and messages the publication heaps praise on a longtime friend and worker for Women’s Institutes, Helen May McKercher, honorary president of the FWIO who has retired after 20 years as director of the home economics branch of the Ontario ministry of agriculture and food.

Born on a farm near Seaforth, Miss McKercher has spent most of her adult life — aside from a stint in the Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service, during which she was one of four dietitians advising on food preparation for all Canadian naval ships and establishments — working on behalf of some aspect of rural living.

Home and Country editor Margaret Zoeller writes, in her tribute to “A friend”:

“Miss McKercher’s goals were always superior and she encouraged all to give of their best. She was an image-maker and expected all to uphold the high standards of lifestyles that were worthy of the Ontario Women’s Institutes. She fostered cooperation and a sense of responsibility at all levels.”

WI members are now wishing Miss McKercher a happy retirement at her home in Stratford, across the river from the Festival Theatre.

Programs that fall upon difficult days all too often have a habit of disappearing completely despite the proven value of the contribution they have been making. News from two London organizations that are back in operation after surviving their own particular crises is therefore especially welcome, and should give encouragement to others.



*Former Lakeside W. I. member*  
**Pleased With First Flight 1976**

Mrs. Bernice Gregory, a well-known resident of Uniondale, told the J. A. reporter recently that, while she waited almost 87 years to get her first flight in an airplane, it was worth waiting for. Mrs. Gregory will be 87 in May, so son Gordon and his wife Helen, who live just south along Highway 19, decided this was the time (on April 3rd) for Mother to take to the air. They had to wait until after three p.m. on that Saturday though. Mrs. Gregory senior was at a Kintore acution sale with an eye on a tea cosy, hand-worked by a member of the family some years back in needle point. She had to pay \$30.00 for the tea-cosy but obviously nobody else was going to get the item, regardless of price.

The April 3rd flight lasted about an hour with Kintore pilot John Chandler at the controls of the six passenger craft. The flight went from Stratford airport over London, St. Marys and other area centres. Mrs. Gregory had no problem spotting Uniondale. “Couldn’t miss it with all those Hutton trucks.”

While enthusiastic about flying after her first trip up in the air, Mrs. Gregory was something less than estatic over a snowmobile ride a couple of years back. “Maybe the kids like them but I do believe a ride in the old-time cutter behind a fast horse was more exciting”. So much for snowmobiles!

Mrs. Gregory, who bowled in a local ladies league here in town until “well over eighty” seems to have no great problem putting in the time. Perhaps the fact she has twenty-five grandchildren and sixteen great-grandchildren has something to do with solving that problem!