



TENTH ANNIVERSITY OF HAMILTON LEATHERCRAFT GUILD

as presented by Irva Ford, F.C.S.C.L., Nov. 17, 1966

It was on October 11, 1956 when this Hamilton branch of C.S.C.L. came into existence. Previous to that evening, three meetings had been held at the homes of Mr. and Mrs. C. Redman, Mr. and Mrs. H. Wilson and Mr. and Mrs. Art Ford. If my memory serves me correctly, those present at the first meeting were: Kay Zasunaka Rhodes, Jim Courneya, Nina and Harold Wilson, Violet and Clarence Redman and myself. We became acquainted, we talked about our leatherwork and the possibilities of forming a Guild. By this time we had all heard about C.S.C.L. and some of us were members. I can remember attending the first C.S.C.L. annual meeting.

To the two following meetings we invited other leathercraftsmen including Grace Jones and Bea Austin and more definite plans were made. We decided to invite C.S.C.L. members to Hamilton to form a branch.

Jean Newton was chairman at that time. She brought with her the Roebucks, the Browns and the Larmours. Jean's remarks that night were well worth repeating. She stressed the necessity of friendliness and sharing in the organization if it was to be a success. Members should exhibit and demonstrate to gain confidence and no one should fear giving or receiving criticism.

After the president's remarks, Fred Brown read the part of the constitution that concerned branches and the Larmours showed beautiful leathercraft slides. Officers elected at that time: Chairman - Irva Ford; Vice-chairman - Frank Torry; Secretary - Nina Wilson; Treasurer - Grace Jones. The seeds were sown on that eventful night, 10 years ago, at the Recreation Centre on Bay St. and the Hamilton Leathercraft Guild became the first branch of C.S.C.L. We are now reaping the harvest and as we end this first milestone we can look back and point with pride to our achievements.

We are an unusual group, not joined together by religion or politics, varying in age and occupations, but bound together by the love of leathercraft. The whole ten years have been a happy

experience - a period in which we enjoyed fellowship and co-operation of not only the executives but of all the members. Many hurdles have been conquered. We have reason to be justly proud when we view the exhibits on the table to-night and note the improvement in craftsmanship of our members.

Many of you will remember that our first meetings were held in the Recreation Hall at Wesley United Church. There were 39 craftsmen at that first meeting in November, 1956 and our treasurer took in \$3.79. Committee chairmen were appointed and Harold Wilson, Violet and Clarence Redman, Bea Austin, Harold Booth, Jim Courneya, Lillian Beech and Marjorie Wright were welcomed to the executive. We will always feel grateful to the Hamilton Branch Community Programmes for providing us with a meeting place and financing and sending out our notices for the first two years.

In three months our attendance jumped to 48 and the Hamilton Leathercraft Guild was away to a fine start. The years that followed were eventful ones. The Hamilton Branch exhibited articles at the C.S.C.L. annual, the I.A.L.C. in Rochester and the Handyman's show at the C.N.E. A bulletin board was made by Alvin Haig and Clarence Redman (publicity convener) had signs made and placed them in all leathercraft stores in Hamilton and surrounding districts announcing the time and place of our meetings.

This was the year we held Dutch Auctions to raise money to buy dishes and coffee jugs. This was the year when I bravely submitted four articles to be judged and was awarded by Associate Certificate.

Harold Wilson succeeded me as Guild chairman in 1958. He was a most enthusiastic leader and during his term of office, he undertook the chairmanship of the Eastern Regional meeting of Leathercraftsmen at Prudhommes Garden Centre in May. This was a very rewarding effort and certainly helped our Guild to grow-up. It was also in 1958 when May Wheatly, Clarence Redman and Harold Wilson gained their Associate standing and I obtained by Fellowship. It was in 1958 when we first entered the Branch competition for the Weston Trophy. We came second. Our first prizes were won at the C.N.E. by Irva Ford and H. Wilson. The following year we were able to boast about a paid-up membership of 50 with an average attendance of 40 members.

One of the biggest thrills our Guild ever experienced was the winning of the Weston Trophy for the first time in 1960. Award pieces were submitted by Messrs. Torry, Wilson, Courneya, Redman and Mrs. Beech and Irva Ford. Derrick Fielding was our first salon winner when his braided belt was selected at Buffalo. The first Hamilton Handicraft Sale was another important event in which our Guild eagerly participated. Our chairman that year was Art Brandreth.

Mr. Frank Torry became our fourth president and with his executive co-operated admirably when Harold Wilson was chairman of I.A.L.C. at Prudhommes in 1961. This was the year when Margaret Wray originated the idea of holding special workshops for those who were interested in becoming Associate members and when she contacted me I agreed to help. At the C.S.C.L. Annual that year, the following names were added to the list of Associate members: Messrs Courneya and Torry and Mesdames Henstridge, Caswell, Comfort, Zimmerman, Schooley. The following year, Mildred Kemp and Alvin Haig were included in the group. At the International Assembly in Detroit, the Hamilton Branch won three salon ribbons and the names of Ford, Haig and Torry were added to Derrick Fieldings.

Four years ago, the Sidewalk Art Shows became popular. These shows give craftsmen an opportunity to become known and to dispose of surplus articles with very little effort. Hamilton members participated in shows at Dundas, Westdale and the Centre. A summer workshop was held but because of holiday schedules, it has been discontinued.

We played hosts to Barrie and London Branches. The workshops were rewarding and the buffet supper was delicious. At the Christmas party, Frank Torry convened the games. So successful was this party in Booth's Recreation Room that Frank now has an annual contract.

When Nina Wilson became chairman in 1963, her husband was C.S.C.L. chairman. Due to expansion of business at the booths, it became necessary to move to the West Pavillion on the Mountain Brow which has remained our headquarters. It was during Nina's chairmanship when Janet Smith, and the following year Bea Austin and Reta Holman gained their Associate standing. Hamilton Branch won the Weston Trophy in 1965 and the following year, when Alvin Haig was chairman, we won the Trophy again with 94.58%. Ruth Waechter and Lillian Beech are our latest Associate members. Since no one from Hamilton besides myself has tried for a Fellowship, we were happy when Jean Newton, already a Fellow of C.S.C.L. moved to Welland and joined our Guild.

The C.S.C.L. annual meeting was held in Hamilton for the first time last spring at the Scottish Rite Club. Also in 1966, we had three Salon winners in Buffalo - J. Newton, R. Waechter and A. Haig. Since all awards over the past ten years are not recorded in our records, I may have missed a few names.

Now we have completed our first decade. Since my term as chairman of Hamilton Branch, many more names, not already mentioned have appeared on our executive lists. These members have also helped to mould our organization: Daisy O'Rourke, Betty Henstridge, Mrs. Tomlinson, Mrs. Rutledge, Margaret Wray, Eva Utter, Jim Roberts Marion Woon, Mildred Kemp, Larry Patterson, Ethel Zimmerman, Jean Booth, Jessie Strain, Jean Gregory, Bill Holly, Ruth Waechter, Margaret Weldon, Rita de Wit and Reta Holman as auditor.

There are many more achievements that might be mentioned in my review such as the part Hamilton leathercraftsmen play in various exhibitions at McMaster Library, Stratford, P.N.E., Arts, Crafts and Hobby show at C.N.E., the Canadian Handicraft Guild and the sales booth in Toronto and Hamilton.

Before closing, I would like to mention some typically important individuals who made contributions to our Society in the field of instruction to individuals or organized groups. There are those who have taught for many years like Alvin Haig, Jim Courneya, Lillian Beech, Bea Austin, Mrs. Wheatley and Irva Ford and others who have done some teaching more recently like the Willsons, Janet Smith, Mildred Kemp and James Oliver.

This sketchy review of major achievements by no means exhausts the listing of accomplishments to our credit nor hopes for improvement. Let us look forward to greater things in the future.

You are a wonderful group of people! We also have a wonderful group of supporters at our guest table. They have given us guidance through those 10 years. I hope we, the Hamilton Branch have expressed our grateful thanks and deep appreciation of your never tiring efforts by inviting you to join us to-night.

We are happy, too, to have with us our husbands or wives. Many times they have given us timely encouragement. They have often lent a hand to help with a project or load the car. My dear husband has more than once ridden on the bus to give me the car to attend a sale or go to meetings. On behalf of all our members, may I express our grateful appreciation to these guests.

In closing may I read a quotation from the speech by the Hon. J.K. McKay, Chairman of the Province of Ontario Council of the Arts, given at the Ontario Crafts conference, Geneva Park, in 1965: "The public to-day needs crafts more than ever before and in this incredibly automated age there is a rebirth of respect for the work of the human hand - the work of to-day's craftsmen will be to-morrow's treasured possessions".

As we look into the future, we realize there is a tremendous challenge. But now we have a sound foundation upon which to build so let us all strive to be creative, improve our craftsmanship and move forward. May the Hamilton Branch always be one of which C.S.C.L. is justly proud.
