

District 41

Elgin

1989-1993

Our "birth" was not a smooth, uneventful one. In 1970 Allan Harrington and Gren Vogan bravely made the initial approach to the Elgin unit of O.A.S.W.T. to suggest that retired men teachers be included in the group. They received a less than cordial reception but several months of deliberation would eventually result in an agreement to hold a joint meeting in 1971.

At that gathering of superannuated teachers held at Parkside Collegiate in St. Thomas, an Elgin County branch of the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario was formed with 40 charter members. The purpose of the organization according to spokesman Allan Harrington was "to preserve the identity of retired teachers and to act as a source of reference and assistance to the teaching profession and governmental bodies". And so Elgin began! It was almost a prerequisite of the discussions leading up to this day that the first President would be a woman. Mrs. Ethel (O'Connor) Hagen was the first President with Allan Harrington the Secretary-Treasurer of what officially was known as the Elgin Unit of District 8 STO. At that time District 8 consisted of London-Middlesex and Lambton, Oxford and Elgin counties.

We are proud of the fact Gordon McBride (1974) and Stuart Phoenix (1982) were District 8 Presidents.

Elgin Unit would also play an important role in District STO restructuring in 1986-87. Mrs. Helen Carter of our Elgin Unit became the first President of the new District 37 which consisted of Oxford and Elgin counties with the two county units. Our units were very nervous (actually unnecessarily so) about breaking away from the larger District 8 but size (both area and numbers) made changes necessary. This restructuring had been a long time in the making. As early as 1976 an announcement had been made that District 8 had approximately 1200 paid-up members making it the second largest in the province and that with such unwieldy numbers serious consideration should be given to reducing the size of the District. How slowly the wheels can turn at times.

To prove that delay and trepidation had been unnecessary an excellent organization with its own District and Unit executives and District Constitution was quickly in place. There were strong social contacts between the two groups and social and business meetings were held four times a year. With the Presidency on a rotational basis, Elgin's Grace Armour would be District President in 1988-89. Max Doan of our Elgin Unit served as the highly efficient Secretary-Treasurer.

Once again, maybe a new-found confidence, travel distances and duplication of effort led in the 1989-90 year to further discussions about the future. From the Elgin side our Unit President Bill Haight would lead these discussions. At a meeting which followed the Annual meeting of District 37 in Ingersoll, where a motion to again divide was passed, the formal paperwork was completed and in September 1990 District 41 Elgin officially began operations.