

Anabel Lasker gives final lecture

By SUSAN KAUFFMAN
Feature Writer

Last week the public was invited to a special program of the Green Acres Garden Club of Lancaster County to hear an internationally known horticulturist lecture on the topic "Our Heritage of Flowers and Plants in Interior Decoration." What those in attendance actually witnessed was the final public presentation to be given by Anabel Combs Lasker.

Since it was her last public lecture, the program contained much more than stated in the title. "I want to cover as much as possible," she said.

The afternoon program which consisted part of Mrs. Lasker's presentation at the World's Fair in Brussels included the use of antiques and reproduction containers as well as modern adaptations of early vessels for floral arrangements. The lecture also included the use of wall hangings, table settings, and figurines as they related to particular floral displays.

An unpretentious lady, Mrs. Lasker packed as much of a life-long pursuit of horticultural expertise and experience into the two hours as possible. As she moved rapidly from one exhibit to another, she related some of the many experiences she has had in foreign countries and in teaching disadvantaged children in New York City. It was quickly apparent to the audience that this expert who was an outstanding horticulturist on an international level was also keenly in touch with the needs and responses of culturally deprived children. Having two children of her own may have given her special insight into the creative interests of these young individuals.

Residing in her retirement on a farm at Woodbine, York County, Mrs. Lasker is a world renowned horticulturist. She received her B.S. and M.S. at North Western University and her Ph.D. at Columbia. She has lectured at the Royal Horticultural Society in London, the World's Fair in Brussels, where she won the Designer's Gold Medal for Creativity, has taught the first judging schools in Canada and Switzerland, was accredited by the National Council of State Garden Clubs as a master judge, landscape critic and horticultural judge, and has written six books.

For 25 years she taught at the New York Botanical Gardens where she was in charge of the children's workshop program. She also taught at Welsley, Penn State, Columbia, UCLA, Yale and Harvard.

For her work with disadvantaged children in New York City she was given medals by two presidents. Several projects she used with these children were also on display. One used broken glass shower doors; another used old bottles, curched, with the resulting pieces of glass glued to create a stained-glass effect; and a third used bits of wood, clothes pins, wire and other trash gathered in the inner city.

In working with the children every Saturday for 25 years (500 children every week) Mrs. Lasker had to devise projects which cost no more than 55 cents per child.

She wanted them to have a finished product to take home to keep, so she contacted contractors and collected the broken glass shower doors. Many of the other supplies for the children's projects were readily available to the children or were donated by visitor to the gardens.

Tracing the American heritage of flowers and plants in interior decorating, Mrs. Lasker explained that our richness of culture is derived from the various ethnic groups which have made our nation. Not tracing these groups in order of importance, but rather as the exhibits appeared on the tables, Mrs. Lasker pointed out several characteristics and differences in the displays she had created.

To represent the American Indian influence, she showed a sandpicture candle arrangement complete with petrified wood and a collection of artfully arranged squash, potatoes, and corn.

The Hawaiian culture was depicted by a display enveloping a Sorenson sculpture of the head of a native girl. Driftwood, bamboo, glads, fan-tailed palm, Antheria, bananas, and pears complemented the sculpture. Warm browns, bright red, and yellow dominated the color scheme.

From the pioneer days, primitive needlework, hand-crafted by Mrs. Lasker on organdy to create a farm scene, was displayed with an arrangement of honeysuckle, grape hyacinth, blue ageratum, petunias, and verbena in an antique agateware teapot.

Also from our early history was a arrangement of herbs, including artemisia and mint in the Williamsburg style.

The Seminole Indian influence was represented by a hand-crafted clay basket of irregular shape filled with a live African violet.

An arrangement of candles and flowers placed on a pedestal base which was traced from the Hebrew or Jewish culture was explained.

Apple dolls and corn husk flowers depicted the German traditional influence in our culture. An early American lantern painted in Pennsylvania Dutch fashion dominated an exhibit of fir, carnations, and Iron Cross Begonias.

The Black culture's influence was represented by a striking display created before the listening audience's eyes. A wrought iron figurine was silhouetted against a white gladiolus and brown palm fronds.

Not limiting her presentation to tracing the ethnic heritage in our total American culture, Mrs. Lasker also included in the afternoon's presentation many hints and

suggestions for using floral displays to accent or dominate place settings, figurines, and wall hangings, as well as giving numerous guidelines to follow when creating the floral displays themselves.

"One should be striving for variety, new ideas, new ways of doing things," Mrs. Lasker stated. "We Americans are not so inhibited that we are afraid to try something new."

"Three things constitute creative design—the idea, the material and the skill with which you handle the material," she explained. "Use nature's unusual forms, such as driftwood, stones and seeds."

Each display for the various ethnic groups evidenced

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The Hawaiian arrangement shown above is created from a Sorenson sculpture and surrounded by gladiolas and fruit.

To the left is a Japanese flower sculpture created by Mrs. Lasker. It features Japanese figures in a wormwood container.



Above is a black influence centerpiece fashioned out of a wrought iron figure placed against white gladiolas and a tan palm leaf.

Homestead Notes

My Thoughts — and welcome to them

By JOANNE SPAHR
Associate Editor

I want to start a garden this year. Me. Yes, me - the one who helped to plant the potatoes that rotted in the ground last year, and the one who decided to plant tulips in the shaded circular flower beds in the middle of June, and the one who always had a piano lesson to practice when it came to picking string beans, shelling lima beans, or freezing corn.

And, hoe a weed, who ever heard of me doing something like that? The best I could do was pick an ear of corn off a stalk when I was desperately starving and there was no other food to be found in the house (which never happened, so you know how many times I picked my own corn.)

Now, of course, this lazy, disinterested individual wants to have her own flower beds and be a super gardener. If I do, you can be sure I'll be the one

who'll end up with the dozen stalks of fennel 10 feet high and then realize I hate the stuff. Or, I'll be the one to plant a zillion tomato plants, then never have time to can the produce, and end up getting three intensive weeks of rigorous exercise throwing rotten tomatoes up against the pump house wall or at any stray cat or dog coming into my range.

Or, if that doesn't happen, I'm sure to let the broccoli go up in seed, or never realize that the little tumors on the sides of the brussel sprout stalks are really vegetables, after all, and not a rare disease.

Oh, yes, this garden of mine will be just a lot of fun, all right. On second thought, maybe I'll brush up on my piano skills--that should take me Summer, and sufficiently save me from myself.