

Family craft night produces patchwork toys, gift ideas

By SUSAN KAUFFMAN
Staff correspondent

BIRD-IN-HAND — Mothers and daughters once spent many Winter evenings together quilting, embroidering, or working on some other form of handicraft. This pleasant way to pass the hours of possible lonesome nights is still alive, especially at Mrs. Paul Smucker's kitchen in Bird-In-Hand on most every Thursday evening as it has been for the last several years. Mrs. Elam Smucker and her two daughters, Barb Kanagy and Ruthie Smoker, have been setting aside Thursday evenings to work on crafts which utilize their sewing, quilting, designing, and recording talents.

Various individual talents and skills dispersed among the three complement each other well, and the result is a unique collection of ways to use fabric and thread.

Ruthie Smoker, the youngest sister, says she and her sister, Barb, and mother have working with the "granny" prints - small figured cotton material - for at least three years.

"I always liked to sew clothes and design new things," explained Ruthie. "Barb does not like to sew like I do, but she did start making pillows for Christmas gifts a few years ago," she added.

"The patchwork pillow was a simple idea to start on; after I did that I started to make a lot of patchwork things for myself and for gifts," Barb stated.

Elma Smucker, the young ladies' mother, had made a number of quilts and taught quilting techniques to the girls.

"My husband works Thursday evenings and I would come over to Mom's then," Barb explained. "Ruthie would usually come over, too, and before long it became a standing arrangement. Working on the sewing projects became a custom gradually, too," explained Barb.

The Thursday evening late in February when Lancaster Farming visited the three ladies was a busy one. Mrs. Smucker had set up a newly pieced quilt top, batting, and bottom cover on the quilting frame in the living room. Barb was hand quilting pieced pot holders. Ruthie was working on some appliance covers which had been ordered, and a mobile complete with tiny stuffed animals was awaiting some finishing touches.

The mobile for a baby shower gift idea was made from a 12-inch-wide macrame hoop, nylon fishing line (so that the thread would be invisible), black yarn crocheted around the hoop, tiny stuffed animals sewn in brightly colored prints, and bells. Ruthie, the designer of this trio, had seen something similar to this fabric mobile and had drawn her own pattern.

The toaster and mixer covers Ruthie was hand quilting onto a solid color backing would eventually be finished by placing the right sides of the solid lining together, trimming excess batting and enclosing the quarter inch seam allowance with double-fold bias tape with a three-step, zig-zag stitch by machine to secure all the materials.

Barb was working on the circular centerpiece of a Dresden plate patterned pillow top. After the top is quilted and the bottom material is cut to fit, a ruffle five inches wide, folded in half lengthwise, and 120 inches long is gathered and positioned around the 16 inch square pillow. A small section of the seam around the pillow is left open to turn the pillow cover right side out; then the opening is finished with hand stitching.

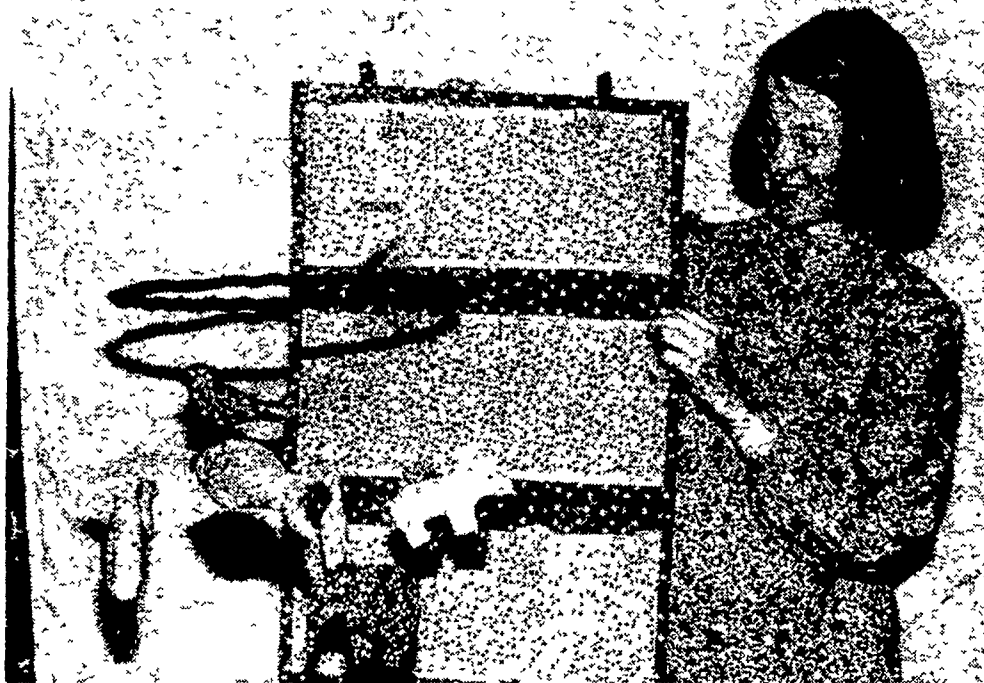
Barb readily gave the dimensions of the craft items and the materials and lengths needed for each item since she had been compiling a notebook of the projects for some time. "People ask us how to make something they have seen that we have made. It makes it easier if we write it down and can look it up," she explained.

Keeping the notebook is a natural outgrowth of Barb's training as an English teacher. "Someday we have this dream, we might publish a craft book," she mused.

Although Barb does not particularly enjoy sewing clothes, she has sewn ex-

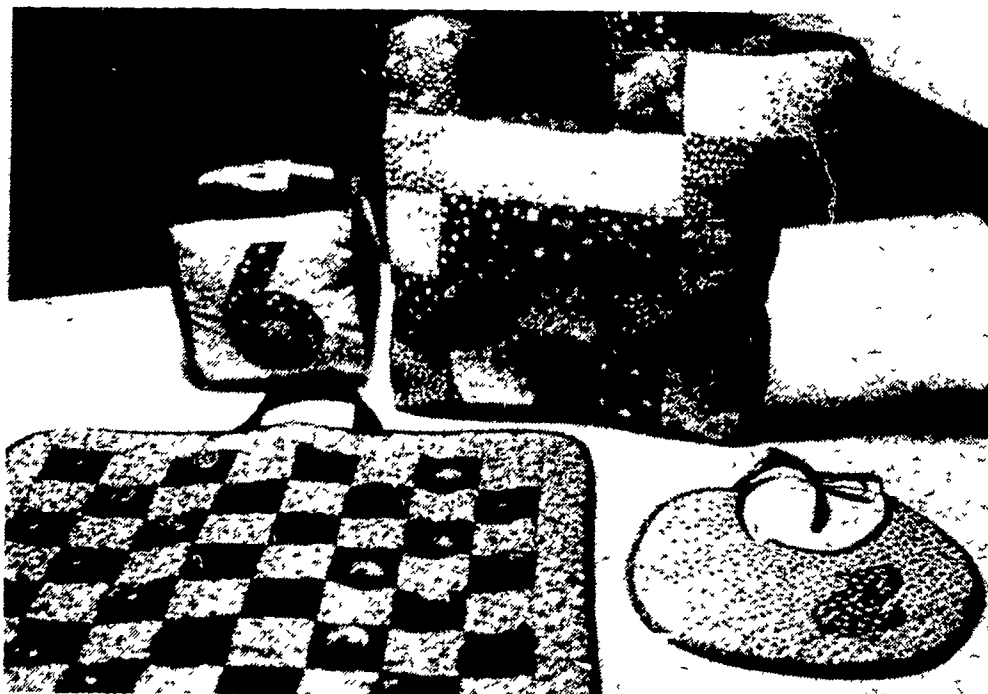


Some kitchen items which can be done up in patchwork include crazy quilt patchwork placemats, hot pads, appliance covers, tableclothes, and patchwork girls centerpieces.



Barb Kanagy poses with an organizer complete with pockets to hold items such as baby care products, children's crayons, and scissors, etc. In front of the organizer is a baby mobile with stuffed animals attached by invisible fishing line to a macrame hoop.

Homestead Notes



Some patchwork games created by Ruthie Smoker include a checkers game with large coat buttons for playing pieces, a baby's block, a bib, and a puppy pillow.

tensively for her home. A Patchwork tablecloth, place mats, clothes pin bag, and pot holders are all products of her handiwork.

Barb cautions any seamstress working with cotton prints to wash them before doing anything else. "Various materials will shrink in different amounts when washed. If they are not washed until they are pieced together, the finished surface may pucker."

When working with patchwork crafts, the number of designs and dimensions of individual pieces as well as the list of possible items is limitless. To use up the smaller bits and pieces left from larger projects, tiny squares of material can be arranged with larger pieces of materials.

Ingenuity and patience are especially evident in the games Ruthie devised for patchwork. The checkerboard game is relatively uncomplicated in design and workmanship when compared to the more tedious piecing and quilting evident in Ruthie's "Chase the Rat" creation.

"The game itself is played much like parchessi," explained Ruthie. "I saw the game originally played on a wooden board with marbles." Her patchwork version of "Chase the Rat" is designed on a piece of muslin 23-1/2 inches square. Dozens of one and one-fourth inch diameter circles are spaced across the muslin to create the path the "rats" must follow as the game progresses.

In the checkers game, Ruthie used large black and red-and-black coat buttons, for playing pieces. But when working on the "Chase the Rats" game, the girls' younger brother, Jeffrey, suggested that she design little mice rather than use some other playing token. Ruthie crated a pattern for tiny rats and made four of each color - red, blue, green, and yellow.

In addition to sewing on hangers so that the games can be hung on the wall when not being played, Ruthie sewed pockets with button flaps onto the back piece of the games to hold the playing pieces.

The game "boards" have rounded corners and the edges of the quilted top, batting, and back piece are finished with double-fold bias tape.

Dimensions for the checkerboard are a finished board of 18 1/2 inches square with each individual space a two-inch finished square. Allow one-quarter inch on each side for seams when cutting out pieces.

Another craft item which is the result of family cooperation and input is what the family calls "patchwork girls centerpiece".

"We were trying to think of something for a centerpiece for a mother-daughter banquet last fall - something nice to have and cheap to make," explained Ruthie.

Consulting the notebook, Barb turned to the proper pages and found these directions listed:

PATCHWORK GIRLS CENTERPIECE

large coffee jars 7 in. high,
2 1/2 in. neck
three inch craft foam balls
8 in. square hot pad
yarn for hair, braids, and
bangs
two raisins and stick pins for
eyes
one button to join hot pad
around jar
filling such as pop corn,
dried beans, tea, candy
double-fold bias tape
two toothpicks

Bonnet:

Band - cut bias strip 3 3/4 in. by 7 in.; fold lengthwise; sew three edges together; turn; pick out corners and press.

Hair - braid nine strands of yarn; sew one end; tie other end. Stick into craft foam ball at sewn end. Make two. For bangs, make 12-2 in. continuous loops and sew along one edge. Pin to ball.

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