

Quilting can be habit-forming!

BY JOYCE BUPP
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EAST BERLIN — Caution: quilting may be hazardous to your housekeeping.

At least that's the warning issued by veteran quilters who turned out June 8 to take part in the 16th annual East Berlin Quilt show.

Quilting, they say, is more than slightly addictive, and dedicated stitchers would much rather pick up a needle and thread than the vacuum cleaner, dust cloth or window washing supplies.

Moving force behind this highly-popular quilt show, held at the East Berlin Elementary School, is the East Berlin Senior Citizens, a gung-ho organization of over 200 members.

Actually it was Florence Hull's brainchild to hold the first show, back in 1957. The East Berlin quilter figured that her organization should do something to help keep alive the tradition of quilting that was so much a part of the area's rich rural heritage. Through her efforts and encouragement, the initial competition opened 16 years ago with some 50 entries.

That number has increased every year, according to this year's co-chairman, Bertha Hull, a sister-in-law of the show's originator. The colorful array of over 100 quilt entries continues to draw large crowds during its short, six-hour run, and as high as 1500 spectators have signed the register on a well-attended day.

In fact, while Bertha Hull busied herself answering questions that came flying from all directions, her co-chairman, Charlotte Kimmel arrived with a message that assured the committee this 16th show was again a rousing success. The judges, it seemed, had suggested that perhaps the show should be carried over to a second day.

Because the school facilities are ideal for the display, show date must be scheduled just after students leave for their annual

summer vacation. Space, however, is becoming a problem as entries have mushroomed, and now line walls, drape across bleachers and tables and still spill onto the stage area of the cafeteria-gym.

Having been involved with the show for many years, the chairmen are quick to agree that quilt styles have definitely changed, both in colors and in patterns. Darker colors, especially shades of brown, are all the rage. Star-type motifs also are current favorites, as well as pristine white creations decorated with intricate patterns of thousands of tiny stitches.

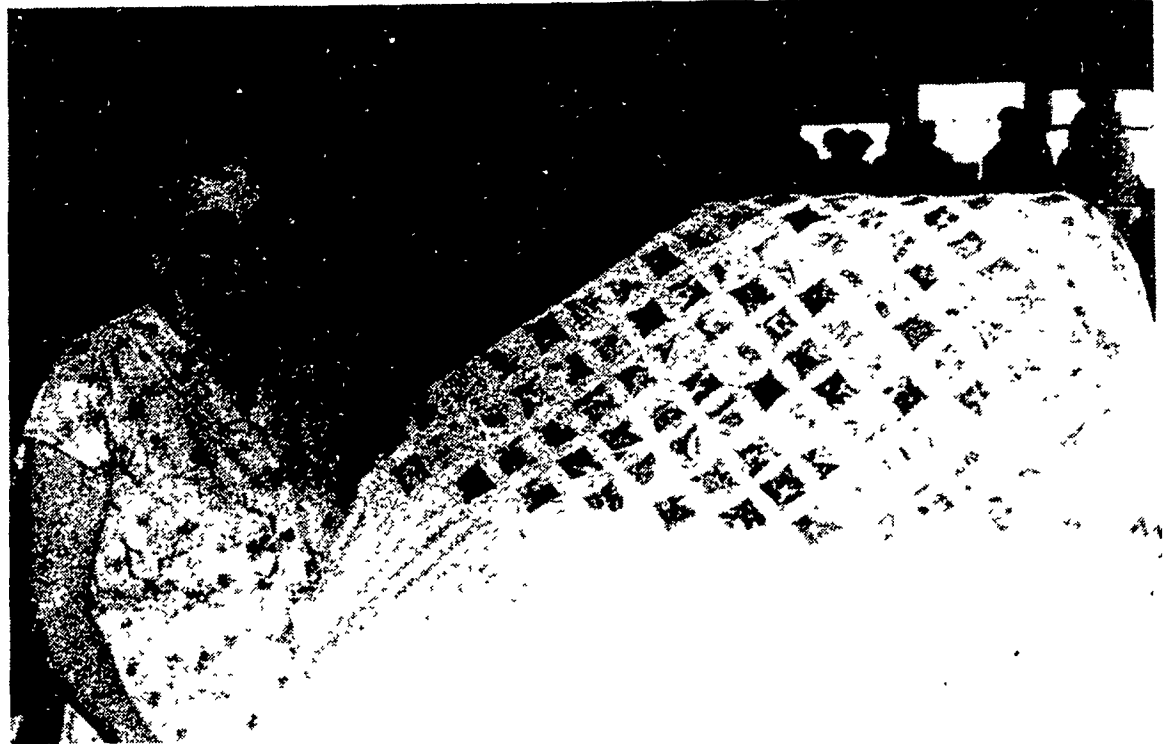
Majority of the quilt show entries originate from the talented hands of local craftswomen, and the show sees almost a complete "turnover" of brand-new entries each year. One quilt, though, originated in Germany, then was finished off under the experienced fingers of Bertha Hull.

Visitors come from quite a distance, and it's not unusual to find addresses listed on the guest register from as far away as Michigan, with Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia signatures frequently dotting the sign-in book.

Quilt owners are permitted to offer their creations for sale, simply by attaching a card to the quilt with the price. Prices seen at the East Berlin show ranged from about \$150 to well over \$300, depending on the overall size of the quilt, and intricacy of the design.

All entries are judged, with four awards given in each category of quilting, applique, lap quilting, antique quilts, patchwork, embroidery and a best of show quilt award. This year's judges were York County farm wife and veteran quilter Ethel Gross, of Manchester, Sue Bouslinaman, a quilting instructor from Carlisle, and Imogene Romino, extension home economist from Baltimore County, Maryland.

One key plus for the show's popularity is the presence of quilting demonstrators, who share



Between five and seven thousand individual pieces of fabric go into a large cathedral window quilt, like this exquisite pale-yellow creation made by Amy Smith.

technique tips, sell patterns and completed quilted items, while mixing their quilting conversation with interesting and humorous anecdotes about the time-honored craft.

Mary Volland is a bubbling, enthusiastic quilting demonstrator and instructor. She's 86, but her pep and involvement belie the eight decades-plus. Her demonstrating outfit is a quilted skirt and matching shawl of pieced-work in shades of blue, and ornamenting her white blouse she wears three of her favorite buttons: "Hug a senior citizen today," another that announces, "I'm older and better," and a "Seniors are super," one.

Mrs. Volland pieced together her first scraps of calico, with her mother's encouragement and assistance, when she was barely 16. It was on display at her quilting table, carefully protected with a plastic covering, providing a colorful background for more recent samples of her expertise with needle and thread.

She recalled that her mother paid about 25 cents per yard for the cheery yellow calico fabric and its contrast materials of bright red



'Hands off' is not a rule at the East Berlin quilt show, since few visitors can resist the urge to closely examine the fine stitching of the intricately patterned pieces. An estimated 1200 visitors from several states inched through the kaleidoscope of color.

and more somber brown. After 70 years, the five-star motif coverlet appears to be brand new, and the colors still brilliant.

Between her first quilt effort and her quilt-productive retirement, Mary Volland was employed for 30

years with an area garment manufacturer. She's been teaching quilting the past 20 years since her retirement, but in 1972 switched from the traditional frame quilting to today's more favored lap quilting.

"It's a lot more handy," she figures, adding that now she only teaches this type of quilting that can be picked up and taken along to be worked nearly anywhere.

While there are small lap-quilting frames available, Mrs. Volland definitely frowns on their use.

"My students can use them at home if they want to, but I don't allow them in class," she admonishes.

While chatting with this veteran quilter at her impressive display of work, one visitor queried Mrs. Volland on how she goes about selecting colors and arranging them in the intricately pieced quilts.

"I lay my prints down, and if they don't talk back to me, I use them," she chuckled in explanation.

Seated near the display table, concentrating on her tiny stitches through a white cotton square with a "sunbonnet" girl calico piece in the center was Donna Grim, one of Mary Volland's students.

"I just love to quilt," she confided, joking that it beats housework any day.

Mrs. Grim, who began sewing simple projects at the age of 5, has completed about ten quilts. None of them, she laments, has been for her own use, and all were completed for other quilt-lovers.



Catharine Deitz, a member of the East Berlin Hookers, is highly skilled at the craft of wool rug hooking. She dyes white wool fabric then slices it into 1/32 inch strips with a special cutter, and pulls loops of the slender strips through Scottish burlap, using a crochet hook-like tool.

Homestead Notes



Two antique quilts earned a special place of honor at the annual show. To the right is a patchwork type dating to the 1800s, fashioned from elegant, satiny-type fabrics, then outlined and accented with assorted stitchery patterns in contrasting thread. Its delightful 'crazy-quilt' effect contrasts with the more somber, conservative design of the woven coverlet on the left, made in 1843.