

Betty Wears Pennsylvania Crown

BY KIMBERLY HERR

BETHEL — She's Queen of the Sky, at least the Pennsylvania sky.

She's Betty Orendo, Queen of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Flying Farmers. Betty, who is 55 years old, was crowned last March during the state Flying Farmers' spring convention in Stroudsburg.

"I'm the official hostess for the year," Betty explained. "It's a nice chance to meet a lot of people with similar interests and similar problems."

The Flying Farmers organization, which was explained in last week's edition of Lancaster Farming, began 39 years ago for farmers and agribusinessmen who are interested in flying or promoting flying.

Betty and her husband, Mike, do not live on a farm, but they do have a nursery, Fort Henry Nursery, in Bethel, right down the road from the farm where Betty was born and raised.

Mike is an ag teacher at Tulpehocken Area High School. Betty is the administrator of the practical nursing program at the Lebanon Area Vo-Tech School. She is an R.N. and has her master's degree in education.

Betty and Mike have owned an airplane for 20 years. They currently have a twin engine Piper

Aztec that holds six passengers. Betty does not have her license, but she has taken a "pinch hitter" course, which enables her to land the plane in case of an emergency. Betty took the one-day course just this spring.

Although this course was all theory with no hands-on experience, Betty feels capable of landing a plane after flying with her husband over the years.

Betty's first time in an airplane was about 35 years ago. Mike was the pilot, and the plane was a Piper Cub. Was she afraid?

"I've never been afraid," she said. "I'm hoping to get my license when I retire. There are a lot of women pilots in the organization."

But for right now, Betty is busy making centerpieces, door prizes and corsages to be used at the many Flying Farmer activities she must hostess.

"You can do as much as you want, or as little as you want," Betty explained. "It is my pleasure to participate in the various things."

Proving how much she enjoys her reign, Betty is going all out. She is candlewicking some door prizes to be used later in the year, and is putting together some silkflower corsages, also to be used at one of the conventions.

Her favors for the Christmas convention are already finished.

"This is what I enjoy doing instead of housework," Betty laughed. "It means more when you receive something that is handmade."

Although she is also in the process of handmaking other goodies for the meetings and conventions, she wanted them to remain a surprise and asked that they not be mentioned.

In addition to the time she spends on her crafts, meetings and conventions, Betty represented her chapter during Ag Progress days at Penn State this summer.

"I was there to get members and to promote flying," she explained.

Betty remembered how the children there would ask "Are you a real queen?" and "Are those stoves real?" She was wearing a tiara given to her by the Cessna Aircraft Company, which also contributed a trophy and a plaque when Betty was crowned. She also received a mug and a wooden airplane from the Flying Farmers.

Betty will again get to wear her crown when she attends the Farm Show, Harrisburg, in January. She also attends conventions of chapters in other states to help crown their queens. She and Mike will leave for Maryland Sunday for that purpose. She has also been to the Delmarva Chapter's coronation and to a coronation in New York.

The queens of all the chapters throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico meet at the International Convention which is held every year. This year it took place in Dayton, Ohio. Next year, it will be in Canada, and the year after that it will be in Lancaster at the Host Farm. According to Betty, they hope to have 1000 members in attendance at that convention.

During these conventions, an international queen is chosen.

To compete, each chapter queen must make a poster, depicting their lives. They also give a five-minute speech about themselves and their chapters. Betty's poster had pictures of the airplane, friends from the organization, she and her husband, some shrubbery from their nursery and Betty's coronation.

Each queen is also required to bring a small gift for each of her "sister" queens. Betty took stained glass liberty bells and maps of Pennsylvania, with an Amish buggy pictured on the front. Some of the unusual things given to her by the other queens were a plant duster made from wool, which she received from the Ohio queen, who raises sheep.

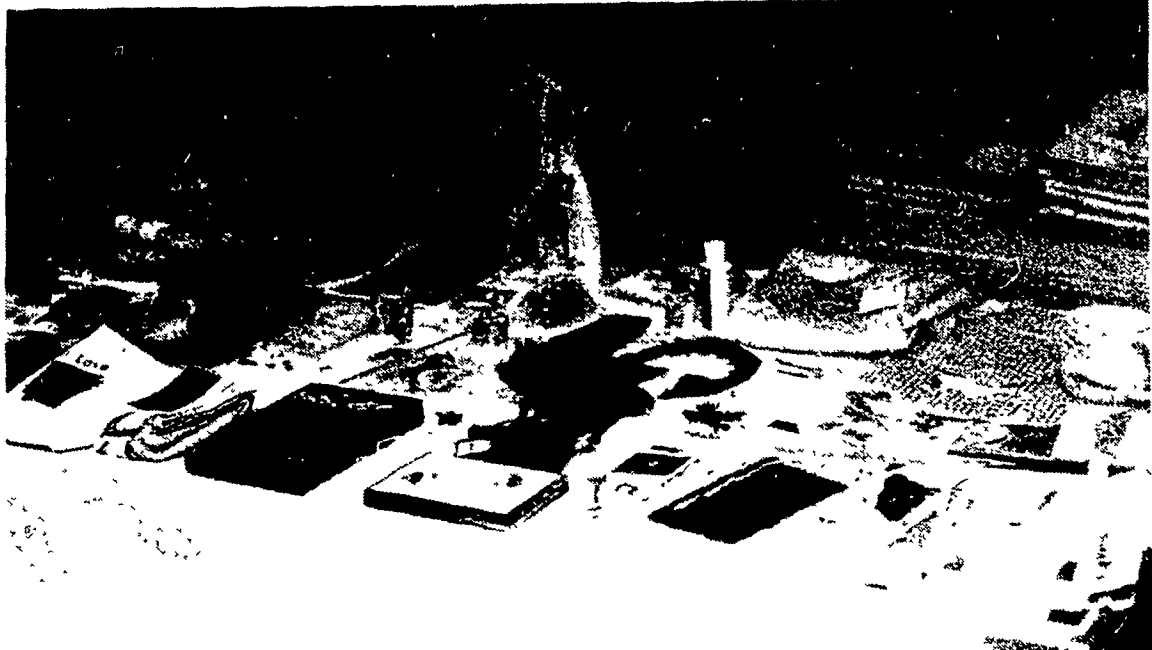
The Nebraska queen gave



Looking every inch the queen, Betty stands in front of her Bethel home with the red silk roses she was given when she was crowned Queen of the Pa. Flying Farmers.



Betty Orendo, Queen of the Pa. Flying Farmers, holds the wooden airplane given to her when she was crowned last March at the spring convention.



The gifts given to Betty from her "sister" queens are displayed in Betty's basement family room. Some of them include a plant duster, a bacon press, hot pads and sachet bags.

decorations made from wheat, and the queen from Minnesota distributed rawhide roses. Betty has all of the gifts displayed in her basement family room.

The winner from this year's convention was a queen from one of the Canada chapters.

Betty explained that the youngest woman was about 21 or 22, while the oldest was a retired school teacher.

"It's no beauty contest," Betty laughed.

Nonetheless, Betty is keeping a scrapbook with pictures of all the queens reigning during her year. She also records the thank you notes she gets from them for her liberty bells. Betty also has a photo album with pictures of conventions from all over the country.

Also in her album is a picture of her husband wearing a bright red hat, given to him when she was crowned queen. Pictures of her children, Mary and Michael, also appear in the album.

Although Betty's reign will end when she crowns the new queen in March, she and her husband plan to continue to be active members of the organization.

"You meet so many new friends," Betty said.

They also enjoy being with others who enjoy flying as much as they do. Betty explained that they fly mostly for pleasure. They have been to Florida, Canada and throughout the southwest part of the United States.

"We don't fly when it's really bad," Betty explained. "We respect the elements."

From Betty's viewpoint as



Each of the chapter queens brings gifts to share at the International Convention of the Flying Farmers. Betty chose stained glass liberty bells and Pennsylvania maps for her gift.

reigning Queen of the Pa. Flying Farmers, she had some advice for women who may like to be in her shoes someday.

"Any woman that has the opportunity should accept the responsibility," Betty said. "It's a real challenge."

