

Dorothy Gish addresses Pa. Society of Farm Women at Spring Rally

BY SUZANNE KEENE

HERSHEY — Nearly 1,100 farm women from all over Pennsylvania converged upon the Hershey Convention Center Tuesday to attend the Society of Farm Women's 19th Annual Spring Rally and to hear Dr. Dorothy Gish speak about "Women's Roles in Other Countries."

Hosted by Lebanon County's 21 farm women societies, the group enjoyed a day filled with singing, talking and fellowship. Dr. Gish was the keynote speaker, sharing the knowledge she gained about women from other cultures through her travel abroad.

Raised on a farm in Lebanon County, Dr. Gish is the assistant dean of students at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa. She has traveled abroad on numerous occasions, acting as head mistress of Macha Girls School in Zambia, Africa for seven years and conducting seminars on self-esteem, child development, and marriage and singleness in Japan, Phillipines, Hong Kong, Zambia, Brazil, New Guinea and Bolivia.

"I really value and celebrate growing up on a dairy farm," Gish said, fondly recalling memories from her childhood.

Her first trip beyond Pennsylvania's borders was to New York City, where she got a taste of the rest of the world and a desire to travel. Through her travels, she

has learned much about women around the world, and it was this knowledge that she shared with the farm women.

The women of rural New Guinea who live in primitive villages, she said, spend much of their lives nurturing the pigs that are the center of their culture. Pigs take the place of money in these primitive cultures, with husbands paying for their brides with pigs. The number of pigs a family owns determines its wealth.

"A good wife is one who can control her pigs," Gish explained.

The women cuddle and snuggle the pigs just as they would their own children, and they have a special sleeping place for the pigs where men are not permitted. Each year the village holds a pig festival when every family stakes his pigs out in the yard, and the village calculates its wealth by counting the number of pigs in the village.

Traveling across the map, Gish said that many women in northwest Australia have been catapulted from the stone age to the 20th century and are having a difficult time adjusting to the changes.

The people, who were hunters and gatherers for centuries, have been forced into government housing that has all the modern conveniences of a traditional Western home.

However, the women are accustomed to living in a vary harsh environment, "that would kill most of us within a week," and they have not adjusted well to the change, Gish said.

Chores like getting water and preparing meals, which used to take all day, now take only a fraction of their time, and the women do not know what to do with themselves. The situation is really sad, she said, but there don't seem to be any easy answers.

"They seem to me to have no authenticity as people," Gish said.

In Africa, where Gish spent over two years with the Batonga people, cattle play an important role similar to that of pigs in New Guinea. The bride price is paid in cattle, with the prettier, better educated brides costing more cows.

"In a sense it is a safeguard to marriage," she explained.

If the husband mistreats the wife and she returns to her parents, he must return the cattle. But if she leaves him without provocation, he keeps the cattle.

The African women are getting caught between two cultures, Gish explained. They have been introduced to all the modern conveniences, but have little knowledge of how to cope with the changes affecting their lives. They know both the ancient and modern lifestyles, but can't seem to fit



Dr. Dorothy Gish addressed nearly 1,100 farm women at the annual Spring Rally. Dr. Gish spoke on "Women's Roles in other Cultures."

them together.

"They have no frame of reference to relate to," she said. "For many women life is very difficult."

Japanese women are coping with similar difficulties, Gish said, with ancient and modern cultures existing side-by-side. In a home where guests must remove their shoes before entering, the decor is modern. The Japanese sit on the floor to eat a traditional Japanese meal, but the kitchen is loaded with modern appliances, including a dishwasher.

In this country marriages are traditionally prearranged by parents and a marriage broker. When the marriage broker finds a woman a suitable match, the couple begins dating. However, the couple retains the right to call off the relationship whenever they want.

While many of the more modern Japanese college women fight tradition by having a college fling, in the end they usually marry the man of their parent's choice, Gish said.

In traditional Japanese culture, the wife's role is more of a slave than of a companion to her husband. The wife focuses her attention on her children and eventually gains power through her relationship with her son.

"Women don't know how to act as a companion," she said.

For Bolivian women the gap between modern and ancient culture is mostly the result of poverty, Gish continued. The

women get their information about modern life from watching American movies, and from them learn to desire modern conveniences.

But because of their poverty, they can't afford to buy all the things they want. They use a bucket with holes punched in for a shower, and a wooden tub with a corrugated washboard for a washing machine.

From her experiences abroad, Gish concluded that "women everywhere are fascinating." Despite their differences, "each one needs to be loved and accepted for herself."

Earlier in the day the farm women listened to a musical presentation by Laura Ritchey, who also provided music during the noon meal.

Laura was named Lebanon County Girl of the Year by the Women's Clubs of Lebanon County last year for her achievements in high school and the community. In the past year, Laura has been attending Grove City College, where she has continued her active involvement. She is treasurer of the Women's Governing Board, and next year will be sophomore class president. She is in band, choir and a Christian entertainment ensemble called "New Grace."

Women from Lebanon County's Farm Women Societies and the Spring Rally Committee planned this year's rally. Karen Skellers and Barbara Grumbine, were co-chairmen of the committee



"The Stormy Weather Glee Club," consisting of members of Lebanon Farm Women Societies, provided surprise afternoon entertainment. Lebanon County hosted this year's Spring Rally held at the Hershey Convention Center.



Laura Richey provides dinner music for the noon meal at the Society of Farm Women Spring Rally.

Somerset Dairy Princess

(Continued from Page B17)

Dairy Princess Angie Brant made about 100 appearances at schools, farm tours, supermarket and shopping center promotions during her reign. She talked to both farm and non-farm groups and participated in special events like

parades.

During the year, she traveled 2,708 miles promoting dairy products. But despite all the time and hard work she put into it, Angie says she believes the effort was all worthwhile.

