

Esther Stuber continues family tradition at Ephrata Fair

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

EPHRATA — In its earliest years, the Ephrata Fair needlework and food entries were displayed in a storefront. Now they are housed in several rooms of the old railroad station, a tent behind the station and in the basement of Newberry's store on Main Street.

Now in its 66th year, the fair has been a part of Esther Stuber's life as long as she can remember. "I grew up with it," she says simply. Esther is general exhibits chairman for the fair, and as such is carrying on a family tradition. Her mother, Mrs. Samuel Mohler, served in that capacity for 35 years before Esther took over in 1960.

Esther disclaims any special abilities to do her job, saying casually, "I've gotten it down to a system after all these years. I have very good chairmen; they're very dependable and most have done it for a long time."

But it is Esther who is responsible for much of the behind-the-scenes work, beginning in August to line up chairmen, helpers and judges, and to order ribbons and other materials.

She gives a lot of credit to her husband, Harold, saying, "I couldn't operate without him." He not only offers support and encouragement, but before the fair he is on hand supervising the Future Farmers of America crew which helps set up tables to hold the food displays.

Esther sees exhibiting at local fairs as a "learning process." She believes it helps the public learn to recognize good quality in vegetables and needlecrafts. It is also her hope that exhibitors will improve "by learning what's good. People should learn that the wrong side should look as good as the right side. They shouldn't exhibit just for the dollars."

There are many exhibitors who



Esther Stuber shows off one of the many quilts which were entered in this week's Ephrata Fair. Esther has been general exhibits chairman for the fair since 1960, when she took over the job from her mother.

come back year after year, and they are often the big winners, according to Esther. "They learn what to look for."

She points out that exhibitors at the fair are judged against each other, not just against themselves as in 4-H judging. Having served as a sewing leader in the Lincoln 4-H Club for 25 years, she has done some judging herself. She also likes people to know that the judges in the needlework divisions are professional home economists, so they know what to look for.

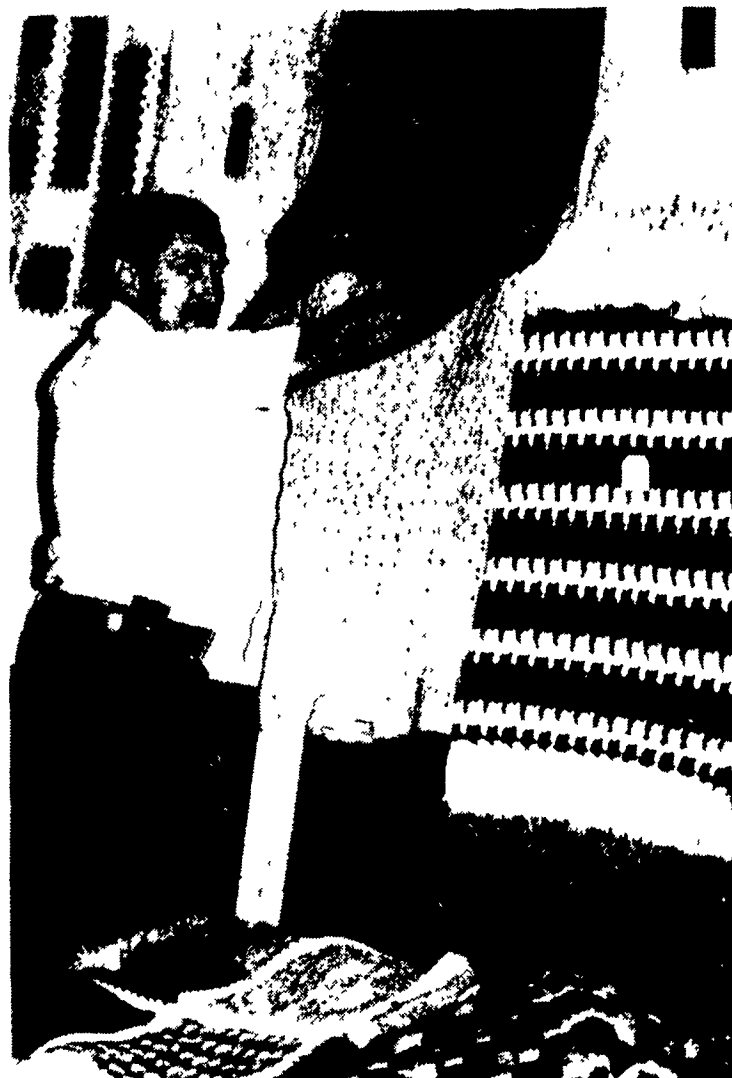
Asked about comments she gets from fairgoers, Esther says, "Mostly they just walk and they look."

Esther has observed and helped effect some changes over the years. She says, "There have been quite a few changes in crafts over the years. We have to evaluate and change the categories from time to time. It's not that styles change, but interests change. Next year something else will be the 'in' thing."

Canning and refinishing classes have been added to crafts, and items like counted cross-stitch have been added to needlework. Esther says that canned and baked goods don't change much, nor do vegetable entries.

She has presided over a change in the baked goods, and now after they are judged the baked entries are given to the Ephrata Community Hospital Auxiliary, which sells them at a food stand. The proceeds are then used to purchase equipment for the hospital.

Esther says that interests in the needlework categories has grown in recent years, and she credits it partly to the pride which people feel in their work. She explains,



John Fuehrer claims he got the job of helping with the displays because someone found out he couldn't say "no." Here he places an afghan in its proper place. He says, "Being somewhat color blind, I just take a stab at arranging."

"People sit and watch television, but they do something with their hands." The results of this handiwork shows up in beautiful displays at the fair.

During the interview, Esther's co-workers were considering pinning a "Best of Show" ribbon on her so everyone would know what an important part she plays in making the fair a success. John Fuehrer, who has helped set up the sewing displays for many years says, "Esther asks you to help in a way you can hardly say no."

The total number of exhibits has grown, and so has the quality. Esther says, "I think the quality has peaked."

The fruits and vegetables

display varies with the weather, although Esther said that last year "It was surprisingly better than we expected. We're expecting a good year this year."

Although Esther admits, "I love to make jelly," she is not among the exhibitors. She has plenty of varieties to choose from, having used 100 pounds of sugar this year for different kinds of jellies. However, she says, "I shouldn't enter, and it's such a bother." It's not that Esther isn't able to carry the jellies to the fair, but she says she has so many other fair items stored at her home which must be transported that she isn't inspired to bring her own entries along.

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This is the beginning of a beautiful display created by members of the needlework committee. Alva Weinstock holds an afghan for Betty Geshchwindt and John Fuehrer to put in place on the frame.



The sewing division always attracts a lot of entries, and here Nancy Good, left, helps judge Nancy Buckwalter as she examines each piece of clothing to award the proper ribbon.

Homestead Notes