

Peppy 81-Year-Old Is A Woman On The Move

BY LOU ANN GOOD

LEBANON — Peppy 81-year-old Ada Kneasel rises daily at 5:30 a.m. First thing she does is pull on her new sneakers. "I bought my first pair last year," the octogenarian brags.

Every morning she uses those sneakers to walk her daily mile. She explained, "I walk up and down my walk 20 times—that makes a mile."

After breakfast, she spends 10 hours a day stitching Ada's Creations at her sewing machine.

Ada's Creations are usually a combination of several patterns and her own creativity. She said, "I just see it in my mind and I know exactly how it's going to look. Some people have problems combining patterns because they can't picture how everything is going to look. I have insight into what looks right."

Ada takes on any sewing project that others request. She estimates that one half her sewing time is devoted to alterations and the other half to custom made clothing. She finds the most satisfaction in making bridal gowns, especially the one she's entering in state farm show competition this week.

Ada made the gown for her granddaughter. The gown features a long train trimmed with lace and 64 tiny covered buttons.

It's designed from a combination of patterns and adjusted for a perfect fit.

This is the first wedding gown she is entering in competition, but she has collected an impressive amount of ribbons garnered from entering coats and dresses.

The last time Ada entered items in the state farm show was in 1964 when she received the two top ribbons for both the eastern and western state competition. Since then,

she said, "I just kept sewing and didn't bother to take anything up."

But this year her daughter-in-law said, "I'm going to enter this gown in the farm show for you."

Ada said, "People say, 'It doesn't look homemade.'" She counters, "Well, that's what our teachers always told us: 'Get away from the homemade look.'"

Her start in sewing began many years ago when she took classes through the Lebanon extension service.

She said, "Years ago, when women were interested in sewing something, we met in each other's homes and someone came from the extension office to teach us." Eventually Ada gained so much skill, the extension ask her to teach the classes.

"I've taught everything in sewing from making coats to draperies," Ada said.

Many people who can sew, do not know how to adjust patterns for a perfect fit. Ada does. She asked, "Did you know people aren't even on both sides? I can tell just looking at people if their one shoulder is further down than the other one."

To remind her to make those adjustments on each article of clothing she makes, Ada keeps a record of her clients' measurements. She doesn't bother to check the records of those she makes on a regular basis. She said, "I know their measurements by heart so I know what adjustments to make without looking."

Ada purchases her material in south Philadelphia. "If you want good quality, that's where you should go," she said.

She learns a lot by examining how ready made clothing is designed.

"I look a lot, but you don't see



Great-Grandma Ada Kneasley finds plenty of reasons to sew for her 10 grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Back row from left: Tammy Beard, Anna Kneasel, and Tina Kneasel. Sitting from left, Ada holding great granddaughter Chelsea and Alvena Kneasley.

me wearing store-bought clothing," she boasted. "I make my own coats and suits. I make bound button holes by the Bishop method. Few people can do that anymore, but I think they look best."

For those who complain that putting in zippers or making bound buttonholes is too difficult, Ada wastes no sympathy. "I just made up my mind, I was going to do it and I did. I practiced until they (buttonholes) were no trouble at all. That's what other people need to do—practice."

Ada advises potential seamstresses, "Have patience. Don't throw it (the sewing project) in the corner if you make a mistake. I've been sewing all these years, and I rip out a lot even yet. That goes with sewing."

Women, Ada believes, should learn to sew now more than ever. She said, "Ready made clothing is expensive to buy and imports don't fit right because they aren't sized for American women."

For her personal preference, Ada said, "I like the young styles."

"See this blousom waistline," she said as she pointed to the silk dress she was wearing. "I wasn't sure how I'd like it until I tried it, but it turned out just fine."

She has two sewing machines set up side by side because, "you know they break down sometimes." She has no time to waste on breakdowns.

After 10 hours of sewing, Ada spends her evenings doing hand sewing and reading. "I got good eyes," she said, "and I got good bones—I drank a lot of milk when I was little. I always ate good and worked hard."

"I'm always going, never sitting idle," Ada admits. People often ask her, "Are you still sewing?"

Ada answers, "I must do something."

Even though Ada devotes most of her time to sewing, she takes a break now and then. Even then, she's a woman on the move.

She took her first airplane flight in 1986 to New Mexico at age 79. Since then she's traveled to California, Florida, Missouri, and now she's planning a trip this year to Hawaii and to Germany.

She took that first flight to a National Grange meeting. "I've been a member for 64 years," she said. She has a golden sheath pin



Unless she is traveling, 81-year-old Ada spends 10 hours daily at the sewing machine.

that represents 50 years. And she's a charter member of the Lebanon Farm Women Society 12. That makes 43 years. She recounts that she has kept everyone of the Farm Women program books. She served as president for two successive terms and as secretary.

Ada doesn't spend much time recounting stories from the past. She has too many current adventures such as the time a hot air balloon landed in her field. She recalls, "We (she and her daughter-in-law) went out to see it and jumped on like two kids and took a ride. Oh, that was fun."

Ada still lives on the farm she and her now deceased husband purchased at the beginning of their marriage in 1933. "The place was really delapidated when we bought it," said Ada. "We fixed it up and put all new boards on barn. We kept fixing up the house until it

was replastered and we put in new flooring and new windows."

Ada said, "Everyone admires my place and I like it too. It's been my home all these years and I don't want to leave."

Her three sons, who live nearby, now farm the land together. And on them and on her grandchildren, Ada depends on transportation because she explained, "I don't drive—that's one thing I don't do. But my sons and their children take me everywhere, so why should I drive?"

She said, "I've never went to high school, but I learned more out of school than in it. You can learn a lot if you keep doing and thinking."

Ada expects to keep learning new things. Her family has a history of longevity. Her mother lived to be 89 and her father 98, "with no trouble at all."

International Youth Exchange

Arleen L. Miller, 21, of Richboro has recently returned from her five-month trip to Paraguay, South America as the 1988 Pennsylvania International 4-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) representative. Miller lived with 10 families throughout the country sharing in their family life in order to grasp an understanding of the Paraguayan culture.

Miller was a 4-H member in Bucks County for 12 years. She participated in the Bucks County 4-H Seeing Eye Puppy Club and the Richboro 4-H Club completing projects in public speaking, leadership, health, crafts, and citi-

zenship. Miller's principal projects was the raising of Seeing Eye Puppies of which she raised six. She served as secretary, vice president, and president in the Puppy Club and in the Bucks County 4-H County Council. Miller was awarded the William Danforth "I Dare You" award for 1985, Teen Leader awards, the Bucks County Chamber of Commerce Youth Quality award, and was the 1985 Dog Care and Training winner to National 4-H Congress in Chicago, Illinois.

The IFYE trip to Paraguay was a step into the international forum of 4-H for Miller.



Making sure the wedding gown is in tiptop shape for state farm show competition, Ada examines each tiny covered button of the 65 stitched on it.