

More Fun

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as last year's," she said of fashion choices.

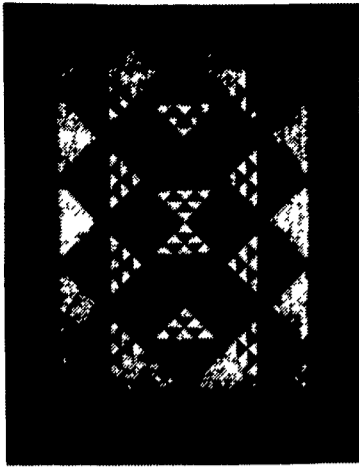
Grace charges by the hour and is adept at estimating time before beginning a job. She also works as a wedding coordinator and does bridal alterations on purchased gowns.

During the month of December, Grace concentrates on family sewing. In response to their requests for Christmas, Grace sewed a reversible coat, a heavy winter coat, a flannel shirt, three polar fleece jackets, a polar vest, and two pairs of fleece pajamas.

"I love sewing. But sewing for my family is my favorite thing," Grace said.

For 12 years, Grace and Eric homeschooled the children. It has been their observation that children do well if they have had two years of public schooling during their elementary years and then attend public high school.

The Millers rent a farmhouse. They own one Jersey cow that they hand milk to supply the family's milk. Eric is a carpenter.



In addition to piecing quilts, Grace has also quilted projects for nationally recognized quilt artists.

Because Grace and her daughter had the unusual distinction of both winning "best of show" awards in their age categories at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, this article focuses on them. But Grace said that each of their children pursue different interests.

The oldest son Daniel is a computer science major at La-Tourne, Texas. Eldon is 16, Joel, 14, Alicia, 12, and Patrick, 10.

"We don't encourage competition among the children. It is not important for them to excel but to understand practical skills so that when they leave home, they can function without us," Grace said.

People often ask how Grace can accomplish so much. She explains, "Part of survival in a large family is working together. Because we do not have television, we read, play games, encourage creativity, and have assigned chores."

She doesn't burn midnight oil on sewing projects or housework. She said that she and her husband have always made it a rule not to work after the children are in bed.

"To function properly, I need eight to nine hours of sleep at night," Grace said.

Although Grace does most of the family cooking, she does not do dishes or cleaning, which are chores assigned to the children.

She said, "Our children complain sometimes. They're normal."

Sometimes they want more things just like their peers. But their parents tell them, "We have chosen not to give you everything you want. We want you to learn to give and not to be selfish. Our lives are not our own

but are to benefit others."

Raising a large family is not without a price. "It's a huge responsibility. We have sacrificed monetary gain," Grace said as she glanced around their

modestly furnished home. "But we have been able to enjoy playing and working together."

For the Millers, that's a goal worth the sacrifice.

Ida's Notebook

by

Ida Risser



This morning I looked over my mother's diary from 1938. There were seven girls in the family—ages 3 to 17—and it was a busy life.

What impressed me was how many notes were made concerning sickness. It seems that one of us, during the winter, always had a cold or a fever. And, one time it was noted that only six students were at our two room school out of some 30 as everyone had the measles.

At home we always had dishes to wash and tobacco to strip. And of course, lots of cooking and baking to do. We butchered a sheep and three hogs. There were three cans of lard from the butchering and we used it in baking and frying potatoes which we ate every day as it was my father's favorite dish.

My parents had a flock of turkeys who roamed in the meadows and woods during the spring and summer. They sold

27 of them over the holidays and bought a new tom turkey. We ate the old one that weighed 28 pound.

Every Sunday we went to Sunday School and church. In the afternoon we visited relatives or they visited us.

My father worked very hard as he put down a stone base for a long lane to another farm by breaking big stones with a stone hammer. He also had to chase our steers to the Conestoga River everyday for water.

The painters who worked on the barn and house were paid .45¢ per hour. We were paid .19¢ a dozen for eggs that a huckster picked up at the farm. The tobacco was sold for .13¢ per pound. That year we grew 14 bushel of sweet potatoes and my mother noted that she made a big iron kettle of soap for washing clothes. There was always work to do.

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