

Clues On A Contest—From Chicago To You

The Birmingham Eccentric

BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN
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How strange that so many men and women will concentrate on gathering things into big barns, and while doing this they pay so little attention to "gathering inspired thoughts" to store in their "spiritual repositories." A workable understanding and application of honesty, ethics, Good Samaritanism . . . these are the kind of riches that none can steal from you, or that economic upsets can destroy. The Kingdom IS within! (GRAY)

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By MARY ELLEN MEAD
Society Editor

Hard Hitting Program

It isn't exactly a pink tea party, ladies, when the Suburban Homemaker program starts rolling in Chicago for a contest that is as unique as it is fulfilling. The froth of a beauty contest is missing; so is financial compensation (for any other type) for endorsements. No winner is commercialized, no strings are attached to the prizes awarded. As a matter of fact, it resembles nothing so much as a brain-washing session, with the homemakers, bless 'em, ripe pickings for a group of people of national stature.

People of Importance

The conference brings together community leaders from all over the country—from the fields of education, government, business and industry, as well as from civic, professional and social service agencies. The common bond is an interest in community improvement and strengthened family life.

As a matter of fact, homemakers are present for the expressed purpose of exploring new ways of making our communities better places in which to live and raise children. Small wonder, then, with only two days for panel discussions, interviews with the judges and listening to guest speakers, the experience becomes a power play that's stimulating but exhausting.

'Heard in the Lobby'

With a bow to one of our local magazines, we repeat comments heard in the lobby of the Drake Hotel (headquarters for the contest) which could prove guide posts for entries another year:

From a judge: "Not one of these gals is international enough in her thinking . . . they're great in a wrapped up, sort of insular way . . . but are they thinking enough about the nuclear world in which we live and how to combat it?"

From a panelist: "They aren't being honest . . . they're giving only the answers they think we WANT to hear" . . . (incidentally, the gals are not judged on their panel participation).

From an editor: "Scrubbing, washing, ironing is all very well . . . so is outside community activity . . . but actually, it's the kids and their development . . . sometimes in the face of financial need . . . who reflect the measure of a homemaker" . . .

From a judge: "Income bracket, high or low, shouldn't be a determining factor" . . .

From a panelist: "There is a real danger that community leaders can become complacent . . . lose their role in influencing public opinion if they don't maintain an acute awareness of their unique responsibilities" . . .

From an editor: "My gal says they've (the contestants) grown to know and like each other so much, they're thinking of forming a club for re-unioning" . . .

What Makes a Winner

The woman who received the National Suburban Homemaker of the Year Award is Mrs. Sharon of Chicago, her children and her husband as the pivotal points of her world, but her activities, interest and community endeavors are many and varied.

She is Mrs. James E. Sharon of Manchester, Mo., a St. Louis suburb.

People of all ages, races and cultures, have been a consuming interest of Mrs. Sharon's since her graduation from Iowa State University at Ames with a BS in sociology and psychology. Following two years as a YWCA director, she traveled to Europe where she participated in the Experiment in International Living program. In the 14 years since her marriage she has opened her home to students and guests from a dozen foreign countries and feels that her three children have gained immeasurably in international understanding through these visits.

Mrs. Sharon's current activities include serving as a Girl Scout leader, as an active member of the United Church Women of St. Louis and of the League of Women Voters. She was a delegate to the recent second annual Methodist Conference on Human Relations, held in Chicago.

. . . and Two Runners-Up

Named as second and third runners-up for the national award were Mrs. Thomas Kelly of Cherry Hill, N. J., and Mrs. Gerald W. Gustus of North Little Rock, Ark.

A tall, patrician blonde, Mrs. Kelly might be mistaken for a photographer's model, which she occasionally is. However, as the mother of six children under the age of seven, modeling assignments are not frequently accepted. Two of her children are three years old, but they are not twins. One is an adopted Korean child.

Mrs. Kelly's voice training at the Philadelphia Musical Academy now stands her in good stead as she sings for church and charitable affairs, although she lists singing as an avocation only.

Mrs. Gerald W. Gustus, third place award winner, has put in many hours of volunteer work with the Red Cross, work which has enabled her to save the lives of two children by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Her three sons, two of whom are now grown, had outstanding educational records and extra curricular honors as well, despite the fact that the family has lived in 11 states because of Mr. Gustus' work with the Missouri Pacific Railroad. One son became, at age 12, the youngest Eagle Scout in the nation. Another son graduated from high school at the age of 15.

Mrs. Gustus believes that a woman's home and family are her first responsibility but that "women need worthwhile outside activities to balance their lives and to make them broader and more understanding mothers and wives."



PRESIDENT OF THE SUBURBAN PRESS FOUNDATION PAUL N. AVERILL CONGRATULATES MRS. JAMES E. SHARON OF MANCHESTER, MO., NATIONAL SUBURBAN HOMEMAKER WINNER, AND THE TWO RUNNERS-UP, MRS. THOMAS KELLY (LEFT) OF CHERRY HILL, N. J., AND MRS. GERALD GUSTUS OF NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARK.



ONE OF SEVERAL PANEL DISCUSSIONS HELD IN THE DRAKE HOTEL'S GOLD COAST ROOM ON THIS STAGE AWARD DAY, "OUR" PETEY RECEIVED HONORABLE MENTION

Birmingham's Local Homemaker Winner Writes Note To Editor And Her Hometown

To the Editor:

Perhaps through a public letter here in The Eccentric it will be possible for me, in some way, to convey an expression of the depth and beauty of my life these past two weeks.

Having been chosen The Suburban Homemaker of the Year, to represent the Birmingham-Bloomfield area, has been a heartwarm-

ing experience beyond compare.

Friendships are one of man's richest gifts, but the full realization and evaluation more often makes its impact during times of trouble.

THE WARMTH of expression conveyed to me and my entire family has encompassed tenderness, gaiety, humor and pathos.

We have heard from close friends, mere acquaintances and many with whom we had lost contact since their moving to other states.

It may interest some readers to know that former school-superintendent, Dr. Otis M. Dickey and Mrs. Dickey, who are not close associates, both wrote letters from Colorado. The hospitality shown us by

The Eccentric has been another unforgettable experience.

I WOULD LIKE to take this opportunity to encourage our local citizens to think carefully about their friends or families who would be deserving of this high honor another year. My association with the other contestants in Chicago was enrich-

ing and rewarding. I have definitely returned to Birmingham a "bigger" person.

Mere words do not begin to convey the enrichment which has been afforded me. With the greatest sincerity, I am

Sincerely,
Mrs. Richard H. Dickensfield
("Petey")

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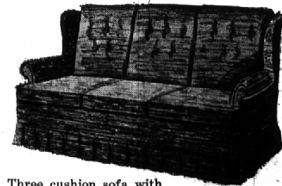
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