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Artistic Navy Wife Puts Talents to Work

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Artistic Navy Wife Puts Talents to Work

Ruth Ann Petree's artistic talents were first used when as a child, she decorated Valentines for her mother. "I've always been interested in arts and crafts," admits Ruth Ann. "As a child, I preferred clay to dolls," she continued.

Both her interest in and knowledge of art were put to full use last year when she was commissioned to do the liturgical artwork for the new PG School Catholic Chapel. All attending the Catholic Chapel can view the outstanding accomplishments of this talented Navy wife. "Privileged" is the word Ruth Ann used to describe her reaction to being selected to undertake the project. She was to interpret and design the Corpus and two religious symbols by means of copper tooling.

The mammoth project, which took two weeks to complete, involved working with a piece of copper 18' by 8'. The material was cut into thirty-inch strips for ease of handling. Not until the finished work was assembled and erected was the artist able to view her endeavors . . . in total. "It was just too large for critical viewing when on the floor where the copper was tooled," Ruth Ann explained. Her other two works in the chapel are also done by the copper tooling process, which incidentally, is an art form she had never before attempted. One side panel is a lamb and the other grapes and wheat.

"We made a chapel of an empty build-

ing," Ruth Ann relates with pride, "and it's such a wonderful place to worship. Our draperies were made from the nets of an old-time Monterey fisherman. Everyone contributed and worked . . . everything was done by hand, and I'll never forget any part of that work. There was such a wonderful group of people involved on such a meaningful project. It will always remain a part of me."

Ruth Ann, a former airline stewardess and now wife of LT Nowell Petree, USN, enjoys all forms of art, but is more interested in crafts than in the fine arts. Her talents in both fields are many. She designs and decorates posters and programs for club activities, does flower arranging, sews, and, with bits and pieces of everything, produces unique collages. "I save—and find valuable—most things that other people throw away," she laughed.

'Tis the season for artists like Ruth Ann to shine and she's doing just that. Currently she's busily making brightly decorated Christmas balls. Also in the offing is the 1964 Petree holiday greeting card, which Ruth Ann will design, write and paint. In addition to these activities she's co-chairman of the Second Annual Religious Art Show to be sponsored next month by the Catholic Chapel Guild of the PG School and the Naval Air Facility. Approximately 700 artists are expected to participate in this year's showing. Private exhibits are



Ruth Ann Petree is shown with one of the three pieces she copper-tooled for the Powers Hall Catholic Chapel.

also planned for the event.

Ruth Ann's days are mighty busy since her activities with the art show and her own artistic projects must be planned around the schedule and needs of her student husband and their three children, Nowell III who is 3; Barbara, 2 and Meg, 8 months. Nowell is enrolled in the Air-Ocean Environment program, section MOZ3.

Plans for Ruth Ann's last year in Monterey include many projects involving art . . . if there is time. "The entire Monterey area is so stimulating, and opportunities abound here with many excellent schools and highly qualified teachers," Ruth Ann says. "I hope I may take advantage of some of these classes.

"I've learned from every art course I've taken, no matter how elementary," states Ruth Ann. She feels that courses in art give her a base and, in turn, more confidence to try new things. But to Ruth Ann, the most important thing that gives confidence is for one to be satisfied with one's work. Her latest course in art was Life Drawing which she took at MPC last year. She finds the local teachers quite understanding with the military wives who are attempting to be students. She was very careful to attend every class . . . even on the night little Meg was born. Mommy attended class first and afterwards was off to the hospital.

Ruth Ann says, "The life of a military wife is an exciting one." For the Petrees it began in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. "Afterwards," Ruth Ann relates, "we were singled out by Pope John for an audience." This incident remains an inspiring and cherished moment to both Ruth Ann and Nowell.

The Petrees will be leaving the Monterey Peninsula for another duty station next year, but Ruth Anne will have left, through her talents, a part of herself here at Postgraduate School. Her efforts will long be an inspiration to many. —Jean Sawhook



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