

Instead of writing a "story" about the life of Bertha  
*Mammoth Cave, Ky.*  
Scasss, I let my camera work to let people see her life as a  
folk artist, for themselves. I think it will show more about  
her than a written sketch.

Bertha was born in Mississippi, but later her family  
moved back to Kentucky around her mothers' family on the  
border of Hart and Edmonton Counties. After her Daddy, who was  
a Thompson, passed away she lived with her Grandmother. She  
attributes most of her folk art abilities to her Grandmother  
and she is now writing a book called "Grandmother Tell Me"  
with some of the stories that she was told in her childhood.

In 1945 Bertha married Haskell Scasss at age 17. They had  
known each other only three weeks but had never dated. "I knew  
he was who I wanted."

With each set of slides there will be a brief explanation  
of Berthas' involvement with the objects.

In the first twelve slides Bertha is constructing a  
cornshuck doll. "No one in the county makes shuck dolls but  
me. "These are Haskell's favorites of all of Berthas' art. She  
goes through the process of rolling the arms, forming the  
head, the body and the cornshuck skirt. The tiny clothes for  
the dolls are what make them look so nice and each piece is  
cut out of fabric and sewn by hand. "I can cut the circle (for  
the hat) without even marking it."

Originally made for pioneer children the hickory nut

dolls, as in slides 13-14, are Berthas' favorite. "It takes a lot of time because of all the sewing. "Each doll takes three hickory nuts to form the head and the body. All of the rest is made with fabrics. "I love to make these things, I guess you can tell it from my face." She says you can play rough with them and they won't fall apart.

Bertha also makes quilts, this is one of her favorites because of the bright colors. She remembered that her father made quilts but no one in the family kept one which she says disappoints her.

Stencil work is also a part of her expertise as is displayed on a pillow in her living room.

Bertha has a spare bedroom that is full of old toys, dolls and somethings she has made. One of the homemade pieces includes a checkerboard afghan with wooden checkers, she says people are really fond of it.

In slide 23 two of her grandchildren hold their favorite toys. Berthas', slide 25, is an old cloth doll.

Slides 26-32 are some examples of things she does for the Christmas season. She has handmade ornaments for the tree and under one of the two trees she has a nativity scene that she has crafted of wood. Bertha also bakes gingerbread men for the holidays. The stockings and wreath are crazy quilt with briar stitch and they are both of velvet.

"My house is just a country home, it's what I want." Everywhere you look in her house there is something she has made. In one corner of her kitchen sits a moss duck. There are also baskets all over that were made by either her or her stepfather. Slide 34 is a basket made of grapevine. In Berthas' kitchen window there are wooden animals she has made

for decoration and a handbuilt stool that she has painted and stenciled.

The last set of slides are some of the important people in her life, her grandchildren, who love the things their grandmother does. Her husband Haskell who seems amazed at some of the things his wife does, but she can do it and her son Michael, he learned to make baskets from Berthas' stepfather.

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