

# Quilters give Blythedale children hand-crafted 'pieces of home'

By SARA BLOOM

The project began to take shape just about this time last year.

It was well into November when Tykie Horowitz and her fellow quilters Leda Kahn, Betty Goodfriend and Marlys Klein got going on the idea of making quilts for hospitalized children. Then, before you know it, practically the whole Village Squares quilting group was cutting and tying and piecing and sewing, here in Scarsdale, and suddenly there was a huge pile of cuddly baby quilts. Thanksgiving has a way of stimulating that kind of thing.

Any youngster, of course, would be overjoyed to get one of these little gems — elephants and tigers, clowns and butterflies and all manner of whimsical patterns in bright colors dancing on soft cotton batting, guaranteed to catch a little one's eye. Putting quilts in these little hands, though, catches their hearts as well.

## Recipients are infants and toddlers

The recipients, in this case, are inpatients in the infants and toddlers unit at Blythedale Children's Hospital, and many of them are going to be there for months at a time. The quilts, you see, pieced together with talented and very loving hands, provide a little piece of home, said staff nurse Elizabeth Maurer.

It was her mother, Pat Maurer, who identified the need for her fellow Village Squares, who were looking for a local outlet for their handiwork. The women had sent some quilts to a social services home in Massachusetts and to a shelter for abused women in Yonkers.

But when Ms. Maurer came to one of the monthly club meetings and told the women about her children — the asthmatics, those born with cleft pallets and physical handicaps, those severely injured in accidents and other difficult cases that she works with every day, it was decided. And Elizabeth Maurer left that day with 40 beautiful, handmade quilts.

A quilt is more than the sum of its parts, as present day quilt buyers can attest. New ones, even those pieced and quilted by machine, can run into many hundreds of dollars, and as for the antiques, well, bring your checkbook.

## An ancient art form

Quilting is an ancient art form with some examples dating back to the 12th century, when knights wore padded jackets under what must have been very scratchy suits of armor.

According to Leda Kahn, one of the stalwarts in the group, "Marie Antoinette probably wore a quilt under all that finery." More recent history reveals that Englishwomen, particularly, quilted bed coverings, but that their patterns, alas, had a tendency to be rigid and uninspired.

In America, however, quiltmaking



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New baby quilts are surveyed by, from left, Scarsdale's Tykie Horowitz and Marlys Klein, Miriam Dedyo of Irvington and Eve Feinstein of Hastings. According to the staff at Blythedale Children's Hospital, quilts have therapeutic properties. One pleased patient, right.

was raised to a fine art. Every self respecting 19th-century bride-to-be had at least a baker's dozen in her trousseau, and expertise in design and execution was highly prized.

Which brings us to those children being Blythedale. Because, children being children, they don't care much about art forms and workmanship, color sense, creative design and other verbiage. Children are practical by nature.

So, what is a quilt, really? Like the great violinists of the world who call themselves fiddle players, quilters describe the product — about 25 hours of hand work in the simplest of them — as a fabric sandwich. The top is the decorative part, either pieced or appliqued; the middle is the filler, usually cotton batting, and the bottom is a piece of whole cloth. The purpose of the quilting (or needlework) is to keep the cotton batting from shifting.

## Quilts are versatile

And that's what's so appealing to the youngsters. These blankets are soft



enough to scrunch up under your arm, pretty enough to hold a tea party on and warm enough to curl up under at naptime. Never mind that the stitches are perfect, the designs unique and the patterns ingeniously crafted.

Never mind, as club guru Teresa Reilly says, that each fine quilt is really a painting, as appropriate for a wall hanging as a bed covering. Never mind that one of the women stitched in a greeting, "Made for you, little one."

What's important here is that each child has a quilt of his or her very own

— to take home on the weekends and back again to the hospital Monday morning. You can call it a fabric sandwich, but to the children, that quilt is a little piece of home.

It is also imbued with therapeutic properties, according to Elizabeth Maurer, who tells the story about one of her 4-year-olds, a little girl who was having such a hard time adjusting to the hospital routine that she just wasn't getting any better. Until this quilt came into the picture, that is. As the nurse put it, "After ..."

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