

A lady with spirit wins at CNE

Every now and again you talk to someone — and their indomitable spirit leaves an impression out of proportion to the length of the visit.

Last week, I absorbed — ever so briefly — the enthusiasm and directness of a woman who reminded me of someone else. In fact, in mid-sentence, I blurted out, "Your approach to life is so like the enthusiasm and imagination my mother had."

She accepted what she instinctively recognized as my ultimate compliment and then continued to talk about consistently winning awards at the CNE.

Muriel Shaw had three reasons for wanting to win top honours at this year's CNE with her fine, hand-knitted lace. The first reason involved her love of competition. "It was the centennial, and I knew they would have the most entries in their history. I thought it would be a nice year to win," she said.

The second reason was an acknowledgement of her years. Muriel Shaw is 89, and although she talks with the firm voice and contemporary ideas of a woman half her age, she is uncertain whether her eyes will allow her to continue the fine work.

But the final and over-riding reason for wanting to win was her husband. Mrs. Shaw had started the fine and intricate work while she sat at the bedside of her dying husband last December and, while he watched the work grow, he said he wanted her to win.

Her remarkable work is not only the work of gifted fingers but the work of a fertile imagination because you don't win simply by producing careful work. It takes something extra. The 'something extra' that Mrs. Shaw decided she needed was a work so delicate it couldn't be produced on needles that could be bought in any store.

She took two hat pins and filed the edges to make her own needles and then, working with the finest thread, produced a hand-knitted lace that had no equal at the show.

Mrs. Shaw is used to winning and not just for her lace. Her work ranges from knitted socks to shawls, cutwork, embroidered pictures.

She talked about keeping house for her husband until his death and moving into "a lovely, sunny room" in her daughter's home about six months ago.

She talked about aging, and about maintaining standards. "I like to embroider and do lace edging on pretty handkerchiefs. I never use tissues — a hankie is so much prettier. I think you care more about being dainty as you get older."

And I guess that's the statement that stayed with me. Somehow it was significant: When you get older, you don't care less, you care more. And I can't wish any of us a more rock-solid philosophy as the years rush by.



Muriel Shaw, 89, wears some of her CNE ribbons, and displays the fine work that wins her honors.