

A VISIT WITH STAN AND BARBARA FORTENBACH ON AUGUST 19, 2005

From stage props to baking goodies, (plus many projects in between), the church has been truly blessed with the many talents of the two Fortenbachs

Stan and Barbara Fortenbach tried several different churches before finding First Church in 1974. They found the sanctuary bright and beautiful and were impressed with the youth program. Their sons, Victor and Jeffrey, joined Sunday School classes and later Jeff became an acolyte. The Fortenbachs joined the Mission Valley Doubles and made many friends enjoying monthly social events with other young couples from the church. They still have happy memories of some of these events such as the Easter outings and Christmas progressive dinners.

Victor and Jeff joined the youth choir and this brought about a new experience for their parents. Ruth Spies, the youth choir director, always put on two musicals every year. She asked Barbara and Stan if they might help make backdrops and props to make the program more realistic. Since the programs were held in the sanctuary, the backdrops needed a frame to keep them in place. Ray Bond helped make a frame that pivoted, showing off the beautiful painted backdrops to great advantage.

Soon Barbara and Stan were asked to make backdrops for each season for the stage in Linder Hall by Ed Hurlbut, the leader of Active Adults. During the 80's, the Methodist Men sponsored the annual dinner for the church. Each dinner had a theme and Linder Hall was transformed into four different looks each year for four years. Each dinner had a title and theme. For example, there was "Up with America", "Autumn Leaves", "Holiday Fantasy" and "Evening of Elegance." For the dinners, besides the painted murals on the stage, Barbara and Stan made additional decorations that included the table tops as well as ceiling decorations. There were leaves hanging from the ceiling for "Autumn Leaves", hot air balloons sewn by members of the church hanging from the ceiling for "Up with America," and snow flakes for "Holiday Fantasy." For the "Evening of Elegance," they made eight crystal chandeliers" from plastic cups. They were wired with miniature lights by Lawson Cooke, and hung from the ceiling. The effect was spectacular.

In the early 80's, the Fortenbach family was involved with the old sound system, working with long time member, Harlan Hatz. At that time, the sound booth was located under the sanctuary across from the old choir room. Stan and Barbara would take turns with Harlan Hatz on different Sundays to monitor the sound system.

At about that time, George Davis asked them if they would help tape the sermons and music to begin a Tape Ministry. This was when the church had a copy machine that would make only one tape at a time. Bob Morley, one of the other ministers, was instrumental in purchasing a copy machine that would make two tapes at the same time. With an idea for a tape jacket, a design was made and the print shop made jackets for each tape. Stan and Barbara would tape the service at 9:30 a.m. and then copy the tape and package them with the jackets and label them with the date, sermon title and preacher's name and sell them after the 11:00 a.m. service. Today the services are recorded and put on CD's.

Barbara served on the Décor Committee with Neil Larson, Kay Kent, Elaine Bond and Leven Leatherbury. At the time that she served on that committee, the cranberry carpet was purchased.

When Carol LeBeau started hostessing the Spring Fling, a women's luncheon, she asked Barbara if she would make 25 Tuxedo aprons for the men to wear while serving. She made them, and they have been used on more than one occasion. The women were very impressed with the men all dressed up in their "formal" attire. After this, Norma Peterson asked Barbara to make 35 reversible vests for the Bell Ringers. These opportunities to sew were right up Barbara's alley since she had taught sewing for many years.

Baking is another interest pursued by Barbara and Stan. The First Church Players involved Barbara with creating candies, cakes and pies for their after-the-play gathering in Linder Hall. When it came time to put on the first production, Barbara and Stan were asked to make ten different desserts each to serve 130 people. They baked cakes and cookies and made delicious candies for the night with the players. For the second year, Barbara and Stan made 85 pies of different kinds to serve over a three night performance. The two of them decorated the room and tables, then prepared and served the food themselves. They also made punch and had coffee for those attending the play.

Over the years, when a function involved decorations, often both Stan and Barbara would be involved with some of their wonderful props. Their projects have provided them with wonderful memories.

Interviewer: Margaret Shafer - August 19, 2005.