

BLACK SHEEP HANDSPINNERS GUILD  
Ithaca, New York

NEWSLETTER #22 -- January, 1979  
*Edited by Jean Warholic*

Well, no one can say we haven't had a winter this year! While it hasn't been really bad out for long, most of us are wishing that Spring would hurry up -- we've had about enough...

*HELLO and GOODBYE!* Yes, with this issue, if you have not renewed your membership with us, this is your last newsletter. Check for a big ~~red~~ dot on your address label -- if we haven't heard from you, you will have one. (And if we have made an error, please let either Linda Dickinson or Jean Warholic know about it.) Only those who have renewed (i.e., no red dot) are being sent a 1979 Membership List along with this Newsletter. And we are planning to really make the Newsletter better than ever this year, so if it has meant a lot to you, *send in your dues NOW...* (Last repeat: \$4.00 for Active, \$6.00 for Inactive, \$2.00 for full-time Student -- payable to Black Sheep Handspinners Guild -- send to Linda Dickinson, Box 179A, Spencer, N.Y. 14883.) We really don't want to lose you!!!

We had a nice, if crowded, Christmas Party in December at the Heritage Craft Shop in Dryden -- you missed good soup-pots, lots of news and talk, and a nice series of dye plant slides by Doris Brown if you didn't make it to the meeting. (Thank you, Doris! And we can hardly wait to see MORE!) Rock Day was especially fun this year, too -- more people than ever, with the faraway spinners from Penn Yan and Canandaigua braving the weather! Dora Swart gave her (usual) good talk/demonstration about dressing a distaff with flax, and many people tried it that afternoon. Doloria Chapin and Norman Hall also showed their spinning wheels which we never seem to tire of seeing and hearing about! Big thank-yous to Dora, Doloria, and Norman, as well as all who helped to make our Rock Day such a festive, pleasurable day!!! Now that we are all back to spinning feverishly, let's get down to business, starting with material from Gretchen Sachse...

JANUARY 31. Last day to file for wool incentive payments for 1978. You must have a sales document with an original signature showing the number of pounds of fleece sold, price, buyer, and grower. File at the ASCS Office at Community Corners. For those who send their wool to Bartlett's or similar operations, ask them to provide such a document. Also eligible for payment are unshorn market lambs. Wool incentive program contributes to wool promotion and education, as well as helping the government keep tabs on what is being produced where. If you can't participate this year (or this reaches you too late), keep records for 1979. And when you buy a fleece, remind the grower and offer to sign a document. NOTE: the Guild has wool documents for your use -- will have a plentiful supply at the meetings this Spring...

FEBRUARY 15. (While we are still on sheep.) Deadline for filing the 1978 U.S. Agricultural Census. The form is simplified this year -- they accept reasonable estimates if your record-keeping isn't immaculate, and it provides essential data for decision-making, economists, historians, etc. If those of us with small operations don't file, a lot of sheep will never be counted. Let's show them the resurgence of the small farm flock. In the 1830's, New York led the nation in sheep with about 6-million head -- a fact we wouldn't know without the agricultural census. Please file!

FEBRUARY 12 MEETING. Tin Can, 10:00 a.m. WINTER DYEPOTS -- using the Gerber investigative method -- five of them: onion skins (Gretchen says she doubts that any of us has thoroughly investigated this dyestuff, and she is right!), spruce cones, sumac, either nut hulls or a bark, and a mystery pot! Bring: 80 one-yard skeins, loosely tied (not in a figure-8). These will be washed, mordanted, and dyed using various after-rinses, at

the meeting. Commercial yarns are quite acceptable if you don't have handspun you want to use.-- just make sure it is 100% wool! Bring if you have them: small and medium enamel dye pots and stirring sticks. Drop Libby Martin Llop a postal card if you have quantities of a terrific dye pot that you'd like to share and we will add or substitute it! So, here is your chance to refresh your techniques, try out the colors of winter plant-stuffs, and we will take care of important matters of business while the mordants are on.

Also on the agenda for February's meeting: (don't say you weren't warned!)

- (1) Wool Day -- where, when, etc.
- (2) Pricing handspuns for guild sales -- a final report. Decision to be made (really!) at the March meeting.
- (3) Disposition of the Gerber skeins -- committee recommendations, with the final decision at the March meeting.
- (4) Demonstrations - development of a policy.
- (5) The Ontario Spinners categories (see Newsletter #21 and page 4 of this newsletter) and recommendations for the New York State Fair.

MARCH 12 MEETING. Japanese Braiding, with Masa Kinoshita. Directions for what you will need to make and bring will be available at the February meeting (and mailed shortly thereafter to those not at the Feb. meeting). If you are itchy and want a sneak preview, dig out a copy of the Winter 1977 issue of Shuttle, Spindle & Dye pot...

FUTURE PROGRAMS suggested so far have included finishing techniques, marketing (hand-spun/crafts), blends, different fleeces and their uses, cotton. Get your wants and ideas to Libby Martin Llop... We would also like to emphasize sheep more this year, especially with the number of spinners in the Guild with small flocks.

WANTED: Short book or journal reviews for the newsletter... It would be wonderful to have a paragraph or two on books in the Guild's Library, or other new books of interest. We have two brand-new books right now, waiting for your review (*The Complete Spinning Book* by Candace Crockett [1977] and *Spinning Wheels - Spinners and Spinning* by Patricia Baines [1977]). It does not take much time and would be enjoyed by everyone. WANTED: Items of interest for the newsletter. We all read different periodicals and books -- when you come across something related to spinning, dyeing, weaving, sewing, knitting, sheep, crocheting, etc etc etc, jot it down (with a reference as to where it comes from) or xerox it, and get it to Jean Warholic. We have some for the newsletter now, but let's get some of those old (and new) favorites into circulation! ALSO WANTED: For a future program -- as many different fleeces as possible. We need about 1-lb. of each. If you can contribute, let us know!

From Gretchen Sachse... As you can see, we have a full and interesting agenda! I hope that as many people as possible will participate. We hope to include the Saturday Group in these important decisions, since too often they are disenfranchised.

The business meeting seems underattended (even by those in the room!). I hope to cut it down to an efficient, shortened form in the coming months. This can be accomplished only with your cooperation. In the course of the year, I hope to see the Guild fulfill its promise to members -- to promote common interests, protect its members, and uphold the standards of the craft. If it cannot do this, it is not a guild in the true sense of the word. I also hope to see the members fulfill their individual obligations to the guild. This was a matter of highest concern to the old and new officers when we met earlier this month to discuss the past and future of the guild. We will try to make it as easy as possible for you to meet your obligations and offer as much understanding and support as possible.

So much for the State-of-Guild speech!

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\* AD SECTION \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

SILK FIBERS -- Beautiful white and tussah in combed and carded roving. Send SASE for free samples and price list. Cocoons, waste silk, silk hankies, spindles, and flicker-combs also. FALLBROOK HOUSE, RD #2 - Box 17, Troy, PA 16947. (717/297-2498) \*9/9\*

GALA WINTER SALE!! SALE on selected yarns for knitters and weavers. We have: Susan Bates needles and hooks. Floor, table, tapestry, and Inkle looms (Ulltex, Schacht & Leclerc). Shuttles, tapestry needles, warping pegs and boards. Spinning wheels (Ashford Traditional and Traveller, Sleeping Beauty, Thumbelina, Clemes Kit Wheel, and Doloria Chapin's "American Traveller"). Drop spindles, niddy-noddies, and handcarders (pine and walnut, flat- or curved-backed). Rental carding machine, loom, and spinning wheel. Ciba dyes (Kiton and Chloratine). Natural dyestuffs, mordants. Newly sheared fleeces (Finn, Morlam & Dorset), \$2.50/lb. Books, umbrella swifts, ball winders. New and wonderful items arriving daily! Classes, too. Kay and Linda -- HERITAGE CRAFT SHOP, 87 W. Main Street, Box 492, Dryden, N.Y. 13053. (607/844-4381) 1/2

MACHINE WASHABLE SHEEP SKINS, \$25 each. Bartlettyarns, natural and dyed, 1- to 3-ply, \$8/lb. Have your sheep shorn, \$1 per head. Mohair, \$9/lb. Patterns, 50¢. Roving, \$4/lb. Two pure fine black ram lambs. Gjeter Wool Co., Libby Martin Llop, RD #2, Locke, N.Y. 13092. (315/497-9545) 2/3

HONEY FOR SALE. Unfiltered, 80¢/lb. (A one-quart canning jar holds about 3-lbs.) Honey can be brought to Guild meeting or make arrangements when you order... Donald Warholic, 280 Ringwood Road, Freeville, N.Y. 13068. (607/539-7648, evenings.)

RENT OUR ASHFORD WHEEL, \$8/month. Or our carding machine (for washed wool only), \$5/mo. Only BSHG members, please. Call Marion Wikoff (387-5410) to sign up for either of these or see her at the Monday meetings. Guild carders are now all sold. Some ½-lb. bags of black roving left for those spinning for the Guild sales table -- call 539-7648 if you are interested.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

HINCKLEY FOUNDATION MUSEUM. July 11-August 26 are the tentative dates for the show. We have been invited to participate along with the Textile Arts Guild, Seven Valley Weavers, and the Tompkins County Quilters Guild. The underlying theme of the exhibit will be the change in the artist/artisan's attitudes toward the textile arts as that work change from necessary work to chosen work. It will consider the effects of guilds, technology, and change in attitude toward crafts. It could be an important show if we really involve ourselves. We will be asked for objects and to provide demonstration/workshops on one or two Saturdays during the show. (Fair warning! We will expect even the rankest beginner to loan work! First efforts are definitely every bit as important to the record as virtuoso performances.) More about this at the February meeting...

THE SATURDAY GROUP. The January meeting was fun -- too bad if you missed it -- with a distaff successfully dressed and a spinning muff made, using the Guild's flax. Several members of the group gave the flax spinning a healthy try! A nice, chatty spinning time was had by all.

There are no definite plans as yet for the Saturday Group's February 24 or March 31 meetings, but bring your wheel or drop spindle (or knitting or whatever you are currently doing), and come prepared for a pleasant, productive afternoon. Again, so we have some idea of who and how many are coming, please call one of the following if you plan to come -- Eleanor May (272-8224), Ernestine Wright (257-0027), or Jean Warholic (539-7648). And supplies of cookies, fruit, or munchables are never refused!

Dashing ahead of ourselves a bit... Pages 5-8 of this newsletter are a reprint of three articles, with permission, from Interweave. We are pleased they would allow us to run them for your information and ideas -- they seem particularly timely with our decisions coming up concerning the pricing of handspun, State Fair competition (see below), and other weighty matters we have been deliberating. Interweave has a regular spinning column in each issue, related articles by others aside, and Linda (who gave us permission) notes that spinning seems to be a particularly important craft in the northeast. She mentioned in her letter that spinning guilds as such in her part of the country (Colorado) don't seem to be around much, although she feels the interest is growing. She suggests that if we have a chance, we as guild members might give them some input at Interweave, as discussed in the current Spinoff '78, that they are really eager to hear from people on it. We should also mention, before ending this paragraph, that the article about speed spinning comes heavily from Paula Simmons's book (remember that the Guild has a copy in its library!). See Paula's book for future reference... And enjoy these articles!!

Perhaps this is a good place to say that Gretchen reports that there is a possibility we will be able to have Paula Simmons for a workshop in May -- whhoooooppppee! But remember that this is in the negotiating stages so just cross fingers and quietly get excited until further word... (If that is possible!)

TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT... (And you will hear more at the Feb. meeting) The Cherry Valley Spinners and their bundle-of-energy president Sunny Bixby have decided on four categories, listed below, which they are urging strongly that the State Fair people adopt as realistic categories for handspun. We are struck by their simplicity and reasonableness and hope that the State Fair people are too. See what you think -- and give it serious thought. For if you concur at the Feb. meeting, we will promptly write Mrs. Crowley at the State Fair. (The Cherry Valley Country Spinners are writing individual letters because Sunny felt they might have more impact. If this is decided at the Feb. meeting, you will hear about it pronto in the newsletter coming out right after that meeting. So get your pen ready...)

The categories are: (and we might add Sunny hopes they will have more than one judge this year...)

- (1) Classification:  
Proficiency of Spin: 2-oz., 2-ply skein of yarn. Evenness of spin. Evenness of ply. Applicable to judging. Doesn't matter what color. Include plans for yarn usage.
- (2) Classification:  
Novelty Yarns: Color included, dyeing, texture, fiber. 2-oz. skein, any ply. Include plans for yarn usage.
- (3) Classification:  
Yarns for Clothing: Two 2-oz. skeins for use in weaving, knitting, crocheting, and macrame of apparel. Include plans for yarn usage.
- (4) Classification:  
Heavy-Duty Yarns: Two 2-oz. skeins for use in rugs, wall hangings, pillows, upholstery material. Include plans for yarn usage.

There. Sound good? Want to push for their use in State Fair? How about in the County Fair? So far as we know, Jean Warholic will be Superintendent of Arts & Crafts this coming year and we could conceivably use these categories too. (As a matter of fact, for those of you out there in other counties or states, you might look into the matter with your state or county fair people -- sometimes this kind of competition isn't a matter of money involved, but just that no one thought of it before... If there is an interest shown, and some support [suggestions for categories, judges, procedures on your part, for example], it might surprise you!) It is also entirely possible that we could have a meeting (as will Sunny's group) where we just spin for the fairs...

# PRODUCTION SPINNING

(Three articles, reprinted with permission, from INTERWEAVE, Winter 1978-79, pp. 44-47.)

by **Brucie Adams**

This article was originally meant to be an examination of pricing handspun yarn. As *Convergence '78* drew near, the chance for meeting or contacting a number of spinners was too good to miss, and as a result, other questions came up. Lee Carlin was kind enough to allow me to pass a list for names in her session on production spinning. There are many spinners now active and certainly the thirty I wrote are only a very small part of the whole. I wish to thank all those who answered—there were only three who did not.

Because I knew I was prevailing on the time of very busy people, I sent a much shorter questionnaire than I would have liked. For the most part the answers were full and informative. I did not try to explore the philosophy of hand-spinning and hand-spinners, but only asked about the most practical aspects. The questions were as follows:

- 1) How do you price your handspun yarns? What factors do you take into consideration?
- 2) Are the yarns you spin for sale the same as you spin for your own use? Do you find it necessary for yarns to look Very Handspun to sell well?
- 3) What proportion (approximately) of your craft-derived income comes from the sale of handspun yarn?
- 4) Any comments on being a production spinner?

As for pricing—I can only say that it is a good thing that spinners have a deep love for their craft. It certainly is not going to make anyone rich. Many supplement their incomes by weaving, teaching, raising sheep or goats, and in a variety of other ways. Some, like Paula Simmons, have been spinning for a long, long time (and she is making her living by spinning), others have only been spinning for sale for a year or two.

As is to be expected, there are many systems for pricing in use. Two said they use a formula, in both cases three times the cost of the raw material. One prices one way for strangers, and another way for friends she knows will treasure what they have. Not everyone gave specific figures for prices. Paula Simmons has not raised her prices for a long while as a protest against all other prices going up—this in spite of all her costs increasing. I am listing the price for a basic, natural one ply yarn, when this was given, in order to have a comparison. One question I wish I had asked is whether tops or raw fleece is used. Quite naturally some charge a different price depending on if the fibers are prepared or not. Prices range from \$.60 to \$3.00 an ounce.

\$ .60 - 1	\$1.50 - 2
\$ .70 - 1	\$1.75 - 2
\$ .92 - 1	\$2.00 - 3
\$1.00 - 5	\$3.00 - 1

\$1.25 - 2

Obviously, the area between \$1.00 and \$2.00 is the most popular. With many machine-made, imported yarns selling for about \$1.25 an ounce, handspun yarns are competitive with these.

None of the spinners said she took into consideration the cost of soap and fuel to heat water for scouring, nor, directly, the cost of dye materials and/or mordants. All charged more if the yarns were dyed in some way, most if they were plied, most for the use of colored fleece (which generally is more expensive) or exotic fibers. Only Bette Hochberg (see her article in this issue) prices by the yard. Paula Simmons stresses labeling with both the yardage and the weight, but she prices by weight. Since Hochberg's reasons for pricing by the yard are very good ones, perhaps more spinners will follow her suggestion. Many spin samples of yarn, carefully timing themselves, and then set a value on that time (mentioned were \$4.00 and \$5.00 an hour). Apparently those using raw wool did not count the time spent preparing the fleece. Since it has been my experience that this part takes at least as long as the spinning, this does not seem too practical. An exception would be if one were using New Zealand fleece, or one which is exceptionally clean. Several people mentioned they consider various factors, but end up charging "what the market will stand". Some in order to get a good price use exotic fibers or dye processes and materials. That this approach works I witnessed for myself at *Convergence* when observing the crowds around Victoria Rabinowe's booth where she was selling yarns and fibers dyed with her own special process.

Related to the pricing of yarn is the speed of the individual spinner. Several people stressed the importance of having a good, well-maintained production wheel. After trying several at *Convergence* I was totally convinced (and am now anxiously awaiting delivery of one). I also had the experience of trying one which would not work on the faster pulley unless the bobbin was half filled; therefore, be sure you try the wheel before buying it. Naturally, the degree of commitment to production of handspun yarn must be considered, but being able to at least double output for the same time period certainly is going to make the additional cost of such a wheel practical, if one is serious, or intending to be serious, about becoming a production spinner.

Marketing is important. I got particularly cogent statements from two people about that. Education of the public is probably the most important element. One spinner is very discouraged about this side of the problem and says she spends far more of her time than she wants dealing with it. Miranda Howard, of the Shepherd's Harvest in Evanston, Illinois, says that the yarns she has found to sell

the best are those that can be used for several techniques like knitting, crochet, weaving and basketry. Something like a soft-to-the-skin two-ply yarn would do. She also stresses regular production so that a return customer can find the same type of yarn. A regular source of fiber is recommended to add to the uniformity of the yarn. Howard does not feel that spinning many kinds of yarn is a good idea. She says, "Market just one type until the market for that is stable—then branch out into other types and textures. It is better (and less discouraging) to start out with one good yarn in several shades rather than to have lots and lots of yarns that one can't keep up with on the production end of things." She feels that money spent on advertising is a good investment. Margaret Weinrod (Albuquerque, New Mexico) wrote, "Repeat individual orders make quite a difference." This surprised me a bit for she is selling in a highly tourist-populated area where one would not expect repeat orders to be a factor. Carol Anne Munson (The Brewery Gulch Spinster, Camp Verde, Arizona) stresses the importance of good business sense and the finding and maintaining of a market. Carol Anne has recently acquired two sales representatives to handle her yarn in Arizona. Pat Anderson (Spinshuttle Studio, Roseville, Minnesota) examined the market in her area and found that there were a great number of "really experienced knitters who use top quality yarns because their level of competence justifies paying a premium for materials." She said that she spins for those who want materials which compliment their own skill, and "garments designed to be worn for years require *Classic* design and *Classic* yarns." Like Miranda Howard, Anderson has found that a soft two ply yarn best suits the needs of her customers. Unlike Howard, though, she has found word-of-mouth to be the best advertising.

Related to advertising is packaging. Paula Simmons emphasized this at Convergence. An attractive label with your name on it to let the customers know that it is made by a real person is a necessity. Annie Kelly (Potomac, Maryland) says, "I like best spinning a personalized fleece and my customers like wearing a hat from Sophie or weaving with Hannah." If yarn is intended for sweaters, it is best to tie together enough for this purpose so it can be sold as a unit. Otherwise a sale might be lost because someone bought one skein, leaving an insufficient amount for a sweater. Supply individual skeins for sale for the person wanting a small amount.

One of the problems of marketing is spinning the kind of yarn which will sell, hence my question is it necessary for yarns to look Very Handspun to sell? I got a variety of answers to this. Obviously Howard and Anderson do not think so; however many people said "yes." The answer certainly lies in the sort of market for which the yarn is intended. The girl I spoke with from the Xochi Spinners coop (sorry and apologies—I forgot to write down her name) said that good yarns did not sell as well as "funky" yarns, particularly at fairs. Perhaps the fair-goer is not as appreciative of craftsmanship and is looking for something obvious to put into a hat or hoop-weaving. I would be interested to know if customers at a fair only buy a skein or two, or enough for a sweater or large weaving. One lady who said I could quote her (but I won't) said, "I spin for people who make wall-hangings, so my yarn for sale looks 'Handspun' (privately I call it 'Yukky')." On the other hand, Margaret Weinrod says, "some basket makers have

bought my yarns saying they are the only ones available here which are of consistent enough nature for their purposes."

I am not sure what this is saying about weaving, but most of those who spin for weavers find the thick-and-thin yarns, or those spun from uncarded wool, do the best. Those spinning for knitters have better success with a well-controlled two ply. All agree that there is little percentage in spinning a yarn that duplicates a machine spun. This is reasonable, since in most cases the yarn is selling for a premium price. Several spinners said it did not seem to matter what the yarn was like so long as it is vegetable dyed—one spinner uses commercial yarns for such dyeing and spins natural colored fibers for sale. If people are only buying the mystique of plant dyes, this might be practical.

Several spinners who count themselves as production spinners spin mostly for their own use, incorporating the yarns into item which they then sell. Only the excess yarns are then offered for sale. Jane Armstrong (Livermore, California) started spinning for her own use, but went into production spinning after her yarns attracted attention when she used them to demonstrate weaving at shows.

A couple of spinners expressed a great deal of frustration at not being able to find a market for the fine yarns they like to use personally; most, however, found they could sell the kind of yarn they use themselves.

Only a few spinners gain most of their income from spinning, or selling items made from handspun yarns. Paula Simmons was unique among those I contacted; the others have supplementary incomes of various kinds, some selling sheep, or other related crafts. Two reported that 80% of their craft-derived income came from sale of handspun yarns, one 98%, one 67%, and several 50%. Whereas production spinning may not be supporting very many, it does look feasible.

Most spinners who responded expressed optimism and enthusiasm for production spinning. One simply said, "Help!", but most feel they are moving in the direction they want to, and the public is beginning to understand handspun yarn. Pat Anderson raised the point that production spinners are always going to be producing for other craftsmen—and so will be producing the yarns knitters and weavers like to use, "not yarns spinners like to make." There should not be any incompatibility here, though, as yarn as an end in itself is useless. Anna Siemer (Sebastopol, California) wants to devote a lot of her efforts to education and market development, "so my efforts to sell and teach stores and purchasers about the hats, etc. and wool will spread out in circles and benefit others. I am never the beginning and end of a chain of happenings, always somewhere in the middle, learning from those who were before me and teaching those who follow..." Carol Anne Munson said, "It is a beautiful contemplative vocation and is a link, it seems to me, with all the spinners who have ever spun, who have had the same love/hate relationship with the wheel that I have had."

Maybe a summation is best expressed by Linda Cameron of Winnipeg: "Having a great time, but busy and underpaid."

(more)

## DOES IT PAY TO SPIN YOUR OWN YARN?

by Bette Hochberg

"Well, I can maybe see weaving something like that, but I'd never think of taking the time to spin all that yarn."

We have all heard that comment, so let's analyze whether it is worthwhile to spin. If you are counting on selling your weaving, perhaps you can't afford not to spin. Usually handspun items sell more readily than machine spun, because they have a distinctive handmade look. Handspun yarns retain more of the character of the fibres and are more appropriate to hand weaving. If well spun they are generally stronger than machine spun yarns, and wear better.

You are not confined to a limited selection of fibres and sizes, as you are with machine spun yarns. You can choose any spinning fibre from any level of quality. And these can be spun smooth or textured, even or slubbed, in any size and with a light, medium or hard twist. You can use these yarns single or plied—natural or dyed. So you can custom design yarn exactly to fit any project.

Spinning does not require as much time as is commonly believed.

There are many stories and old wives' tales that increase with the telling. Let's look at some of them.

*It takes seven or eight spinners to supply one weaver.* This is simply not true. One good spinner using a hand-spindle can supply the yarn for one good weaver using a tapestry, backstrap or other loom at an equal level of technology. A fast spinner on a contemporary production wheel can keep pace with a fast weaver on a modern floor loom.

*It takes a day to spin enough yarn for a pair of mittens.* Not unless there is something agonizingly wrong with the process. 800 yards to the pound is a size of wool yarn appropriate for mittens. Assuming I would need a four-ounce skein, it would take me 15 minutes instead of a day. I canvassed eight spinning friends about this, and none estimated it should take more than a half hour.

*A spinner walks twenty miles a day when using the great wheel.* It's not likely this style wheel would be regaining popularity if this were true. To walk 20 miles a day, you would need to spin at 35,000 yards a day—it is unlikely any spinner in the history of the world has ever done that.

*It's impossible to spin enough on a handspindle to be worthwhile.* If this were true, Europe would have gone naked until the thirteenth century. For at least 9,000 years before the wheel, all threads, yarns, ropes and cordage for clothing, household, war and commerce were spun on handspindles. A fast spindle beats a slow wheel. If you are spinning something which requires a lot of twist—short staple fibres or very fine yarns—you can spin them faster on a good spindle than you can on a bulk-head spinning wheel with a low drive ratio. I have seen good supported spindles give as many as 800 twists each time they are twirled. By contrast, many bulk spinners give only four twists each time they are treadled.

It is possible to make a living selling handwoven things made only of handspun yarns, but it does take hard work and planning. Here are some recommendations:

Choose your equipment wisely. Once you become an experienced spinner you will sometimes want to spin faster

than even the fastest wheel. So it's practical to buy the most efficient and versatile wheel you can afford.

Don't limit your spinning to wool. Many other natural fibres require no preparation for spinning and some, like silk, cashmere and camel down, go much farther than wool, and they often sell better.

A sturdy drum carder will save time. This is also a quick way to blend fibres and colors.

If you are doing weft face weaves where the warp is not visible, you might consider using machine spun warp. When you are planning to spin your own warp, always sort out the best fibre for the warp, since it is necessary to spin it more smoothly than weft yarn.

Save time by planning weaving projects, and then spinning for the entire project. For instance, if you decide to weave 10 shawls at one half pound each, you would need to spin about 5 pounds of clean fibre. Decide how many yards of yarn you need, spin, set the twist, and wind on a warp about 25 feet long. Then weave, fringe and finish all together. You will waste less time and use less fibre than if you did separate projects.

If you wonder how to price handspun yarn, you might consider this method. Determine how much you want to earn per yard you spin, and add to this the cost of your fibre. For instance, I might pay \$4 for a pound of clean fibre, and spin it at 800 yards per pound. If I charge a penny and a half for spinning, it would be \$12 for spinning plus \$4 for fibre—or a total of \$16 per pound.

It would take me one hour to spin and a few minutes to set the twist. This is a fair price for doing something I love, and a fair price to the customer. It takes into consideration the lesser time for thick yarn and the greater time for a thin yarn, and the varying prices of fibres.

## SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSPEED SPINNING

by Nancy Thompson

Most handspinners today have resigned themselves to the fact that spinning their own yarn is both time consuming and tedious work, though most of us also find it a soothing way to unwind. But as more weavers and knitters seek a custom look for the yarns they use in their own work, and as the market for handspun yarn as a product in itself also increases, ways to expedite the spinning process become important. Before the Industrial Revolution, speed spinning was universally used. But since the necessity for handspun yarn has virtually disappeared in this country, the need to speed spin has also declined. The typical spinner now uses only the two-handed inchworm method. This is a good, safe technique, and is best used to spin thick and thin yarn. However, the output of this method can never be accelerated, and it is impractical for many fibers such as cashmere, camel down, and short-staple wool.

(over)

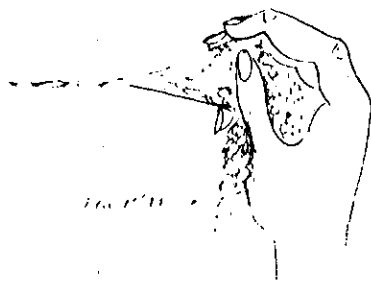


Consider the capabilities of your equipment before attempting to speed spin. Some spinning wheels are simply not suitable for this technique. A good wheel for speed spinning should meet the following requirements:

- 1) It should have a heavy, well-balanced drive wheel for momentum and smooth revolution. A poorly balanced wheel will allow the drive band to slacken and jump the track.
- 2) Firm and secure floor contact. Speed spinning puts quite a bit of stress on a spinning wheel, and if it has even a slight wobble this condition will worsen, putting undue stress on poorly designed parts.
- 3) A large drive ratio. To speed spin a fine yarn requires a higher drive ratio than to speed spin a medium or thick yarn.
- 4) Good lubrication. This cannot be over-emphasized. Use a light oil (such as WD-40) for fast moving parts and a heavy oil or grease (such as vaseline) for slower moving parts.

The most important step in speed spinning is to have a well prepared fiber supply. Easy slippage of fibers is essential. This can be accomplished by: 1) carding and picking well, 2) applying spinning oil, or, 3) in the case of a smooth fiber such as alpaca or dog hair, washing prior to spinning. Washing will prevent fibers sticking due to dirt or foreign matter. To spin fast, always avoid wasted or excess motion. This includes keeping the fiber supply within easy reach.

Begin by attaching the rolag (or Z strip) to the leader yarn as usual. Draft out these fibers until the right hand is at least a foot away from the orifice. Never clutch the fiber supply. Now slowly let go of the yarn with the left hand, allowing the twist to travel almost to the fiber supply. The triangular shaped drafting area will be much smaller using this method. Move the drafting hand away from the orifice, keeping just ahead of the twist. Pull against the tension of the spinning wheel to facilitate drafting. Always keep a two-way pulling action on the drafting area. That is, let the tension of the spinning wheel pull these fibers toward the orifice as you gently draft away from it.

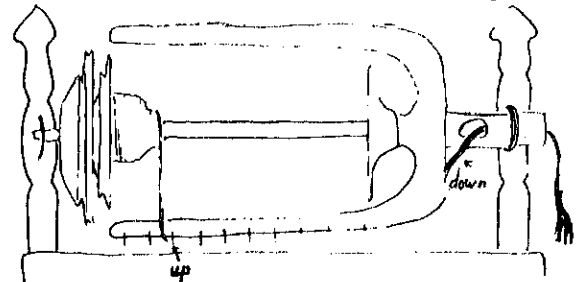


Now you may ask, "What do I do with my left hand?" Several things, actually. Use the left hand to make tension adjustments, to reach for each new rolag, to pick foreign

matter from the fiber, or to scratch. Occasionally the left hand will be used to roll slubs back and forth between thumb and forefinger to minimize irregularities. Last, it will sometimes be necessary to pinch the spun fibers to make drafting easier. If the fibers in the drafting area are not slipping properly, it is usually due to insufficient preparation.

Splicing can be another time consuming step if you have to stop or slow down to do it. Mastering this step will save time and greatly increase yarn production. The rule of thumb here is, *Always Attach Unspun Fiber To Unspun Fiber*. This produces a structurally sound yarn and an undetectable splice. The feathering of the fibers of the last rolag will be done with the ring and little fingers of the drafting hand. The new rolag will be handled and fed into the drafting area by the remaining fingers and thumb. Your hand should be in the same position as it would be to hold chopsticks. For some people it is easier to splice by reversing this technique, i.e., hold the fibers from the old rolag in the first three fingers, and feed fibers from the new rolag with the ring and little fingers (see drawing).

On a spinning wheel with a two-way treading action it is possible to change flyer hooks without completely stopping the spinning process and without using the hands. Begin by hooking the yarn on all the flyer hooks, thus filling the back of the bobbin first. When ready to change hooks slow down just enough to allow a slight reversal of the wheel giving the yarn just enough slack to slip off one hook. Then take up the slack and continue to spin.



A common problem of speed spinning is that the yarn along the flyer hooks will flair out in an airborne arc. Bending the hook nearest the orifice into a more closed position will help to minimize this problem. Or you can thread the yarn through the orifice, then under the flyer arm and back on top of the flyer arm at the point where the yarn is to wind onto the bobbin (see drawing).

It has been my experience that nearly every fiber spins best to one size. Whenever possible it is best to spin it to that size. I don't recommend trying to speed spin with grease wool as it is usually rather gummy, especially if it was sheared late in the summer. It is worthwhile to become proficient at several different spinning techniques (matching technique to fiber requirement) and to become a competent spinner with either hand.



TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 1978. We definitely had a busy year, and a run-through of expenditures/earnings are rather interesting... (And thank you, Maria Steve, our [outgoing] Treasurer, for all your hard work throughout the year!!)

YEAR-END BALANCE, CASH	\$ 275.31
<u>Memberships</u> paid during 1978	414.00
<u>Workshops</u> (a loss, but we have the wool from the Gerber workshop, sale of the carders, etc. to recoup all the loss if not more)	180.09-
<u>Carding Machine</u> balance (we have now paid a little over one-half of our costs)	42.43
<u>Library</u> (we have spent \$214.59, but we have made \$31.50), balance	189.59
<u>Program costs</u> (fees for judges, lamb for barbeque, Bartlettyarns roving, flax, mordants, etc.)	282.56
<u>Newsletter</u> costs for the year (postage, duplication, etc.)	196.88
Earnings from ads in newsletters	15.50
<u>Miscellaneous sales</u> (sales table, sheep pins, magazines)	145.50
<u>Wool Day</u> (all earnings)	100.76

Total deposits for the year: \$ 2893.51

Total expenditures 2618.20 -- For the calendar year ending December 31, 1978

\* \* \* \* \*

PEWTER SHEEP PINS. We are putting together another order and need a few more names for the list before it is sent. You may have seen these at the December meeting (or sported by a few members at Rock Day). These are pewter sheep pins or pendants, made at Fly Creek, N.Y., and are unusually nice. Price is \$14.00 per pin or pendant (indicate which you want), plus 28¢ postage if we have to send yours to you. Interested? Get your order and name to either Linda Dickinson or Jean Warholic at the next meeting, or give one of us a call.

BLACK ROVING still available for spinning for the Guild sales table. If you are interested, let Jean Warholic know -- will bring to the Feb. meeting. White roving is used up. Two delinquents in getting it in from the last handout: (tsk, tsk) Jean Warholic and Dora Swart. Anyone doing it now should get it in as soon as possible... It is to spin as you wish, ply it or not -- the only stipulation is that it comes back to the Guild tagged with your name, the yardage, the weight, and with the twist set (either by washing or the Gerber dip method).

The Shepard magazine may discontinue its woolcrafting page unless volunteers can be found to carry it on. Gretchen Sachse feels we have some good stuff ready to go and could probably pull together enough to at least participate. Are you game? Let's talk about it at the February meeting...

AD SECTION -- a reminder that our ads are cheap cheap cheap. The rates are 50¢ for four (4) lines, one run; or three runs/\$1.00. This newsletter (as of this one) reaches over 125 spinners, mostly in this general area of New York State... Anything of possible interest to spinners is accepted! Ad copy and payment (checks payable to Black Sheep Handspinners Guild) should be sent or given to: Jean Warholic, 280 Ringwood Road, Freeville, NY 13068. Newsletters come out about eight times per year -- call Jean at 607/539-7648 evenings, to find out deadline for next issue (or check the last page of our newsletters!). We appreciate your patronage!!!

WORKSHOPS, CLASSES COMING UP... Get out your calendar. Jean Case will be giving a two-day workshop on SILK, April 6 and 7 (with 13 & 14 as snow dates) at the 1890 House in Cortland, 9:30-3:00 each day. The 7VWG is sponsoring the workshop in conjunction with America the Beautiful funding. Flyers are being prepared, giving you further information and we should have them at the February meeting (others will be sent in mail to absentees if we have enough). Tentatively, the fee will be \$9.50/day or the two days for \$11.50, with silk provided. There may be a (free) evening mini-session on Friday, 7:30-9:30 if interest warrants. Friday will be an overall picture of silk, its processes, history, types, etc.; Saturday will concentrate on the spinning of different types of silk. Cutoff deadline for registration of guild members is March 1st (then it opens to others), on a first-come, first-served basis, payment to be included with registration. Jean Case is super-duper and this should be a terrific workshop... // The 7VWG is also having a sale on March 17, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., at the Cortlandville Mall. If you are interested in selling yarns (as a spinner) either as a donation or commission, then contact Mary Kelsey (844-9106). This sale is to help defray the costs of the workshop. // Classes at the North Campus Union are beginning soon. Libby Martin Llop will be teaching beginning spinning. Masa Kinoshita will be teaching tapestry weaving, pile rugs by latch hook or sewn-on method, chemical dyeing, beginning weaving (with Marie Macrae) and intermediate weaving, Japanese braiding. Nancy Morey-Brower is teaching the basic knitting and crocheting courses. Other fiber classes offered include macrame (beg. & Adv.), quilting (beg. & adv.), batik, etc. Jean Nowack will be teaching the rush and splint chair seat weaving as well as the chair caning. Many of these classes begin soon, so hustle -- more information: Randy Richter, North Campus Union Craft Shop, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853 (or 256-6238, afternoons). // BOCES has classes coming up, too. In addition to their sewing and tailoring classes, they are offering doll making, quilting, macrame, and one dealing with oriental rugs. For more information: call 257-1551 for a listing. // The Mannings are having their 6th National Handweavers' Juried Show, April 14 to May 6. For more information: The Mannings, RD #2, East Berlin, PA 17316 (717/624-2223). Entries to be received between March 12 and 31st. Eight categories this year: (1) Weaving in the Colonial Tradition; (2) Handspun/Vegetable Dyed/Handwoven (any combination, with handwoven); (3) Handwoven Rugs; (4) Weaving You Can Wear; (5) Tapestry; (6) Weaving for Home Interiors; (7) Macrame; and (8) Fiber Manipulation (basketry, structural pieces, etc). This is an important show and several of our members have done exceedingly well in past years. (C'mon, do it again -- we are so proud of you!!) // The Mannings also announces their spinning and dyeing workshops for June 6, 7, and 8 -- with Palmy Weigle ("Dyeing Cotton with Natural Dyes") and Edna Blackburn ("How to produce wool for weaving, knitting, crocheting" with knowledge of sheep and types of fleeces they produce relative to desired product). Their Annual Spinning Seminar (free day) is to be Saturday, June 9. (Always a fun, old friends, etc.!) Mannings is also having basketry and weaving workshops June 6-8. For more information about these workshops, write to them at the address above.

An exhibit coming soon: "Twenty-two (22) Polish Textile Artists" to the Johnson Museum, Cornell University, February 17-March 18. Large-scale tapestries, sculptures, etc. Should be especially interesting. Hours for the Museum: Tues-Sat 10-5; Wed 10-9; Sun. 11-5; and closed on Mondays. (Call 607/256-6464 for more info.)

OTHER GUILDS IN THE AREA... Thistledown Handspinners (Norwich) meeting on Saturdays during the winter -- February 17 is their next meeting (10 a.m. - ?). Sorry, don't have program listing handy -- check around. Several BSHG members go (Eleanor May, Jean Warholc, Dora Swart, Suzie Hokanson to name a few), and if you are interested in going, give one of them a call. It is always refreshing to go to others' meetings and see what they are doing... // Ithaca Textile Arts Guild appears to still be working on its banner project. // Lamb-to-Loom news in the next newsletter. // Cherry Valley Country Spinners worked on blending at its Feb. 1st meeting (they meet the first Thursday of the month, at the Lorenzo South Cottage at Cazenovia). March program will be announced in next newsletter...

*Puff, puff, wheeze, wheeze...* Last page! (The first newsletter of the new year always seems to be the longest!)

BOONS AND SHIVES... The baby report appears to be the overwhelming part of the news!!! Louise Hebbard had a baby girl, Heather Satera, on November 6. // Charlotte Altmann also had a baby girl (sorry, I didn't get date and name). // Toby Chambliss had a baby boy, Lachlan, on Jan. 10 -- says it was a fast birth, almost didn't make it to the hospital! 7 lbs., 14 oz. // Linda Brecht had a baby boy also, Elijah, born Jan. 27 -- 6 lbs., 13 oz. Everyone doing fine! (A "mellow" baby she says, unlike Toby's!) // New address for Joe and Ann Laiacona: RR #8 - Box 104, Huntington, Indiana 46750. Joe has been working for a large publisher as promotion manager and is also now beginning work on a Masters degree from Indiana University/Purdue. He and Ann seem to have been quite busy (they moved to this address in November), with Ann confessing that she has a lot of unspun wool as well as unknit-unanythingelse skeins, and is struggling to finish sweaters she began long ago (sounds familiar!). They sound quite happy and content these days... (Joe and Ann were early members of the Guild, with Joe being the only male spinner we've had. Hmmm. How about that, men?) // Colleen Stone wrote us a fat letter which will be circulated at the meeting, but in the meanwhile, they are fine, she is expecting a baby in late April, and belongs to a guild in her area. Good letter, Colleen! // New address for Cathy Anderjack: RD #1, Bath, N.Y. 14810. We miss you -- hope you will get to a Saturday Group sometime! // New address for that busy Laurel Scheeler: The Sheepish Grin, 7 Chestnut Street, Princeton, N.J. 08540. (And we have to tell you that her telephone number is [Laurel doesn't miss a trick!] 609/924-YARN. YES!!!!) // Correction on Eileen Oldham's address: 1 Pine View Lane, Clifton Springs, N.Y. 14432. // Did you get Billie Hall's new address?: RD #1 - Box 178A, Newark Valley, N.Y. 13811. Happy new house, Billie!! // And Maria Steve's new telephone number: 387-5559. Happy new house to you too -- they got in just in time for Christmas! // And let's not forget Norman Hall's new address: RD #3 - Box 185A, Oxford, N.Y. 13830. (607/843-7935) Goodie, now he is closer to us Tompkins County folks!

PLACES TO VISIT. Gretchen Sachse sends news of two out-of-the-way stores that everyone interested in fibers should enjoy visiting: The Fabric Gallery, located upstairs at Community Corners on Hanshaw Road (Ithaca), is open Tes.-Sat. 10-5. If natural fibers are something you've been looking for in fabrics, rejoice! Cottons, wools, cashmeres, wool challis, silks abound. Liberty of London and other marvelous fabrics, both imported and domestic, line the walls and make you yearn for a few yards of each. Mrs. Cooke welcomes your enthusiasm, invites you to feel the cloth, and tries to keep her prices fair and reasonable -- not always an easy trick with foreign markets. // Aunt Rhody's Grey Goose is located at 929 Danby Road in Ithaca, just below Ithaca College as you go up South Hill, in a red brick Victorian, better known as Ithaca Talent Education (the Suzuki violin place). Joan Reuning has taken a sabbatic after some 20 years of teaching the violin to pursue some of her other interests. She weaves, knits, sews, and raises Corriedale sheep among other things. Aunt Rhody opened just before Christmas, filled with tempting yarns and crafts, mostly textile in nature. There are Bartlettyarns for both knitters and weavers -- the fisherman's baby bulky is a favorite of Gretchen's for both -- Guatemalan (Gretchen thinks) handspuns, and a beautiful brushed wool that resembles mohair and comes in lovely laid-back hues. Joan is interested in carrying locally-made yarns and handcrafts. Hours are 10-6, Monday-Friday, and weekends and evenings by appointment. It is probably a good idea to call first anyway (272-6006; the Ithaca Talent number).

If anyone else has favorite shops, terrific finds, and out-of-the-way places, write a short paragraph, including location, hours, and directions if necessary, and we'll make it a regular feature in future newsletters... This goes especially for all our readers living outside the Ithaca area!!

Deadline for next newsletter's material: February 12th...