



BLACK SHEEP HANDSPINNERS GUILD NEWSLETTER

Number 98 - April 1987

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

April 4, Noon.....The sheep farm visit has been postponed...and instead, the program will be a surprise program and of interest to all spinners!! (And Pat says no hints in advance)

Interested in getting really involved with Spinners' Market Day?! Come ½ hour early at 11:30 to brainstorm ideas.

May 9, Noon.....Color Perception. Dick Corth has been involved with the perception of color for approx. 15 years. He will present a slide show and talk, with lots of time for questions, on color--how it is perceived, what it is, how different illuminants affect what is seen, and how color is affected by its surroundings.

SPINNERS' MARKET DAY

It's fast approaching! Plans and details are falling into place, preliminary publicity has been done, and by now you've thought about what You will be helping with. The sign-up sheets will be passed around and we want your name on it somewhere. Many hands do make light work and Spinners' Market Day is no exception.

Your ideas and suggestions are most welcome and time will be made for more discussion at the meeting. (Several suggestions have already been made: Mary McGee proposed our giving spinning lessons as a money-making project. Kathy Halton would like to have an ongoing demonstration of wool preparation. What would you like to see done and help with? Speak up!)

PROGRAMS

Always a dilemma for your hardworking vice presidents. Pat is no exception. Let's make it less of a dilemma and more of a creative challenge. A list of possible programs will circulate at the April 4 meeting. You will be asked what you would come to a meeting for--and to add ideas of your own to it. And we'll plan to talk more about them, also.

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Programs....A very important part of Guild meetings is the sharing of ideas and interests -- sometimes called show-and-tell but sometimes also called a program. Programs don't have to be given by experts. (Remember, experts had to start somewhere anyway.) But anyone giving a program should try to spend a little time doing the topic--spin the fiber, dye it, or whatever, look up some sources for information, have some examples, etc. If you are new at it, team up with someone else and share the program's tasks. Do a hand-out -- very convenient if you feel nervous about talking in front of a group (who doesn't?) and very handy so we all have something to take home and think about and take the program's topic further. And if everyone would bring something to the meeting that relates to the program, that always makes it more interesting and fun!

WORKSHOPS

Another good topic we'll discuss on April 4. Who, what, and when!! We also need to consider plans for a Beginners' Spinning Workshop -- team-teaching it in the past, with an over-all coordinator, has been a good way to do it...



NOTES ON MEMBERS**EVENTS**MARCH MEETING

18 members were at the March meeting where Pat gave a presentation on different kinds of wool and their potential uses. She passed around many cards of locks of various breeds of wool both white and colored, from Merino for baby sweaters to Karakul for carpets. They were delightful to see and touch.

Kathy Halton, Elaine Case, and Michelle Kurz will be presenting 50 minute hands-on programs for 4-6th graders in May as part of Co-operative Extension's Natural Resource Appreciation Program. The Ithaca Festival is looking for volunteers to demonstrate spinning on June 6. Hours are completely flexible. There'll be a sign-up sheet at the April meeting. Last year Tina Fenn donated handspun yarn to WSKG's TV auction and they'd like more for this year! Contact WSKG or Tina for more info. If you'd like to help Navajo and Hopi weavers who have been dispossessed of their land (and thus, their sheep) you can send fleeces, preferably but not necessarily washed, to: Big Mountain Legal Defense/Offense Committee, 2029 Center St N, Flagstaff, Arizona 86001.

CHOOSING A FLEECE

At many local sheep farms, spring shearing is rapidly approaching. New lambs have been born and the ewes' fleeces are long and lustrous. While the best time to get a fleece for spinning is soon after shearing, many of us wait for Spinners' market Day in June when vast arrays of fleeces can be seen all in one place--many sheep breeds, angora, mohair, silk, etc. Prices of fleeces vary considerably. How do you know which fleece to buy? While color and texture may excite you, the quality of the yarn ultimately depends on the quality of the fleece, so other considerations should be employed before whisking those fibers to your home.

*If possible look at the whole fleece which is usually wrapped and tied with the best wool showing. This is not always possible since, understandably, if a fleece is particularly clean, the seller may not let you unwrap it for fear of grass and dirt getting in there.

*Sound wool should have staples that "ping" when held taut and flicked with the ring finger.

*A tender staple will pull apart with a tearing sound which you may hear. Pull out a lock which seems typical of the fleece. Holding the base, tug sharply at the tip end to see if the tip breaks off. This will affect the strength of the yarn and is difficult to card without more breaks occurring. A break is nearly always obvious to the eye. A general thinning of the staple can be seen and the regular pattern of the crimps will be interrupted. Hold the staple up to the light.

In some cases, special characteristics of the fleece may compel you to overlook some tenderness in the staple, being very gentle and careful in processing the fleece.

*Avoid "second cuts" in the fleece which appear as very short fibres - clumps about 1/2" long. When the shearer doesn't get close enough to the skin the first time, he/she may go over the area again producing the second cuts. This can be expected from any shearer occasionally, but if the shearer is not expert, it will happen often. Second cuts will cause lumps in your yarn.

*The locks should be free from one another--not felted together. In a badly "cotted" or matted fleece, the individual staples will not pull apart at all.

*Check for staining. A lot of dirt will come out with washing. Some, however, will not. "Canary stain" induced by heavy rainfall, heat and humidity, is permanent. So if your fleece comes from an area with these weather conditions, watch for this stain.

*Loose dirt and dust in the tips and further down in the staples is normal and generally comes out in washing, teasing, or carding. Vegetation--seeds, twigs,

Fleeces.....hay, burrs--are also normal but the fewer the better! These often have to be picked out by hand. Excessive seeds or burrs should be avoided as they become thoroughly entangled in the wool and are difficult to remove.

*Crimps should be well defined and evenly spaced for the whole staple length. The size of the crimp should be relatively consistent over the whole fleece.

* The staple tips should not be excessively long or "tippy." When the tips have not been sufficiently compacted, they lack needed protection from over-exposure to weather. Parts of the tip may have broken away unevenly and more will break off during spinning preparation.

*Unless you are specifically looking for a hairy or "kempy" fleece, for instance for a tweed, avoid a particularly hairy fleece. Because they have a different composition from wool fibres, they do not dye readily and have a different, coarser feel from the rest of the fleece. You will probably want to separate whatever hair there is from the rest of the fleece before spinning preparation.

*And of course, test the feel or "handle" of the fleece for what appeals--silky and soft, crisp, flat when pressed with a hand, or lofty and full.

For some of us it is difficult to examine the quality of a fleece with the seller there watching. But it is important for several reasons. First because of the expense and time you put into your spinning, felting, weaving, or knitting. A good fleece will mean less waste in preparation and better quality in your finished project. Second, because if our local shepherds and shepherdesses know we only want to buy fine fleeces, they will spend the time and thought into producing them. So your time examining ultimately may improve the quality for everyone by educating the shepherds to our needs. Thirdly, for your own education and curiosity. As with so many things, close attention to detail will reveal differences and similarities between same breed and different breed fleeces which you may never have noticed otherwise.

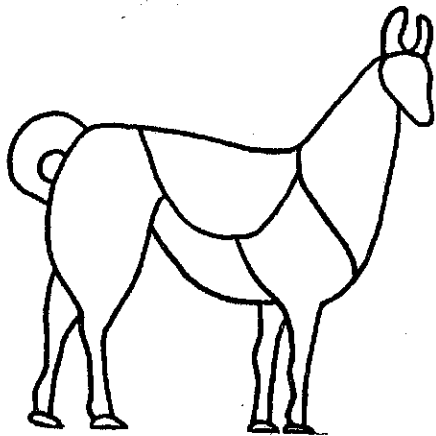
ADVERTISEMENTS

Fleece Sale--til gone...colored Lincoln, Lincoln cross & Lincoln lambswool from last spring and summer shearing. Many shades to choose from. Nancy Morey, Shadeyside Farm, PO Box 48, Chenango Bridge, NY 13745. 607/656-4737. 2/3

Advertising Rates: 1-3 lines, \$1 for one time, \$2 for 3 times
 4-12 lines, \$5 for one time
 13 lines-½ page, \$10 for one time

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UPCOMING EVENTS



May 2-3 14th Annual Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival. Harvard 6 Fairgrounds, West Friendship, Md. -- highly recommended by Nancy Morey.

May 7-8 Spring Crafts Fair. Contact Sharon Adams, Unions and Activities, Willard Straight Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853

May 9-10 The New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Festival, New Boston, NH

May 11-16 Eastern Great Lakes Fiber Conference. Workshops with Malin Selander, Ulrike Beck, Joanne Rogers, Evelyn Pirson, Luncheon and Fashion Show featuring garments by Selander. For info: Mary Anne Morton Bliley, 4621 Covert Circle, Erie, PA 16509. 814/866-2622. Conference held in Bellinger Hall, Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY. This conference will be cancelled if they don't receive a lot more reservations by March 21!

May 24 The Genesee Country Museum Spinning Day. Activities include sales, guild tables, dyeing, sheep shearing, sheep to shawl demonstration (teams invited). For info: Lynne Belluscio, Genesee Country Museum, Flint Hill Rd, Mumfordsville, NY 14511. Or contact Michell Kurz. There is always a good gathering of spinners for this Annual Spin-In. Registration is free (Michelle has forms) and entitles you to free admission to the museum.

May 27-29 Precious Fibers 3-Days Congress at Berea College. Theme: Cottage Industry. 16 instructors. 26 courses. Beautiful setting. Precious Fibers Foundation, PO Box 511-S, Berea, KY 40403. 606/986-1495. Contact Michelle Kurz for car pooling.

June 5-7 Midwest Weavers Conference in Lawrence, Kansas. Featured speakers, Albertje Koopman and Lois Ericson.

June 6-7 Ithaca Festival Arts & Crafts Show. Deadline April 10!! For info: Ithaca Festival '87, c/o CSRC 301 S. Geneva St, Ithaca, NY 14850. 607/ 272-4098 or 272-2439. The festival is looking for volunteers o demonstrations of spinning June 6(Sat) on the Commons.

June 13-14 Ontario Handspinners Seminar, Theme: Angora and Camel. Lots of exhibits. Ontario Handspinners Seminar Inc, Ron Abbott, PO Box 400 Verona, Ontario KOH2W0

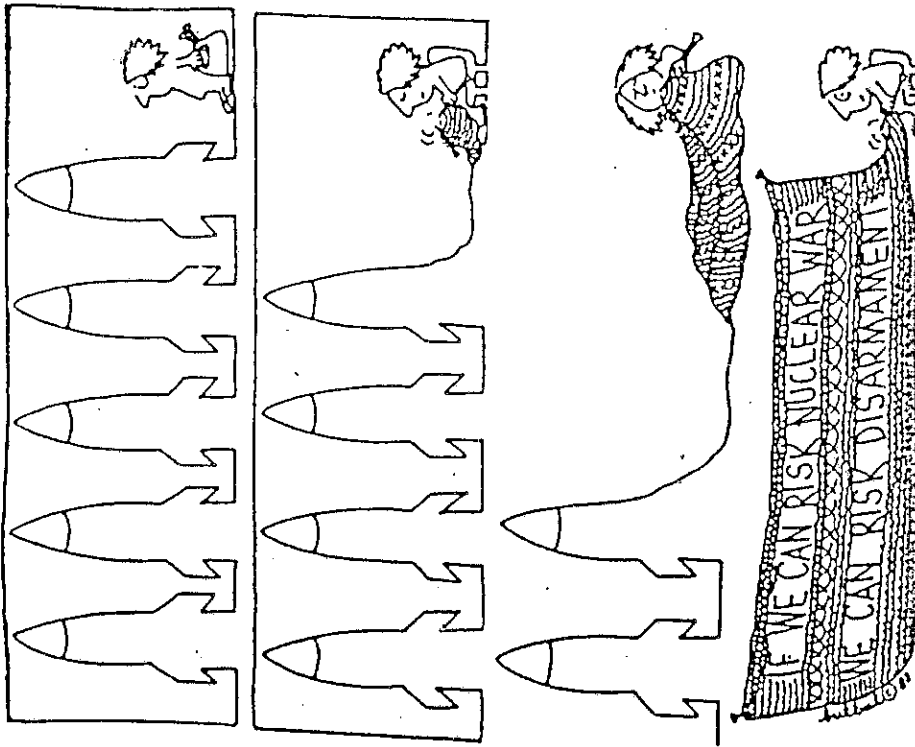
June 21 Black Sheep Handspinners Guild Market Day!!! at 4-H acres.

July 25, Sat Connecticut Agricultural Sheep to Shawl Contest. Each team shall consist of 4 spinners/weavers. Entry fee \$5.00. Premiums \$100.00, \$75.00, \$50.00, \$25.00, \$20.00. For info and registration, send captains's address, team members' names, team name, and fee to: Jill Roby, 59 John Hand Drive, Coventry, CT 06238. 203/742-1201. I have further info on this contest which I'll bring to the April meeting.

July 30-Aug 1 Upstate Crafts Fair, juried. Deadline for application without a late fee of \$25.00--June 30. Upstate Crafts, PO Box 173, Ithaca, NY 14850

Aug 1 Deadline for submissions to the State Fair. NY State Fairgrounds, Syracuse, NY 13209

WAGING PEACE



Deadline for May newsletter -- April 26, Sunday



BLACK SHEEP HANDSPINNERS GUILD

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