



BLACK SHEEP HANDSPINNERS GUILD NEWSLETTER

Number 104 - November 1987

Editor: Deb Serviente
63 Neimi Rd
Freeville, NY
607/347-6631

UPCOMING MEETINGS*****

November 14 Saturday at Noon at the Varna Community Building (Firehouse) on Rt 366. ELECTIONS are to be held this meeting for officers for 1988. This year sure is zipping by! If you are interested in being an officer, now's your chance. After the business meeting and elections we will be chatting about the directions the guild will take in 1988--that is, what do you see the guild doing, what are your interests and fantasies for guild activities and programs. November is also the traditional month for a year's worth of show and tells. Bring all your completed projects from the past year for gentle critiquing and oo-ing and ah-ing by your spinning companions. Let's fill the room's tables with our efforts.

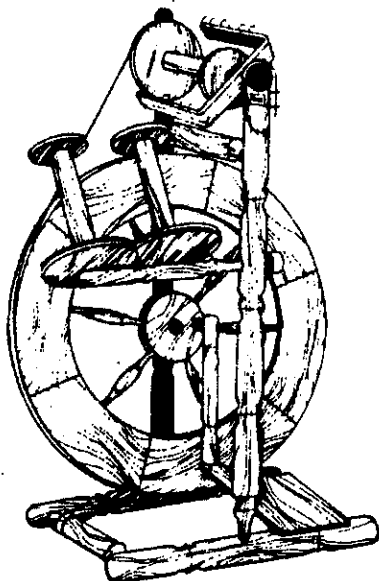
December 12, Noon, Varna. Christmas/Holiday/Wintertime Party. Bring a dish-to-pass for a shared lunchtime meal. Pat and I are working on some fun spinning contest ideas for this meeting. And a great door prize by drawing--a one year subscription to Spin-Off (or comparable magazine) as a holiday treat! We may even have some red and green fleece for spinning.

NEW MEMBERS!!*****Please update your membership list.

Julie Gill
10 Penny Lane
Ithaca, NY 14850
273-1887

Nancy Wilson
651 Ridge Rd Apt H1
Lansing, NY 14882
533-7992

SOME NOTES from Shelly on the last meeting: The October 3 meeting was highlighted by Pat Randorf's program on silk. She passed around more kinds of silk than I'd ever seen before, and explained how best to use each kind - cleaning, dying and spinning. The variation in color of the raw silks, from brown to nearly white, was amazing. Marie Bryan also passed around some beautiful fine-spun, dyed silk, and talked about harvesting silk right from the cocoons. Pat will bring an order form and address for The Silk Tree, a reasonably-priced Canadian distributor, to the next meeting.



It was unanimously decided that the guild should purchase both Glorious Knits and a copy of the dye book that Mary Ann Sumner had displayed earlier this year. These will not appear on the library shelves but must be borrowed directly from Debbie Benzer. Mary Ann will check into getting a discount on these books.

ROCK DAY CELEBRATION: Saturday, January 9th!!

The Black Sheep Handspinners Guild members will celebrate their ROCK DAY -- or St. Distaff's Day -- on Saturday, Jan. 9, from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Varna Community Building. Traditionally for us, it has been an informal spinners' reunion, a wonderful day to spin and visit, with members of other guilds invited to come be with us.

The self-appointed ROCK DAY committee of Kay Stickane and Jean Warholic has been making plans already for the day and it is hoped that all BSHG members will definitely plan to attend.

We hope to have a brief history of the guild recapped (and if you are interested in helping with that, call Kay Stickane now), several other activities to amuse us, door prizes for those present, etc. There will also be time for a short business meeting if one is needed. Other guilds have now been invited to attend, some publicity will be done for the event (always a good way to get interested people to come and bring in new members), and we are looking forward to a good turnout.

Area vendors have also been invited to bring their wares to sell (at no charge). BSHG members with items for sale -- an extra wheel, a fleece or two, books no longer needed, etc. -- are welcome also and a table will be provided.

So, BRING your spinning wheel and project(s) to show or work on and: a pot of soup, or bread or rolls, or suitable accompaniments, or dessert, or a modest (under \$5) door prize -- whatever you feel comfortable providing. Coffee, tea provided as usual. Bring your own table service.

PLAN TO COME -- this has always been a FUN day! We look forward to seeing many new and old friends!!

There is no snow date for this event. If the weather is in doubt where you are, call either Kay Stickane (387-3687) or Jean Warholic (539-7648) or the Varna Community Building after 10:30 a.m. (272-2658). The day is ON, unless there is an absolute blizzard on and the predictions are for worse...

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WHAT IS ROCK DAY, ANYWAY??? Depending on the language it is taken from, the distaff usually used in handspinning flax was called a roc, rocke, or rocken. In English-speaking countries, the distaff was sometimes called a "rocke" and St. Distaff's Day, or Rock Day, was celebrated by spinners in Britain on January 7. This is the day after Twelfth Night, when the Christmas festivities ended (a period of vacation for spinners), and the spinners resumed their work. (Remember, spinning was an almost seven-day-a-week CHORE in an effort to keep up with the demand for yarns for domestic and commercial use, prior to the Industrial Revolution -- it wasn't just a chatty, fun time...)

One of the stories associated with Rock Day is that the farm boys' vacation lasted until the following Monday, so they spent their idle time teasing the girls by setting their tow flax on fire. The girls threw buckets of water on the flax, and on the boys, of course. (Nowdays, we would use our AB fire extinguishers.) Herrick described it in this poem:

Partly work and partly play
You must on St. Distaff's Day;
... If the maids a-spinning go,
Burn the flax and fire the tow.
Bring in pails of water then,
Let the maids bewash the men.

(Some spinners, perhaps from California, have misinterpreted the latter line to be some sort of get-together in a jacuzzi, but no scholarly evidence has been found to substantiate it.)

Handspinners have at least one other day to celebrate, but it is less known or widely celebrated.

Saint Catherine is the patron saint of spinners. She was a Christian martyr in Alexandria. In 307 AD, she was condemned to be torn apart by the spokes of a wheel. November 25 is her Saint's Day and in some parts of Europe it was celebrated by spinners taking the day off for a festival.

The fairy witch of Scottish peasants is a Nordic, named Gyre Carline. Spinners must look to her for skill in spinning and if you are lucky, she will grant it to you. (And here you thought it was just a lot of practice and hard work!) She also comes to your home on New Year's Eve to inspect your wheel, which you must leave with the drive band loose and bobbins empty. If you have left a partly-filled bobbin on the wheel, she will spin up the rest for you, but she will mutter and curse you for being lazy.

Well, some of us have been accused for being worse... BUT THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR: finish up those spinning projects in time for Christmas, take a spinning break over the holidays, and start some new, challenging and interesting projects for the New Year -- ones you will complete. And COME TO ROCK DAY on Saturday, January 9th!!!

-- Jean Warholic
with some help from SPIN
SPAN SPUN by Bette Hochberg

SOME MORE NOTES*****It's always nice to know what fellow spinners have been up to. Debbie Benzer, Amy Knatko, Julie Gill, Bobby (a potential new member) and Shelly made it over to Marty and Perry McGee's for a beautiful afternoon, Oct 10. Those llamas are delightful!! There were many babies this year all different from each other in color and personality, as well as those sophisticated adults. There's nothing like rubbing noses with a llama. Marty showed some of her latest projects: sweaters worked entirely in llama wool. They feel just like alpaca. Shelly also reports "Pat Randorf, Debbie Benzer and I demonstrated both freezing and handspinning at Joe and Judy Dell's Pumpkin Festival at their Woodwind Farm in Mecklenburg. Judy insisted that I bring sheep, and I finally was able to woman-handle one into the truck with Debbie's help, while its twin, who had dumped me in the mud, stood and laughed at us. It was fun but boy was it cold out." Nancy Morey has been busy as usual. She was a judge for the Sheep-to-Shawl at the New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Festival and Fiberfest '87, and for the Fiberarts competition at Fiberfest 87. Marrienne Horchler has been working on a new barn for their 200 (!!!) angora rabbits. Let me know what you've been doing for upcoming newsletters--share your impressions of workshops, conferences, community demonstrations, etcetera. Inspire someone!

Some information on the Master Spinner Program of Canada which I'd gleaned from the Northwest Pennsylvania Spinners and Weavers Guild for an earlier newsletter has a follow up in their most recent newsletter:

THE MASTER SPINNER PROGRAM OF CANADA
by Joanna McDermot

Some of you will remember that I've mentioned the Canadian Master Spinner Programs before. I was best acquainted with the program offered through Georgian College in Barrie, Ontario, because I am acquainted with, and have studied under, the director of the Georgian program, Dawn Leggett. She has been my valued teacher as well as a good friend.

Since I last mentioned the program to you, there has been a change for the better (for us in the States) in the class arrangements. Those of us who live at a distance may now make arrangements to study with Dawn privately, following the courses as approved by Georgian College, and eventually receiving the Master Spinner designation, conditional upon successful completion of all requirements.

This new program seemed like a dream come true for me, so this summer I jumped in with both feet. After correspondence back & forth, I took my box of class materials, checked into a handy motel right on Lake Simcoe and only 2 doors from Dawn's house and we began. Since I had already done some work with Dawn, we spent some time evaluating my level & finding my major weaknesses, and then proceeded with class work. We spent 3 days in all in intensive study. At the end of that time I was prepared to work independently for the winter, with heavy help from the mails and even the occasional use of the telephone. Studying on a one to one basis means you can move along at your own pace -fast or slow. Eventually you'll complete 6 levels of courses, plus a 50 hour journeyman project, a 250 hour masterpiece, and a written thesis. Seems like a lot but it's all so interesting and such fun!

You can tell that I'm just thrilled to finally have a structured program and a definite goal. If any of you are likewise motivated and want information, write Dawn Leggett, Spindles & Skeins Unlimited, 134 Blake Street, Barrie, Ontario, Canada L4M 1K3. If you just want to chat about it, give me a call.

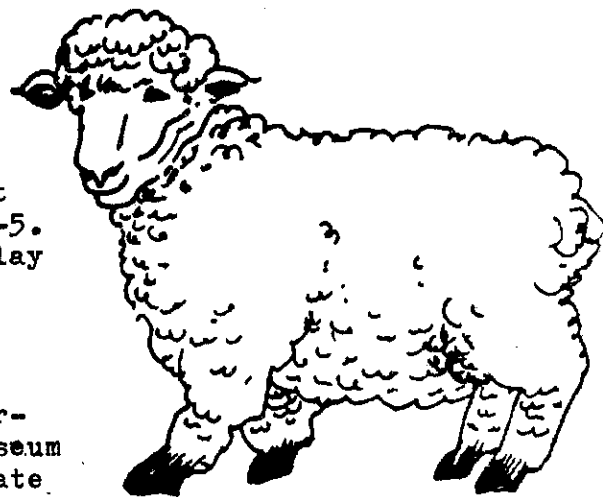
ADVERTISEMENTS*****

Handspinning Fleeces available most of the time. Send SASE. Several crossbred ewes available. Prolific, good mothers. All colors. Sound flock. Will sell individually or as a group at a better price. Kathie Garnsey 315/364-8889 3/3

Wanted: Spinning Wheels, Spinners and Spinning by Patricia Baines. Contact William Ralph RD1 Box 141A, Rome, PA 18837. Tel: 717/247-7175

For Sale: Angora Goats: Doe, 4 years old. Doe kid, 3 months. Buck kid, 3 months. Lincoln Crossbred lambs. Tina Fenn 272-6797.

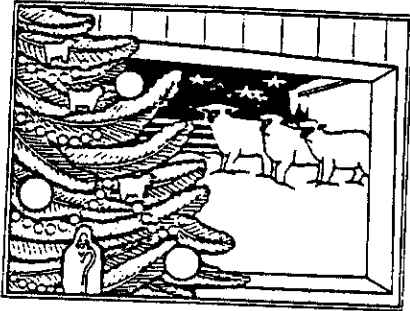
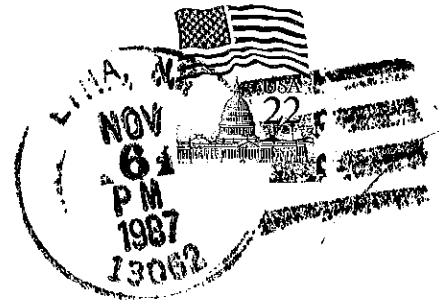
Angora Goats for sale: 30 bred does, 3 breeding bucks. All registered. Wethers at \$50 each. Contact Susan H Manes, RD2, Pompey Hollow Road, Cazenovia, NY 13035. 315/655-8365. 1/?

UPCOMING EVENTS*****

- November 6, 7, 8 Rochester Folk Art Guild 'Fall Harvest of Crafts' at the Women's Community Building, 100 W Seneca St Ithaca, Fri 2-6, Sat 10-5 and Sun 12-5. They usually have a beautiful display of craft items for sale, with handsome textiles among them.
- November 9 Understanding Your Textile Collection workshop led by Rabbit Goody, supervisor of Domestic Arts, Farmers Museum Adjunct Faculty, Cooperstown Graduate Program in Museum Studies. Will include Care and conservation of textiles, Storage methods, Identification techniques, and Tour of Textile Collection at Cortland County Hist. Soc. Fee. Registration deadline is Nov 2. Contact Regional Council of Historical Agencies, 1509 Park St, Syracuse NY. 315/475-1525.
- November 14 Autumnfest at Wells College. This is their annual arts and crafts show, schedule on the Sat of Parents Weekend. To display and sell fee of \$10 for an 8 foot table. Show runs from 10 am-5 pm. Contact Student Activities Office, Wells College, Aurora, NY 13026. Reg. deadline Nov 6
- November 21 Anne Kreckel workshop on exotic fibers, sponsored by Genessee Valley Handspinners.
- November 23-24 Persis Grayson Workshop sponsored by Cherry Valley Handspinners. Contact Shirley Howe, 5507 Mt Pleasant Dr, RD4, Cazenovia NY 13035 315/655-8883.
- December 2, 3, 4 Holiday Craft Fair 10 am-6 pm. Juried fair. Spaces are 5 1/2'x10', \$125.00 Contact Sharon Adams, Cornell Craft Fair, Willard Straight Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853. 607/255-5170.

Editor's Corner: This has been a busy and fertile time of year for us. Ohlabeil, our Jersey cow gave birth to twins! both males. We are enjoying the most delicious milk I've ever had as well as enjoying watching those calves grow and gambol. One week later, almost to the hour, I gave birth to our beautiful, new daughter, Corinna. She and her 20 month old brother are keeping our hands and minds very active. In the midst of all this turmoil, and change, I've managed to find a few moments for a little spinning and weaving--some successful and some disastrous. My latest loom project was a baby blanket, soft as could be in odd lots of alpaca. It was lovely off the loom until I washed it to 'full' it. Think again. Wool has those scales which help everything cling together into fabric. Alpaca seems to just slide around. I ended up with a very soft lacey fabric--looks like summer curtain material but boy is it soft!! Still it's not a complete disaster. I learned more from this project than from others which came out well. Mistakes seem to demand careful examination; who wants to repeat them over and over again? And examination and reflection breeds learning.

BLACK SHEEP HANDSPINNERS GUILD
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ELECTIONS THIS MONTH. Just like the rest of the country, the Guild is electing officers for 1988 in November. Come and vote and spin!!

Advertising Rates for the Newsletter: 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

Deadline for Dec newsletter, November 29.

