



BLACK SHEEP HANDSPINNERS GUILD NEWSLETTER
Number 85 - January 1986

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I would like to start off the new year by offering our heartfelt thanks to all the officers who served us so ably in 1985: Helen Kiker, our president; Barb Pilbeam, vice-president and program chairman; Ginny Lance, secretary; Mary Ann Sumner, treasurer; Marianne Horchler, newsletter editor; and Kathie Garnsey, librarian. Thank you for all your time and energy in the interests of the Guild. Special thanks to those of you who have been willing to serve for several years: Mary Ann Sumner and Marianne Horchler.

Welcome to our new officers: Marty McGee, president; Joan Johnston, vice-president and program chairman; Vernice Church, secretary; Helen Kiker, who is still with us, this year handling both the treasury and the library; and finally ye ed, newsletter. (Actually, Marianne Horchler had agreed to continue the typing of the newsletter if I would assemble it, but we decided that to have two people doing the newsletter who are separated by 18 miles, really wasn't any easier than doing the whole job. So here I am. I've never done anything like this before, so please bear with me.)

This is the time of year when once again, DUES ARE DUE. But please don't be too quick to send in your checks. It was discussed at the last meeting (see minutes) that the dues really should be increased (\$2 across the board was suggested), but there were too few people to really get a good vote on it, so the decision will be made Jan. 11 (barring a blizzard). So bring your checkbooks so Helen can take your money as soon as we decide how much we want!

Please, please, please return your WORKSHOP PREFERENCE SHEETS. We want to present the workshops that you want to have, but can't do this unless we know what you want. The sheets were in the November 1985 newsletter. Please get them to Helen Kiker ASAP. If you can't find yours, a verbal reply will do (Helen's phone 273-3124). The suggestions were: Jean Case on Silk, Fred Gerber on Dyeing, Felting, Angora, Indigo Dyeing, Color Theory, Weaving With Handspun, Knitting With Handspun, Barb Wheeler Workshop, Dyeing Workshop other than Gerber. Since that list was made two other possibilities have been mentioned: Nancy Morey on Dyeing, and special design techniques on the knitting machine (possibly with Amy Hnatko if she can be talked into it). So please get your responses to Helen. It is a lot of work to plan a workshop, and if it is then canceled due to lack of participation, it is very disheartening to those who were volunteering so much time and energy. At last count the enthusiasm measure was way ahead for Jean Case and Fred Gerber. These are both well-known people who are hard to get. If a workshop with one of them is to come off, we need your ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT. So please get your response to Helen.

COMING MEETINGS

January 11, 1986, ROCK DAY 10-4 at Varna

This is the annual get-together-to-have-fun of spinners. It is a day to spin and chat, catching up on last year and making plans for the coming year. It is a dish-to-pass lunch. Traditionally, soups (with recipes) have been featured. Since we didn't have our annual November Show, it will also be an opportunity for a year's worth of show and tell. Please bring your projects of the past year. Many people who have missed meetings during the year will be making a special effort to be with us at Rock Day. So bring your goodies so that those that didn't get a look before will have a chance now.

February 8, 1986 12-4 at Varna

This is the first of the regular meetings of the 1986 year. Our new program chairman, Joan Johnston has decided that the emphasis for the year will be on COLOR. In keeping with this the program for this meeting is COCHINEAL. Please look through all your samples and projects with cochineal and read up on it. No one particular person is responsible for presenting a program on this dye, (unless someone wants to come forward and volunteer!) so it will be up to all of us to be as well prepared as we can for a mutual discussion and pooling of our knowledge.

COMING EVENTS

Jan 5, Beginning Spinners Workshop

Thistledown Guild, 45 Rexford St., Norwich 13815

Jan 11, Rock Day of the Leatherstocking Handspinners

11-4 at Herkimer Home, Herkimer

Jan 12 Rock Day of the Lamb to Loom Guild

at the home of Dorothy Bosket

20 Circuit Dr., Binghamton, 607-723-2138

Jan 18 Art Teachers Workshop at Little Falls

contact Gary Aney, RD 2, Box 396, Mohawk, NY 13407

Jan 18 Knitters Workshop with Carol Knoblock from Cazenovia

Intermediate to advanced level

Thistledown Guild, res. by Jan 10, c/o The Museum, \$12.50.

Feb 5 WINQ4 Weavers' Inspiration Night at the Tabby Shop. 273-3308

JULY 13 - JULY 25 CONVERGENCE '86

This is the bi-annual convention of the Handweavers Guild of America and will not be given on the east coast again for another six years! Dorothy Burnham, author of "Keep Me Warm One Night" is the keynote speaker. There are many fascinating seminars and 3 and 5 day workshops. All the info is in the Winter '85 issue of SS&D. Applications should be sent in immediately so do not delay.

This is an article on Finnsheep by Marianne Horchler originally written for the Finnsheep Breeders Association Newsletter.

Because Finnsheep are bred primarily for prolificacy (as they should be) and because they have lightweight fleeces (generally 5-8 lbs.), little attention has been paid to their wool production in the US. Fleece weights and especially fleece characteristics (fineness, staple length, uniformity, kemp) vary greatly from one Finnsheep to the other. The American Wool Council grades Finn wool at 50's-60's with a "high" yield and a staple of 3"-6" while a brochure published by the Finnsheep Breeders' Association in Finland states that fineness varies from 48's to 58's with a scouring loss of about 30%. In his book "Finnsheep In Finland", H. Goot lists grades of from 46's to 60's and finer.

Regardless of its grade, Finn wool is easily recognizable because of its luster and softness. Even older sheep will produce extremely soft fleeces, unlike any other U. S. breed's wool. Most of the Finns we raise on our farm have a yearly staple of 5" to 8" and we shear them twice a year.

Purebred Finnsheep in Finland as here come in white and colored. Most colored Finns are characterized by a white star on top of the head and sometimes one or several white "socks" on the feet. Occasionally colored Finns will have a white area in the neck under the chin; a few may have no white markings at all. Aside from the occasional white "bib", colored Finn fleeces are uniformly colored and not spotted.

Black Finns are born coal black and stay a deep black for several years after which the wool lightens up to a charcoal grey and later to a medium grey. Some pure Finnsheep may be born grey but they are rare. Rarer still are brown Finnsheep. To my knowledge there are none in the U. S. and there is only a small number of brown Finnsheep in Finland.

A true brown color (called "morit", from the Icelandic "moorutt" - as red as the moor) in any breed of sheep is extremely rare. You may think that you have brown sheep when actually the fleece is black or grey with sun-bleached brown tips. A true brown sheep has a chocolate or cinnamon brown face and legs while black or grey sheep have a black head and legs. The brown color should not be confused with the "red" which appears in the Tunis and Karakul sheep and is governed by different genes entirely. While black is recessive to white, brown is recessive to black, which explains its scarcity. Colors have been discriminated against for so long that any color is difficult to obtain in most breeds of sheep.

The only way to discover whether white Finnsheep carry a black gene is to use a colored Finn ram on the ewes. You will probably find the incidence of black lambs very low. I once bred one of my black Finn rams to about 15 of our white Finn ewes; theoretically if any of these ewes carried a black gene, I should have had about 50% colored offspring. In spite of the twins, triplets and several sets of quads, not one of these ewes produced a colored lamb. I also breed black Finn to black Finn every year and have yet to come up with a brown one.

Minutes - December 14, 1985

The Christmas dish-to-pass meeting was held at Varna with about 12 members present.

Mary Ann Sumner, treasurer, reported a balance of about \$632 and advised on the expected expenditures for the coming year. The discussion ended with a general feeling that dues should be raised to \$10 for an active member, \$12 for an inactive member and \$8 for a subscription to the newsletter.

It was decided to again provide money awards for the State Fair and 4 H, the same amounts as last year.

Jean Currie presented the slate of new officers: Pres. Marty McGee, Vice. Pres. Joan Johnston, Sec. Bernice Church, Treas. Helen Kiker, Newsletter Marianne Horchler and Daisy Kirkpatrick and Lib. Helen Kiker. The slate was voted unanimously. Helen Kiker thanks all who have been supportive of her this past year and especially Barb Pilbeam, Jean Warholic and Mary Ann Sumner.

The few of us who attended this meeting had a grand time and a delicious lunch. We were entertained by lovely chamber music played by our very talented members Tina Fenn, flute, Kathy Bishop, cello, and Tina's husband, Ben, playing violin. We found it delightful to spin while being so well entertained and wish more of our members had been there to enjoy it with us.

As seems more and more evident, the versatility and skill of our members increases every year. Mary Ann Sumner showed us her woven cotton place mats, no hand spun here but of interest to all of us. Amy Hnatko has become very creative on the knitting machine creating jackets and vests that really must be seen to be appreciated. I would advise all of you to ask her to show them to you. We hope Amy will provide some sort of program in the future. Pat Randorf has a nice way with colors and is so wonderfully productive. Tina Fenn brought her rabbits and chinchillas to charm us and showed some nice skins with blends of wool/silk/angora. Sheryl Whitted spins so easily on her big drop spindle. Jean Currie (spending Christmas in New Zealand) is finishing a natural dark brown sweater. Mildred Scudder has photos of woven wall hangings she has done for her church and also showed new made-to-order coverlets from people in Pennsylvania. Kathy Bishop showed her daughters indigo dyed vest and the wonderfully designed and produced wool combs made by her husband. He will make them to sell to guild members and if you intend to do worsted yarn you certainly will want to consider a pair. Vernice Church was spinning rainbow dyed wool from Nancy Morey. She remarked, as we listened to the trio, that she would enjoy all concerts more if she could take her wheel along.

Respectfully submitted, Virginia Lance

Another Show & Tell: Joyce Kraeger - Kneupfer brought a white hat which she had improved by adding an extra band for fit and also added colors on the top. Very creative!

Aside from color there are no differences between white and colored Finnsheep. Colored Finns have short tails, mature just as early and are just as prolific as white Finns. Of course there are poor black Finns just as there are poor white Finns.

The breed is well-known for its prolificacy and its role in crossbreeding in commercial "meat" flocks. There is also a potential market for the Finnsheep breed (white or colored) to be used in crossbreeding in commercial wool flocks. The owners of these flocks, who cater to the spinner's and knitter's need are very often interested in heavy fleeces just like the commercial market lamb producer is interested in fat lambs, but both types of producers may want to use the Finn because of its prolificacy, early maturity, etc. Many unfortunately are unaware of the luster, softness and long staple of Finn wool. This may change. Ron Parker in his "Sheep Book" and several articles in various magazines describes how he and his family live off "100+ ewes" which are primarily Lincoln X Finn; he has a commercial wool flock, deriving his major income from the sales of wool to handspinners. Paula Simmons who has written several books on sheep and wool processing and who is considered by some wool producers as an "authority" has finally discovered Finn wool! I had always been disappointed with her description of Finnsheep in "Raising Sheep The Modern Way" - there was absolutely no mention of the wool. Her latest book "Turning Wool Into A Cottage Industry" describes Finn wool as "54's to 60's. Although low in fleece production, growth rate, and carcass quality, this is an unusually prolific breed." After writing her and sending her samples she wrote back saying she had just discovered Finn wool after the book had been completed. She promised to add something about the "super soft Finn wool" in the second printing and added "I think the appreciation of the Finn wool, among spinners, is rather recent. The unknown is never appreciated, and it is recently becoming better known and more available." I found very surprising that a person who has been involved with fibers for as long as Paula Simmons (since 1945) and who makes several trips across the country every year giving lectures and workshops would only now discover Finn wool!

Like any Finn breeder I believe the emphasis in the Finnsheep breed should be on what it excels in - prolificacy. Just like its early maturity, milking ability, and out-of-season breeding ability, its unique wool and potential for colors are pluses which should not be ignored.

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Thank you, Marianne. Articles on any subject related to our craft are always welcome. Please feel free to call me and discuss any ideas you have if you need any help or anything. The DEADLINE for all newsletter items will be one week after the meeting. After that, you may catch me if you're lucky.

Congratulations to Kathy and Paul Bishop on the birth of their son, Thomas Dec. 18, 1985.

ADVERTISEMENTS

SPINNERS; Did you know that a properly restored antique flax wheel can spin wool as well as or better than many of the new wheels? The cost of a restored antique flax wheel is no more and sometimes less than a quality new wheel. Antique wheels not only retain their value but appreciate considerably in value over the years and can later be sold to non-spinners as valuable decorative antiques. The heart of any Saxony-type spinning wheel is in the flyer assembly. A new, balanced flyer, in appearance like the original, and custom-built to fit an old spinning wheel costs less than \$100. Talk to us about antique wheels for spinning. Bill and Vicky Ralph, Rome, PA 18837, 717-247-7175. 11/12

Wool Picker For Sale: \$125.00. Almost new, includes doffer. Call 315-685-5529. 2/3

Black second generation ram lamb for sale, purebred Corriedale. Very friendly and good natured. \$50.00. Call 315-685-5529. 2/3

Get yourself an after-Christmas treat! We have everything for the spinner/weaver/dyer/knitter. How about a little Charkha spinning wheel that you can carry like a book under your arm? They only cost \$49 and include a skeinwinder and 3 spindles! Or a wooden umbrella swift for only \$27? We have some fantastic new books like "A rug Weaver's Source Book" and "Knitting in the Old Way". Our knitting machines are very reasonably priced but prices go up Jan. 13, so hurry! Check our wool & cotton yarns, all our spinning fibers & natural and synthetic (Kiton) dyes! We also have sheep & fencing supplies & you are welcome to visit the farm any time. **THE WOOLERY**, Marianne & Tim Horchler, RD 1, Genoa, NY 13071. 315/497-1542. Or, for delivery to Ithaca call Daisy Kirkpatrick at 272-4552. 1/1

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HAPPY
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