

MAR 2013

ROVINOS

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**It is time** for consideration of new officers and volunteers for YOUR guild. The guild only happens if WE work together to do it, so please consider volunteering for one or more of the following positions. These are not all elected positions, but are the positions needed to keep the guild functioning.

**Volunteers please step up.**

**President** should be someone who can organize the monthly meeting, call it to order and **try to hear the meaning of the discussions**, not just the voice of the loudest. S/he should be prepared to spend anywhere from 2 to 6 or more hours per month dealing with communications: including queries from new people, various other organizations and questions about spinning and spinning equipment.

In my opinion, at this time, the guild has no need for a vice-president or secretary as there is no formal minutes or organization needing them. Unless we decide to start having an organizational memory and become more structured than currently is the case I think we can do without these two positions.

**Treasurer** keeps the records of all the money of the guild, pays all bills, keeps track of membership dues and therefore membership. She works with the newsletter editor to maintain the mailing list and with the program coordinator about external classes and programs.

**Newsletter editor** writes and sends out a monthly newsletter to all current members and several other guilds. She receives articles and notices and arranges a listing of events. In the unusual situation of needed communication about specific events between the monthly mailing she sends out email blasts to all members. She needs to be familiar with using publishing software.

**Program chairs** see to it that there is: some programming for guild meetings; arrange for workshops and special events; and coordinate the Roc Day committee. As you can see this is a place where multiple volunteers are needed.

The **web mistress** maintains and updates the web site at least monthly with at least the current newsletter. Also, announcements for the general public are posted there.

One last volunteer, the **keeper of the key**.

If you can see yourself in any of these positions, or wish to continue in any of them, please contact me before the April meeting. Warning, service to the guild is both rewarding and frustrating, but is needed if we are to continue.

*Jim*

March 9

## Spin-in

President- [Jim Johnson](#)  
 Vice President - [Sue Quick](#)  
 Secretary - [Audrey Lowes](#)  
 Treasurer - [Vickie Marsted](#)  
 Newsletter Editor - [Susan Sarabasha](#)

Membership - [Wayne Harbert](#)  
 Programming - [Sharon G](#) & [Marjorie I](#)

Web Mistress - [Teresa Porri](#)  
 Roc Day - [Teresa Porri](#)

## In this Issue

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The Black Sheep meet from 11am - 3pm on the 2nd Saturday of each month at All Saints Church Parish Hall, Route 34B, in Lansing, New York

# This 'n That

## Possible Resolution

•I would like to submit the following resolutions for consideration by the Blacksheep membership:

1. Resolution: that members who were active in the guild in its first decade (before 1985) be offered Member Emeritus status, if they like, entitling them to the newsletter and other privileges of membership.
2. Resolution: that one of the summer meetings in 2014 be designated a "Return to the Fold" meeting, to which earlier members of the guild will be invited to come and be recognized.

Wayne Harbert.

•I would also like to ask members to submit reminiscences about "spinnable animals" they have known and loved, for an upcoming essay on the animals who've contributed to the guild over the years.

•Here is the mission statement of the guild articulated in a Guild newsletter of 1977.

To preserve and perpetuate the art of handspinning.

To promote interest in spinning through education.

To provide instruction and social life in spinning

## The start of our guild cont'd

and even, in the case of more than one of our sterner editors, publicly shaming scofflaws by publishing the names of those guilty of keeping books out overlong from the Guild library!

\* Joan Johnston, Jean Nowack, Kay Ross, Kay Stickane, and Jean Warholc, have provided us with invaluable documents from the early days. Thanks to them, we have most of the issues of the newsletters for the first couple of decades, but a few (most notably, the elusive #1) are still missing. If you have been hoarding Blacksheep ephemera in your attic, the Guild would be happy to take charge of it. After scanning the documents into our digital archives,

we will be turning them over to the Tompkins County Historical Society for its own Blacksheep archives--we are a part of regional history, after all.

*Kay Ross with one of her wheels.*

## Fibery Events



## MA Sheep & Woolcraft Fair

May 25 & 26

Cumington, MA



## Roc Day Notes from Teresa

**W**e had a wonderful discussion about Roc Day at the February meeting, and I thought I would put some notes on what was covered into the newsletter for those who were unable to attend. There were a number of overlapping threads in the course of the conversation, which I will try to ply together as smoothly and tightly as possible.

I think the biggest agreed-upon point was that people want Roc Day to feel like a true celebration of fiber arts and of each other. Guild members had lots and lots of ideas for ways of doing that. One idea that was discussed in some detail was that of splitting up various beloved elements of Roc Day throughout the calendar year, although there is some concern about both manpower and the fact that the fiber festival calendar is so full between April and November that there would not be many times that wouldn't overlap with other well-established fairs and festivals. Attendance at classes has been low in recent years, so

we discussed some other ways of providing outreach and education to the non-spinning public, and deeper educational opportunities for our fellow spinners. Another thought put forward was that the portion of Roc Day programming that provides a welcome to newcomers could be taken by devoting one guild meeting specifically to newcomers, where there would be one-on-one education time, a chance to try different wheels and spindles, etc. I really like this idea as a way of replacing the one annual class that has consistently had a good turnout, the "learn to spin" class. If we decrease or eliminate the small 90-minute classes that we've held previously, this opens up the whole rear hallway of the parish hall. This could be an alternate space for vendors, a place to put a "guild gallery" of finished objects we're rightfully proud of, or something else entirely. On the topic of vendors, there was some talk about a way of randomizing vendors to have some more variety in the future, and give long-standing vendors that have not sold at Roc Day recently a chance to return.

A big concern about the auction was that many of the items were contributed by a relatively small number of guild members, and we discussed ways of improving this. Because Roc Day has been so successful financially, Vickie suggested the idea of allowing an item to be donated to the auction in lieu of the \$20 membership fee. Also, because of the financial success of this year's auction, we agreed to give a large portion of the proceeds to charity and to a guild scholarship fund for upcoming classes.

Lastly, a small point that was not directly made during the Roc Day discussion but was mentioned during the business meeting: the guild's 40th anniversary will be next year, and it'd be lovely to highlight that in some way.

I'm really grateful to everyone who contributed to the conversation and to those who emailed before or since, and I hope we can put these ideas together to have a fun and fibery Roc Day in 2014! But first I'm going to take a little nap. :)



# A Guild of Our Own: How it all began.

from Wayne

**F**irst of all, a correction of the record may be called for. The oral history of the Blacksheep Guild, and all its brochures and other publicity, have reported for years that it was started in 1974. That may not be technically true. In a recently unearthed newsletter from January 1978, the Guild congratulates itself on its third anniversary, stating “as of this spring, the Guild is going into its fourth year!!!” That would make the date of its founding 1975. So have we been laboring under revisionist history all these years? Are we jumping the gun with this new round of anniversarial self-congratulation? If so, no matter. Thirty-nine is also an auspicious milestone--three times thirteen--and good enough for Jack Benny. But in fact, the core of the Blacksheep group had been spinning together at Kay Ross’ house for at least a year before formally incorporating. So quadragesimal kudos is arguably in order after all. (Speaking of technicalities, my fastidious spell checker has just reminded me that

‘kudos’ is singular—no matter what we might think.)

Kay had only shortly before that joined the newly formed Thistledown Guild in Norwich (est. 1973), to which she had been referred by the Farmers’ Museum in Cooperstown. She took part in Thistledown’s fall workshops, whose programs featured some of the pioneers of the modern spinning revival. Kay’s handwritten notes from these workshops are to be found in our digital archives. Some other locals, including Beth Campbell, Dora Swart and Louise Hebbard, were also members of the Norwich guild, and still others attended the workshops. As exciting as the Thistledown events were, Norwich was inconveniently far away for the Tompkins County spinners to attend the regular sessions there, and it was not long before they realized that they had a critical mass of spinning enthusiasts closer to home, on the shores of Cayuga Lake, where spinning had already established a modest beachhead. (Suzy Hokanson, one of the group, had taken her first spinning

lessons at a craft shop in a church basement in Aurora owned by Claire Morehouse.) The nucleus of what would eventually turn into the Blacksheep Handspinners Guild (among them, Kay, Dora, Louise, Suzy, Karey Solomon, Doris Brown, and Virginia Lance) began spinning together, Kay recalls, in the family room at her home on Irish Settlement Road in Dryden, moving later to the big room in the second story of her garage, where she kept her looms and wheels. Interest grew quickly with the approach of the Bicentennial and the accompanying general revival of curiosity about traditional ways of living, and when the participation had grown from a bare half dozen to more than twenty, they moved to more commodious accommodations in the Dryden Presbyterian church.

The decision to form a guild, Karey and others recall, was prompted in large part by a very practical consideration--the desire to be able to put in group orders for Ashford spinning wheels from New Zealand. When bought in

## How it all began cont'd.

quantities of fifteen or more, these cost a mere \$45 dollars. Acquiring good and inexpensive wheels was a big concern back then, and orchestrating bulk orders became a central function of the new Guild, and the main job of its treasurer, for a few years. The second issue of the Guild's newsletter reports that an order for Ashford wheels had just been submitted, along with one for "60 extra bobbins [56 spoken for!]". As late as 1977, an order for 17 Ashford wheels went out in March (with delivery expected in July or August), and a second order was placed in June of the same year (with delivery expected "just in time for Christmas".) By 1978, after a steep increase in the price and a decline in demand, the guild decided to get out of the spinning wheel biz. The traffic continued long enough, though, to account for the unusual number of Ashford wheels, complete with jumbo flyers, floating around the area.

The founders had loftier ideals in mind, too, of course. The purpose of the new guild was declared to be

"to preserve and perpetuate the art of hand spinning, to promote interest in spinning by educating the public through displays, workshops and lectures, and to provide instruction and social life in spinning for members." For some, "social life in spinning" was paramount. Suzy Hokanson recalls that "the members of the Black Sheep were my family back then. Living out in the boonies on our dairy farm outside of Marathon, NY, half an hour from everything, the chance to gather with my kindred spirits of the Black Sheep was my lifeline. I could share what I loved to do -- create in fiber -- with people who understood my passion."

Karey recalls that it was she who came up with the name "Blacksheep", and Suzy notes that the name seemed apt enough, as its members had strayed from the Thistledown fold. Thistledown was in fact something of a fountainhead; in 1974, Doloria Chapin spun off the Cherry Valley Country Spinners in her living room in Pompey with

seven spinners, so it was a sister guild to our own. The parting of paths was an amiable one; Blacksheep members continued to participate in Thistledown seminars in Norwich, and the Blacksheep cooperated with Thistledown and the Cherry Valley Spinners in putting on the massive Wool Day event in Lorenzo ("You are to wear your Early American costume... The mansion is roomy... A crowd of 8,000 is anticipated..."). The names of the newly elected officers of its mother and sister guilds were even published in the Blacksheep newsletter.

According to an *Ithaca Journal* article written shortly after the Guild's charter was signed, there were 22 members at that time, and they had begun spinning in the Clinton House in downtown Ithaca on the second Monday of every month. (The meeting time would be a point of contention over the years, excluding, as it did, participants with day jobs, and a semi-autonomous Saturday group came into being, about which more later). The Guild's first

## How it all began cont'd

officers were Kay Ross, President, Gretchen Ham, Vice President, Gesima Meeker, Treasurer (an office shortly afterwards assumed by Jean Nowack), and Louise Hebbard of Newfield, Secretary. A second *Ithaca Journal* article, dated November 16, 1975, had them still meeting in the Clinton House, and reported that the Guild now had 47 members, of whom eleven spun professionally.

Still further moves were in the future; by 1976, the Guild had relocated to the Youth Bureau facility near Stewart Park—the old one, universally and fittingly referred to simply as the “Tin Can”. Its Roc Day celebrations were held in the Dryden Presbyterian Church. By this time, membership had grown to 60. A further move, to the Varna Community Center in 1983, brought it to the facility it would call home for the next quarter century. Kay Ross had ceased to be active in the Guild by then; she had moved to Ithaca, and no longer had sheep. Like several of the others who were involved in its

founding, and many more who would follow them, she set off in new directions in pursuit of evolving interests—horticulture and weaving in her case—after having invested enormous energy, creativity and enthusiasm in launching and growing an enterprise which could be proudly entrusted to other capable hands. They all have left their mark on the Guild, and vice-versa, as I have learned from the fond reminiscences I’ve heard and read. As Suzy Hokanson puts it, “Once a Black Sheep -- always a Black Sheep!”

We don’t know exactly when the *Blacksheep Handspinners Guild Newsletter* started, though we suspect that it was June 1975. The first in our collection, # 2, dated June 1976, is accompanied by the report of the Guild’s first Wool Day. Shortly thereafter, it started appearing as a (more or less) monthly publication, and it has been published continuously ever since, becoming the voice and the chronicle of the Guild. The issues ceased to be numbered consecutively after #137,

but by now I estimate that there have been almost 400 of them. Jean Warholic, editor until 1981, produced exceptionally energetic, witty, chatty, information-packed tomes of up to ten pages, single spaced, with narrow margins—on a typewriter, it should be noted. She was succeeded in this demanding office by Jean Currie, Marianne Horchler, Daisy Kilpatrick, Deborah Serviente, Shelly Reif, Shelly Marino, Leona Buerkle, and many dedicated and self-sacrificing Heroes of the Guild since then. We are well on our way to assembling a complete collection of these important records of our history, thanks to some recent gifts to our archives\*. They still make fascinating and informative reading, and collectively build a rich picture of the dedication of the editors to their complex mission—spreading the gospel of handspinning, informing the members of events and resources, cajoling them about their obligations (including constant calls for volunteers, and dues reminders),

*completed on page 2*

## CHARKA WORKSHOP

Date: Sat. April 27

Where: Lansing at All Saints Parish Hall

Time: 9 am to 4 pm with a one our lunch break (pack a lunch)

Cost: \$65.00 includes workshop and materials fee

Come learn about spinning on a charka or perfect your charka skills. Our instructor, Glenna Chumtley is an experienced charka spinner. She not only spins cotton on the charka but is one of the few charka instructors who also spins wool and exotics on the charka. Glenna has written a booklet on charka spinning which will be included with your fiber for the workshop. If you do not have a charka but would like to try it out we have several which can be borrowed for the workshop. WORKSHOP LIMIT IS 10 PARTICIPANTS.

To sign up for the workshop please forward your check to :

Marjorie Inana 41 W. Court St., Cortland NY 13045. Make check out to Black Sheep Handspinners.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email\_\_\_\_\_

I have a charka for the workshop\_\_\_\_\_

I need to borrow a charka for the workshop\_\_\_\_\_

Please fill this out  
and either bring it  
to a meeting or  
mail it with your  
check for \$20 to:  
Vickie Marsted,  
29 Lincoln St,  
Cortland, NY  
13045



## Membership Form

*Please type or print*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **DUES Record:**

2011 2014

2012 2015

2013 2016

Joined guild in \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

preferred email: PRINT NEATLY please \_\_\_\_\_

preferred phone # \_\_\_\_\_ birthday month *(opt)* \_\_\_\_\_

This info will be made available to the guild membership. If you wish to remain anonymous please let Char know.

Please list your wheel(s)

We welcome spinners of all skill levels. How long have you been spinning? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you: Knit? Weave? Crochet? Dye - *(Natural or chemical)* ?

Which of your skills might you be willing to share with a member or the group?

ie: teach beginning spindling or spinning or dyeing; teach a spinning / knitting / crocheting skill, etc

If you raise any fiber animals, please list them here \_\_\_\_\_

Which committee(s) are you interested in joining?

- Roc Day
- Membership
- Programming
- Charity Works
- Outreach including Events & Activities Schedule for non guild members
- Newsletter - advisory & review
- None
- Library
- Education
- Website
- Nominating Committee *(occasional)*

Would you be interested in chairing or co-chairing one of these groups? If yes, which one(s)?

*Newsletters are sent via email. If you would prefer to get yours via snail mail please give 12 SASE envelopes to Sharon Gombas. Postage should be \$2 per envelope.*





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### To place an ad

A check for \$5.00 made to BSHG for an ad to run  
three times for members; \$5/month for non  
members should be sent to our treasurer: Vickie  
Marsted, 29 Lincoln Ave. Cortland, NY 13045.  
Send the ad to the newsletter editor, [Susan S. sarabasha@earthlink.net](mailto:Susan S. sarabasha@earthlink.net)


If you have a question for her or others, you can  
email us through the links on page 1.

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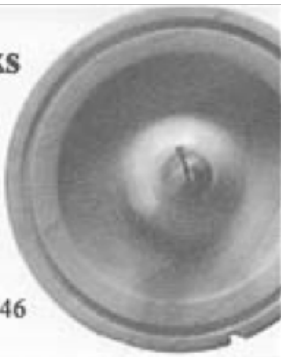
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