



A Message from the President

Greetings!

I'm just back from the guild retreat--our weekend in Skaneateles presented the opportunity for lots of spinning (in my case some for the guild shawl for next Roc Day, and some for my next cowl project), visiting with friends new and old, eating of course, some retail therapy and even singing. I am brimming with enthusiasm and new ideas, which will hopefully translate into some good items to show off.

For our **March** meeting, Lisa Merian will guide us in creating color-blended batts custom-made for our projects. Materials will be provided; please bring your hand or drum carders and a sense of fun.

Have you begun your spring cleaning? The guild garage sale is scheduled for **April**. Turn those fibers and fiber-related items into cash, or trade for someone else's treasure. We expect to have Ruth Allen's stash offered at that time.

See you there.

—Sharon

Flax packets

Wayne will be handing out up to 20 packets of fiber flax seed (enough for 10 square feet each) at the March meeting to anyone who wants to try growing a patch. Instructions will be included. If enough of us grow flax patches, perhaps we can organize a workshop in the fall on how to process the fiber we harvest.

Dues are Due!

Membership fees of \$20 are due for 2014. You may bring this to the meeting, or send to Vickie Marsted, 29 Lincoln Avenue, Cortland NY 13045. Checks should be made out to BSHG.

March 8

Lisa Merian will teach us about color blending using carders. Fiber will be provided, and hand and drum carders will be on hand for participants to use, but you should bring your own cards too, if you have them, so that there will be enough to go around.

President [Sharon Gombas](#)
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P. 2 A RUSTIC SICILIAN WHEEL

P. 3. FEB MINUTES, STELLA MARIS

P. 4. PICTURE GALLERY

PP. 6-7 Ads

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

Minutes of the February meeting

- The September meeting will be at Sharon Gombas's house as the church will not be available. Directions to her house and a reminder will be given in the August newsletter.
- The membership list will NOT be placed on our website but will be printed for members who would like a copy.
- The treasurer's report revealed that our rent for the church space will increase next year from \$50 to \$60 per meeting. We currently have 27 paid members and our annual expenses are approximately \$860. Income from Roc Day was \$504 profit, \$450 from the shawl raffle, \$513 from the Chinese auction.
- Ellie would like to thank people who sent in items for the Chinese auction. Sharon Gombas will be organizing it next year. We will draw tickets quietly and place them near the item instead of announcing winners as we have in the past. Lynne Anguish will be organizing the raffle of the shawl that Anne Furman will be weaving on a triangle loom. Member spun fiber from Lisa Merian at the Stella Maris retreat will be used for this project. There may be more fiber for spinning.
- We will donate \$250 to the Lansing Food Net (as suggested by the church) from our profits and \$250 to the Food Bank of the Southern Tier. Profits from the shawl raffle were donated to Hospicare in memory of Ruth, a devoted member who recently passed away. Since 2009 the Guild has donated over \$2000 to various charities.
- A workshop with Beth Smith will be held Nov 1-2, 2014 at the Country Inn and Suites in Cortland. The workshop will be a breed study in which participants will spin wool from 18 breeds of sheep. There will be a maximum of 20 people who can participate. The Guild will pay the \$1200 teaching fee for Beth and participants will need to pay \$55 for the workshop and \$60 for materials. There will be a scholarship application in the April newsletter for those who cannot afford the fees. Please contact Marjorie Inana for more information. — Respectfully submitted Lynne Anguish

A high-tech product review from Anne Furman

For only \$4.99 at iTunes you can buy an iSpin Tool Kit for your iPad, iPhone, or iPod touch. Michael Golden has devised an app for your spinning which does all sorts of marvelous things. All the tools necessary to create a beautifully balanced yarn are available in this easy to use app which has directions built in. And for \$.99 apiece, he has apps for knit gauge and a needle sizer. Sometimes I just love technology!! But not always.

Stella Maris report

There were 16 of us at Stella Maris. 12 were there the whole weekend and 4 came for the day on Saturday. Lots of spinning, knitting, talking, eating, and joking. The Solarium Room has windows on 3 sides, and we basked in the sun. Two surprises were Jeanette Sweeney who won this gray yarn at Roc Day and finished her sweater in time for the retreat, and Sue Quick who put the collar on this turquoise sweater she knit in 1971. Kudos to them. At the retreat we spun up almost the whole pound of wool which will be used to make a triangle loom shawl for a Roc Day raffle 2015. —Anne

Fibery Events

May 3 & 4 ,2014 - MD Sheep & Wool Festival, West Friendship, MD
www.sheepandwool.com

May 10 & 11, 2014 - Bethel Woods Fiber Festival, Bethel Woods Center for the Arts(site of Woodstock in 1969), Bethel, NY
www.bethelwoodscenter.org

June 14 & 15, 2014 - CNY Fiber Festival, Butternut Hill Campground, Rte 20, Bouckville, NY
www.cnyfiber.org

Sept. 6 & 7, 2014 - PA Endless Mountains Fiber Festival, Harford Fairgrounds, Harford, PA
www.pafiberfestival.com

Oct. 11 & 12, 2014 - Little York Fall Fiber Arts Festival, Little York Pavilion, Preble, NY
www.cortlandrep.org



Editor's Corner: A rustic Sicilian spinning wheel

My wife's mother's family came from a small town in southern Sicily called Campobello di Mazara, where they lived for generation after generation. The family name is in fact found almost exclusively within a ten-mile radius of the center of that town. Diane's grandparents broke the pattern in the early 20th century, braving the ocean to resettle in Mississippi. In 2008, our family made a pilgrimage to the old country by way of

reconnecting with its roots, and we spent a pleasant day in Campobello di Mazara, which is now a pretty seaside resort town, next door to some spectacular ancient Greek ruins, and as remote from the grand centers of Italian culture as it is possible to get--much closer to the northeast coast of Africa than to Rome. In the center of town is a very thoughtfully laid-out museum of peasant life, which gives some sense of what a struggle it must have been like to wrest a living from the dry, stony earth there in earlier, less prosperous times. I had become a spinner only a few months before our trip, and had never spun on a flyer wheel or thought much about them, but I did snap a picture in the museum of what struck me as surely the most primitive looking spinning wheel I'd seen. Now that I am a bit more knowledgeable about old wheels, I still think it holds that distinction. As you can see, it is a very rustic, homemade affair. The drive wheel is hand cut, its groove showing signs of being carved with a chisel. It's hard to imagine that it could have been much fun to spin on this contraption, though someone did at least ply on it, since the bobbin still holds apparently plied yarn. (Or perhaps it was only meant for plying?)



My insufficiently informed curiosity and the protective gaze of the museum guard kept me from inspecting it as closely as I might have, but on studying my picture after the fact, I've decided that this primitive wheel incorporates a spinning mechanism different from any other I've found described anywhere. Most notably, it lacks flyer arms, and there seems to be no place they could have been attached. An orifice on the right side opens into an eye set in a narrow waist on the other side of the front maiden. Above the eye is a peg set into a wide wooden collar. The collar has a curved slot cut through it above the peg, through which the yarn passes to the bobbin. If I have interpreted the mechanism

correctly, the peg must have done the work of flyer arms. As it rotated around the shaft, it snagged the fiber emerging from the eye, twisted the thread, which then travelled through the curved slot to be taken up by the bobbin. Since the drive band is attached to a bobbin whorl, this would be a type of flyer-drag system. But would such an arrangement even work?? How would the yarn distribute itself evenly along the bobbin, without hooks? I have in mind to try to recreate a wheel along these lines someday when I have time, to satisfy myself that it could really work in the way I have envisioned. In the meantime, my ongoing inquiry into the development of spinning technology has convinced me ever more that the most interesting phenomena occur in places at the edges of the world, where the combination of remoteness, isolation from mainstream innovations, and necessity does indeed lead people to reinvent the wheel. This primitive but apparently innovative Sicilian spinning wheel may be a case in point.

—Wayne



Picture Gallery



There's just no way of predicting what will happen at a Blacksheep February picnic. Close your eyes for a just a second and a salsa dance breaks out! Many thanks to Audrey for officiating at the festivities and bringing the ants, and to Ayne for teaching us some moves!



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To place an ad


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Current members may submit one business-card sized classified ad per month for free. Send a check made out to BSHG to our treasurer, Vickie Marsted, 29 Lincoln Ave, Cortland, NY 13045. Send the ad in digital form to the newsletter editor,

newsletter@blacksheephandspinnerguild.com. Black & white business cards are published free for current members.



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