



April  
2021



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# NEWSLETTER

## APRIL 2021

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## Message from the President

Dear Fellow Spinners,

Spring is here, and the air around us is warming up, despite a few snowy reminders of winter. It is time to garden and to meet friends outside again. I have missed meeting you in person during the winter. And now that it is spring, I'd like to take the chance and schedule an outdoors in person meeting again. The weather precast looks decent, yet not particularly warm. But as fiber artists we probably all have a warm sweater or two and a shawl to bundle up as needed:

Our next meeting will be on April 10<sup>th</sup> from 11am-3pm. I rented the pavilion behind the Brooktondale Community Center (522-526 Valley Road, Brooktondale, NY) for that time. The pavilion should protect us, in case April regales us with one of its proverbial showers. The pavilion also features a concrete floor, which means we'll be able to set our spinning wheels on a solid, dry surface. We'll have access to the Brooktondale Community Center's restrooms. Since not all of us are vaccinated yet, masks are still required.

For those who might not yet feel comfortable to meet in person, don't want to sit in slightly colder weather outside, or are stuck overseas, we'll have an online meeting over zoom on Sunday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 12pm-2pm., Meeting ID:, Passcode:

I hope to see you soon,

Angelika

[location of the Brooktondale Community Center on Google Maps](#)

Meeting ID: 882 6274 3214

Passcode: 777113

Link: [Meeting Link](#)



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## Guild News

The next meeting will be on February 13<sup>th</sup>, over Zoom.

## Old News

### Guild Meeting Location

All members are asked to be on the lookout for an alternative potential meeting location in a reasonable price range. It must have adequate parking.

### New Members

If you know of folks who would like to join, please have them contact Louise Henrie and pay dues at: [henrielm6@aol.com](mailto:henrielm6@aol.com).

### Address List

We put together a list of names, email addresses, and telephone numbers for guild members. This list is available in printed form at guild meetings or by request to Secretary, Wayne Harbert at [weh2@cornell.edu](mailto:weh2@cornell.edu) or phone [607-564-9328](tel:607-564-9328) .

## Guild Officers

President	<a href="#">Angelika St.Laurent</a>
Vice President	<a href="#">Sue Quick</a>
Secretary	<a href="#">Wayne Harbert</a>
Treasurer	<a href="#">Louise Henrie</a>
Newsletter	<a href="#">Rachael Skye</a>
Workshops	Position Open
Webmaster	<a href="#">Rosane Mordt</a>
Roc-Day Coordinator	<a href="#">Yvonne LaMontagne</a>



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## General Announcements

### To Place an Ad

The cost for ads is \$5.00 per month for non-members. Current members may submit one business-card sized classified ad per month for free. Send a check made out to BSHG to our treasurer, Louise Henrie, 417 2nd Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Send the ad in digital form to the newsletter editor, [rachael.siems.skye@gmail.com](mailto:rachael.siems.skye@gmail.com).

## Stories From The Guild

While we're scattered, I've been collecting stories from our members. You can send stories to the email chat threads being sent around, post them to our Ravelry group, and check out the Facebook page. If you want help finding these groups or if you have a story to feature, email me at [rachael.siems.skye@gmail.com](mailto:rachael.siems.skye@gmail.com)

This month, we have two longer, fascinating stories from Susan, Jeannette, and Marcia. Thank you!

Best,  
Rachael



**Susan Shilliff & Jeannete Sweeney**

I wanted to share some projects that Jeanette Sweeney and I have been working on this past year. Quite awhile ago we were blessed with barrels of a friend's wool from her Romney sheep. We spent several summer days washing and drying it but we still had a whole lot more. Being inspired by a demonstration at one guild meeting about wool blankets and mattresses, we decided to have the wool processed into batts and roving and try our hand at it. Most pictures that we found for wool blankets were actually quilts with a wool batting. So that is what we did. It was the first time Jeanette had ever quilted and with the help of a quilter friend she made a beautiful quilt. I made mine from material I had purchased years ago but never had the time to make.



Jeanette's Quilt



Susan's Quilt





I also wove some wool rugs with the roving and batts.

The next project that I'm working on now is making a baby duvet for a soon-to-be born grandbaby and a bigger one for my bed. It is basically pillows stuffed with wool fleece and then the pillows sewn together. At first I combed/flicked the locks for the stuffing but when that ran out, I decided to just finger tease it a bit and use it as is.





## Marcia Weinart

### AWASH IN QIVIUT

Decades after I learned to spin, I timidly accepted my first handspinning commission. It taught me that, whenever a spinner is asked to spin on commission, she should accept. For one thing, while one might ordinarily spend hundreds of dollars to take a class on how to master a technique that will improve their spinning, in the case of a commission, this is reversed: someone will provide you with fiber and pay you to become a better spinner!

For that commission, I was forced for the first time to measure my yards per pound, and to confess to the commissioner that one skein lay outside the 10% leeway I'd hoped for. That skein became the perfect back-of-neck, under-collar skein, pooling terribly in a place no one could see—and the commissioner thought I was pretty genius, even to be aware that a 10% difference in yards-per-pound might make a difference to her gauge!

The two commissions that followed this were lots of yardage, but all of it singles—to keep the commissioner's costs low. Nothing will make you a better spinner in a hurry than to make hundreds of yards of consistent singles from lovely tops provided by someone else—and perhaps especially so when those tops are made of fibers you would never have chosen for yourself! One customer gifted me a pound of ingeo after I frankly confessed that I found it impossible to spin.

Last June, a masked fellow trotted up my front sidewalk with 21 ounces of raw musk-ox fiber he'd collected on a trip to Greenland. He offered me a "deposit" for the work I was to undertake—and I laughed aloud, explaining that the raw qiviut in the two zippered plastic bags he'd just handed me costs about \$65 per ounce. He had just entrusted me, a total stranger, with over \$1,000 worth of fiber.



The first task was to remove the two layers of guard hairs from all the short, downy fibers at their base. Some of this was supremely easy: the very long “raincoat” hairs that cover a muskox are dark, and stiff and thick as horsehair—easy to spot and yank out by the handful. These easily pass through the shorter down fibers. I retained all of the coarse fibers, both to be able to prove to the owner that I had not absconded with any of his precious fiber, and in case he might want to make something with those horsehair-like strands.

However, according to Judith MacKenzie’s Rare Luxury Fibers, there are no fewer than three separate undercoats to be dealt with. I splurged on a \$12 clip-on 60x microscope for my cell phone, to reassure myself of this fact: each successive coat is about twice the diameter of the next one. Given that qiviut ranges from 14-18 microns, this may not seem like much of an issue—but in fact, it is a contrast in fiber thickness that our skins perceive as “prickliness.” As Judith MacKenzie puts it, “The more similar the two coats are in length and micron size, the more difficult the down coat is to dehair. Fiber that hasn’t been dehaired properly makes poor yarn. This is often deceptive, as the spun yarn can look perfectly fine until it’s washed. Then, as the water allows the natural crimp to revive, the crimped undercoat expands while the hair fibers don’t, giving the yarn a rather ragged bouclé surface. Of course, the real problem with badly dehaired yarn is that it’s very prickly and uncomfortable. Those straight fibers stick out at right angles to the yarn and behave like little thorns.” She recommends using a (backlit) light table and tweezers, to pull out all but the finest fibers.

This is painstakingly slow work—six hours of effort per ounce, for me—and I regretted not having set my price twice as high for the project. Working over a white table, I essentially teased each clump of fiber by hand; since the thicker fibers are less crimped and therefore eager to pop out from the finer mass, it is easy to see them waving, “Here I am!” I positioned a set of cotton cards at one hand, to accept the dehaired fiber, and a coarser handcard on the other side, to capture the rogue fibers. The whole process generates an astonishing amount of static electricity, so the tines of the carders were needed in order to convince the fibers to let go of my hands! Of course, a fair amount of







Greenland accumulated on the table, too, just as chaff falls from sheep's wool during picking and carding. It should be interesting to see what new weeds appear in our yard, this summer!

When the fiber seemed (!! ) well de-haired, I began the process of shaping it into punis (small rolags, like those used to spin cotton) and there was some color blending to do, in the process. Just two grams of qiviut fills the face of my cotton cards, so after the colors were well-blended, I would pull this mass into quarters (one-half gram each!) and card it one last time before rolling it around a dowel.



A Canadian Production Wheel is a type of double-drive wheel with a high wheel ratio, used for long-draw spinning of fine yarns—perfect for this task! Mine seemed like a total stranger, when first fed a handful of qiviut: it is difficult to make subtle tensioning adjustments on this wheel, and qiviut is so short and silky that it would slide apart and through the orifice in a heartbeat! After trying to “lace” the singles around the flier without success, it became apparent that plumbers’ pipe insulation was needed to add bulk to the bobbin cores, in order to have adequate draw-on without breaking the yarn.



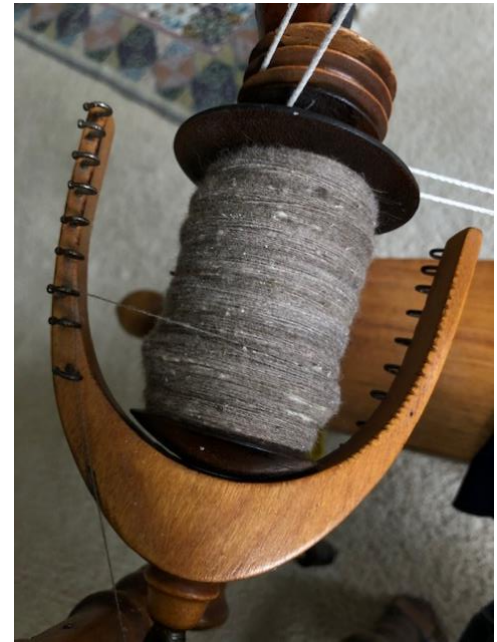
Working with a dark napkin in my lap gives good contrast with the color of the fiber as I work, though I must still pause to pull thicker fibers from the yarn as it draws on—and I have no doubt I will be pulling these loops from the plied yarn as I knit! A good deal of chaff and scurf continues to fall from the fibers as I spin each 16” make, giving nine treadles per make (at a wheel ratio of 18:1). Though scurf has a terrible reputation, it seems to have dried out and



typically falls off as I card or spin, only occasionally requiring the use of a fingernail. I am curious to discover what headaches will arise as I ply this yarn, and delighted to know that it cannot felt, as I wash it before knitting!

There are plentiful, fascinating videos on YouTube about musk oxen, most of them from the Musk Ox Farm in Palmer: [MuskOxFarm.org](https://www.muskoxfarm.org). Perhaps my favorite—now that I know how much effort goes into de-hairing!—is the one from the Large Animal Research Station at the University of Fairbanks, Alaska. Since the down undercoat is shed all at once, each spring, it is possible to serve these huge animals their lunch while they are contentedly penned in a narrow crate. <https://youtu.be/ZFXaYEtZZuQ> This video shows a young woman using a human hair pick with long teeth to gently and calmly harvest an entire blanket of precious fiber from one side of the animal!

Also intriguing: though musk oxen (neither musky nor true oxen!) were originally native to both Alaska and Greenland, they had disappeared from Alaska by the 1930s, when they were re-introduced in an effort to provide impoverished Inuit with meat. This effort was deemed a failure until, in the 1950s, a few remaining calves were rounded up in an effort to attempt to domesticate the wild giants, including an explicit effort to harvest and use their soft undercoats—something even the Inuit never aspired to do! Don't miss a chance to work with this amazing fiber: you'll be participating in a truly ground-breaking effort!





# ROVING

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## Vendors

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315-246-1178    [mflowers@wells.edu](mailto:mflowers@wells.edu)




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<http://chemungvalleyguild.wordpress.com/>



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## New Member's Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email (Print Neatly) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

This information will be shared with registered guild members. If you wish to remain anonymous, please let Louise Henrie know.

Please list your wheel(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you spindle spin? Yes or No (circle)

Do you Knit? Weave? Crochet? Dye? (Natural or Chemical?):

Would you be willing to share your skills with other members (ie: teach beginners, present a meeting topic, demo to the public, etc?)

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

We need your help on committee(s). If you would like to volunteer, let our president, Angelika St. Laurent know.

Roc Day Programming                      Newsletter

Membership                                  Website

Outreach                                      Treasurer

Our newsletter is distributed electronically. If this is a problem, please contact Rachael Skye (734) 476-0634. Please fill this out and either bring it to a meeting or mail it with your check for \$25 to: Louise Henrie, 417 2nd Street, Ithaca, NY 14850





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## Zoom Details

Angelika St.Laurent is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Angelika St.Laurent's Zoom Meeting

Time: Apr 11, 2021 12:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88262743214?pwd=K091bFM4VE51L3F2TmhkSm41K3E1UT09>

Meeting ID: 882 6274 3214

Passcode: 777113

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