



October
2021



NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2021

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Message from the President

Dear Fellow Spinners,

Fall is upon us and the temperatures are getting lower. We are meeting in the Parish Hall of the All Saints Church in Lansing (347 Ridge Road, Lansing, NY 14882) for our next meeting on Saturday, October 9th from 11am-2:45pm. For everyone's safety, we ask that masks be worn during indoor meetings. We also ask that members who are not vaccinated against Covid-19 refrain from attending.

We decided during our September meeting to have a small, in person Roc Day celebration limited to Guild Members. Ideas on how we want to celebrate are welcome.

Hope to see you soon,

Angelika



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Guild News

The next meeting will be on Saturday, August 14th, at the Brooktondale Community Center.
522-526, Valley Road, Brooktondale, NY

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

Guild Dues

Hello, Black Sheep Guild members! Greetings from your treasurer. If you haven't paid your dues of \$25 yet for 2021, now is a good time to catch up. You can send a check made out to Black Sheep Handspinners Guild or BSHG and mail it to me,

Louise Henrie
417 Second Street
Ithaca NY 14850,

or we now have a Venmo account! Be the first to try this! our username is @Black-Sheep-NY

Of course, you can catch me at a guild meeting and pay in person. Checks are fine, or if you want to pay in cash, an envelope with your name on it helps with tracking!

Thanks, spinners!



Roc Day Contest

The Roc Day contest is underway for January 2022! Thank you so much to Anne Furman and her helpers for choosing the contest and packing fiber. Pick up a kit at a meeting to join, or email Anne (ahfurman@yahoo.com) if you can't make it.

Roc Day 2022 Spinning Challenge

Spin the 2.5 ounces of Merino wool roving to create 2 singles. Spinning techniques are your choice – any gauge, any twist, or any ply. Ply the 2 singles together, incorporating the dyed kid mohair locks. These locks should not be carded or otherwise prepped; they should be plied in. An example of one type of this plying is included in the packet. Use **only the fiber provided** with no dyeing or additions of any kind. It is not necessary to use all the fiber. It is necessary to use only the fiber provided.

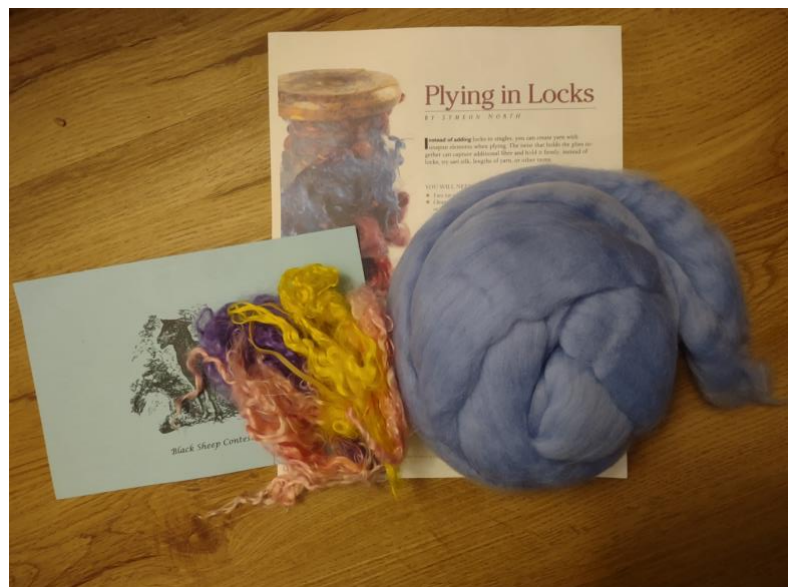
The superfine merino roving is from Outback fibers in Colorado, color Hydrangea:

<https://www.outbackfibers.com/superfine-merino-wool-roving>

The kid mohair locks are from Diane Coon at Coon Hollow Farm in Hamilton, Montana.

Finishing the yarn to set the twist by steaming or washing is recommended. Loosely tying the yarn in 3 places is also suggested. There will be two judgments: one for proficiency, and one by people's choice.

The deadline for turning your yarn in is 10:30 AM on Roc Day.





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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.

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 or phone [607-564-9328](tel:607-564-9328).

Guild Officers

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



General Announcements

Sales & Trade

Fran Miller is selling a loom:

LeClerc Fanny Floor Loom, 45"

Counterbalance, working order, older. Woolery.com has a great picture of the new ones

Asking price: \$700

Contact: franmiller44@hotmail.com 607 657-4400

Luna Fiber Studio is also having a sale on looms and spinning supplies:

These beautiful looms are for sale, as well as a ton of yarn, spinning wheels, ceramic wheels, a kiln, and more! Everything is in great shape and there are lots of smaller equipment (like shuttles, bobbins, warping tools, etc) that they want to sell/give with it.



Contact: Lynn at (607) 351-3958 or (607) 532-6741



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Susan Verberg is looking for coarse roving:

As part of the Livestock Conservancy's Shave 'em to Save 'em:

<https://livestockconservancy.org/2020/04/01/se2-anniversary/>

ISO coarse roving, like Shetland, or Icelandic, for bulk felting. Does not need to be spinners quality, looking for bulk over quality. A Guild shephard offered to process fleece for me at cost when I asked in spring but I can not find their information anymore and hope that perhaps they'll see this request and we can reconnect. Thanks!

Susan Verberg at Far Mountain Farm

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.



Stories From The Guild

Have you made something interesting, learned something new, or haven't been able to make it to meetings and want to show off your work? Send in a story! You can send them to the editor, Rachael, by email at rachael.siems.skye@gmail.com.

Not Mohair

Shelly sent in a story from Israel – a visit with goats!

So this can be captioned, “Not Mohair”:

On a hike today we met up with a herd of goats. I'm guessing they're of Nubian descent judging by the long ears and Roman noses. Notice the long hair! I picked up a bit of it to twist by hand - it would probably make a strong rope or wire substitute.







Experiences at the 2021 Spin-Off Autumn Retreat

Marcia Weinart has a lovely letter for us about her time at the Spin-Off retreat.

From the time my flight left Chicago, I stared out the window seat, hoping against hope to watch the Rocky Mountains appear below me as we approached Colorado. Disappointingly, on the approach from the east, no mountains are visible as one arrives in Denver. Delightfully, however, the Colorado Chautauqua in Boulder is nestled up against the base of the Flatiron peaks that establish the mountain range that spreads westward from that point. Better still: my cabinmate was a graduate of UC-Boulder, and encouraged me to claim the bedroom that offered a breathtaking view of the pink sunrises that graced the signature peak of the Flatirons, just in back of our lodgings!

That view was just exactly as amazing as the instruction offered at the first gathering of the Spin-Off Autumn Retreat (SOAR) since the magazine by that name changed management, eight years ago. Over fifty fully-vaccinated attendees gathered at the Chautauqua for four days in late September to learn from Spin-Off editor Kate Larson, long-time shop owner Maggie Casey, Russian spindle expert Galina Khmeleva, sheep breed specialist Deb Robson, tablet weaver John Mularkey, Navajo weaver Lynda Teller Pete, and my personal spinning heroine, world-renowned spinner, weaver, and author, Judith MacKenzie. The retreat was organized so that it was possible to study with as many as five different teachers, ending with a two-day “intensive” workshop under just one instructor. I was as interested in studying each instructor’s approach to teaching as in learning the specific spinning techniques presented.

My first class was an introduction to spinning on a “book” charkha—the small, high-speed, folding spindle wheels developed in India that are typically used for spinning cotton. Kate Larson offered her students six types of cotton from which to spin: brown, green, and white sliver; punis (both commercially produced from India and those we made ourselves in class;



plus ginned cotton which we “bowed” (snapped with willow sticks to remove chaff). Kate instructed us in how to disassemble and “tune” our charkhas, as well. Because charkha spinning requires using just one hand to draft the (very short) fibers while cranking the wheel with the other hand, it can be a difficult technique to teach, even (and sometimes especially) to seasoned spinners, so I learned a great deal about how to approach the typical problems that plague new charkha spinners.

Though I have been spinning for almost a quarter century, I only began teaching under duress, for the Finger Lakes Fiber Festival in 2013. I made it my mission to learn as much as I could about how to teach well, as quickly as possible—and had the great good fortune to take a 5-day class in Harrisville, NH with Maggie Casey, long-time owner of Shuttles, Spindles and Skeins, a fiber arts store in Boulder, CO. She herself learned to spin in the 1960s, when commercially-prepared fiber was not to be found. Since it was necessary to prepare her own wool for spinning, she first learned a technique called “long-draw” or woolen spinning, in which the twist energy that makes yarn is allowed to pass in between the spinner’s hands while drafting (pulling out fibers)—and this technique was also the focus of the class I took with Maggie at SOAR. She demonstrated not just the drafting technique itself, but also the preparation method (carding rolags) and the types of fiber (short and crimped) that respond best to the technique. I requested particularly to be introduced to the procedures best suited for spinning using the long Navajo spindle, and Maggie gave me the briefest demo, after claiming that she herself is not very proficient in the technique: “I’m still learning to spin!”

Deb Robson is the author of a thorough and outstanding compendium of information on animal fibers, *The Fleece and Fiber Sourcebook*. She offered classes at SOAR on two endangered breeds of sheep: Clun Forest and Florida Cracker. Happily, my cabinmate and I each took her class on a different breed, so we were able to swap from the generous samples of two different fleeces of each breed that Deb passed out in her classes. She gave each class a detailed description of the history/geography and attributes of their breed samples, and then invited questions, which made for wide-ranging discussion.



My true goal in attending the retreat was to have the opportunity to work with Judith MacKenzie, author of multiple books and videos on spinning. It was hard to skip opportunities to work with other teachers, but I was glad to take part in two of the three classes she taught at SOAR. I did not take her class in handspinning paper fibers, but took a delightful session on spinning tweed yarns, which I very much hope to add to my own offerings at the Weaving and Fiber Arts Center. As defined by Judith for the purposes of this technique, tweed yards are made primarily of recycled scraps of fiber: everything from garneted (chopped) yarns to unraveled cashmere sweaters to wool nepps, silk noil and weaving thrums to cotted (felted) mats of angora rabbit fur, and even snippets of non-woolen fabric! All of these items and more were carded together into colorful rolags and spun into two-ply yarns (often using so-called “Andean” plying techniques to maximize yardage of short lengths of unplied singles). The options for creative use of “leftovers” are limitless for this nevertheless durable and useful yarn!

Judith is truly a storyteller, and has a vast well from which to draw: she is the offspring of a Canadian Coastal Salish clan member and a Scottish father, and reveled in sharing stories from both of those cultures. In addition, she has been a sheep rancher in Montana (with neighbors who raised everything from zebras to musk-oxen and yaks), sometimes responsible for moving a flock of thousands of animals, and occasionally for caring for a herd of musk oxen. Judith worked with the Blackfeet tribe to introduce a way to recover and process the one part of the bison that the tribe was not yet putting to use: the short, soft down fibers of the undercoat. She ran her own fiber-shearing company at one point, and explained that there is a nerve at the base of the sheep spine that causes it to experience euphoria when “seated,” as for shearing. (This same nerve, she noted, keeps deer who are slaughtered by wolves from experiencing pain.) She has traveled to Mongolia and Afghanistan as an employee of the Aga Khan IV (the acknowledged descendant of the prophet Mohammed and leader of a Shia Muslim sect) to help diminish poverty amongst the shepherds and goatherds by improving the quality of their fiber through breeding. She was awarded a National Research Council grant to investigate the very best scouring agent for washing wool. (Answer: Dawn dish detergent has the fewest harmful chemicals, and is—as the advertising touts—gentle enough to use on wildlife impacted by oil spills, plus it adequately removes suint/perspiration salts and grease from wool fleeces.) And she gave an endearing evening lecture at SOAR about how deeply affected she has been by



being forced to adopt two hair-sheep (i.e., non-wool-bearing) lambs whose mother was abandoned by a tenant on her farm and who were, in turn, rejected by their mother. “You know,” she says, “sheep came to us, when we were still living in caves. And they gave us so much: warmth, meat, and companionship.”

Her two-day “intensive” class was labeled as being focused on fibers produced in the “western” world: bison, llama, Columbia sheep, etc. This course began with Judith passing around amazing handwoven works of high-twist yarns from 19th-century Peru, as well as an assortment of Native American spindle whorls, some as small as 1/4” in diameter. (Judith reported that she had spun yarn using every one of the 19 whorls she displayed!) We each got to hold an ingenious Peruvian doll, 5” tall—also from the 19th century—fashioned of alpaca fiber, with an embroidered, smiling face and a hairdo woven using the “sprang” technique.

Judith detailed the evolution of the animals that used to occupy the land where our conference took place—and how, following the retreat of the Ice Age, some of these animals migrated north and west to what is now Asia, to become camels, while others roamed to what is now South America, to evolve into llamas and alpacas. The class experimented with dehaired fibers from all three families, as Judith explained how their fiber is harvested and processed for spinning. At the same time, Judith delineated the history of humankind’s spinning mastery—from thigh-spinning to stick- and spindle-spinning, beginning with bast (plant) fibers and moving on to animal fibers.

By the time she was distributing silk tops from India, however, her students laughingly questioned how far we had wandered from the “Western Woolies” class advertised. As Judith handed out shining white bombyx (domesticated), beige tussah (wild) and dark brown peduncle tops from the fabulous Treenway shop that was part of the retreat marketplace (treenwaysilks.com), she chortled, “In the west...we can also SHOP!!”—before sitting down to demonstrate how to spin a yarn across the tips of all three colors of top to create a marled yarn.



Then, however, she brought out the very most “western American” fiber there is—her entire remaining stash of buffalo down—and distributed it for her students to play with. Next, she provided another uniquely American fiber: wool from Columbia sheep, the first breed developed in the US, in 1929. She described how small the pool of genes was from which our country had to draw until the 1960s and 1970s, when many new genetic lines were imported—and how that pool has again narrowed, since we may no longer import DNA from other countries. She detailed how each strand of wool is created by a sheep’s hair follicles, and how the resulting structure can influence our choice of spinning techniques. And she bemoaned the fact that our current penchant toward breeding for fine wools also endangers the health of the sheep themselves: the same, soft keratin forms their hooves—and soft hooves can lead to problems. We discussed how to “staple” wool—to sort and assess individual locks of wool for length and strength—and how to wash the sorted locks.

Next we learned how a Montana farm has imported genetic materials from the finest cashmere goats of Mongolia, to develop a longer “staple” of this luxuriously soft fiber. The American rancher, however, still must send her entire harvest back to Mongolia to be processed in preparation for spinning, because there are no mills in the US capable of removing the guard hairs from the soft undercoat! While fiber from Mongolian goats is generally just 1/4 - 1/2” long, the Montana-grown equivalent grows up to 3/4” long. In any case, cashmere fibers can only be spun using the “woolen” technique described previously: they are too short for human fingers to restrain the twist from flowing between the spinner’s hands!

Since the first fibers humankind spun were plant fibers, we were next invited to try our hand at breaking up the skeletal “bast” fibers from...iris leaves, grown and retted by the naturally heavy moisture of Judith’s own yard, near the ocean in western Washington state. As we struggled to remove the non-bast components of the leaves without breaking and shortening the fibers we wished to spin, everyone in the class gained an appreciation for the significant skills of our forebears!



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Last, Judith instructed us in how to create her signature “wolf” yarn—that is, a novelty yarn she spun for sale for many years, “to keep the wolf from the door” of her young family! This yarn is a kind of bouclé or “buckled” yarn, spun and wrapped with additional fluff at the same time. While hardly a fiber from the western US, some weaving thrums from the silk wedding dress of Lady Diana Spencer (aka the Princess of Wales) made for unique and lovely yarns, as did the kid mohair locks Judith had dyed for our use.

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to the Weavers Guild of Rochester for the scholarship that enabled me to attend the 2021 Spin-Off Autumn Retreat (SOAR) at the Colorado Chautauqua in Boulder, Colorado.



ROVING

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Vendors

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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