

Basketry Network Newsletter

December 2005

A Message From The New Editor

Season Greetings Everyone: I hope you know by now that I am the new editor of the Basketry Network Newsletter and that Gus Janca will be the publisher. I hope that we can continue in the footsteps of our fellow members and keep producing an informative and interesting letter. You may have met me at one of the last two basketweaving conferences that were held in Strathroy, Ontario. I do basketweaving and gourding and also teach in the vicinity of Fenelon Falls, Ontario.

This month is renewal month and I will enclose the renewal form at the end of the newsletter. It will be going to Donna Pasman as usual. I hope that you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

- Dale Adamson, Editor



What Our Members Are Up To:

Willow Weaving with Irish Basketmaker, Joe Hogan

- Gus Janca

In September, on a visit to Ireland, I was lucky enough to meet and work with world famous basketmaker, Joe Hogan. My wife and I, and another couple, who are also basketmakers, were on a three week holiday in Ireland. We had arranged to rent a cottage from Joe for one of those weeks. We studied with Joe for only three days, and while we did regret that time being so short, we did learn an enormous amount not only about willow basketmaking, but also about



growing, picking, storing and working with a number of varieties of “sally”.

Joe Hogan is a traditional basketmaker and teacher who lives and works near Clonbur, Co. Galway. Over the last thirty years, he has worked hard to keep alive the techniques used in making Irish traditional baskets, a task that has become more urgent as indigenous baskets, such as creels and lobster pots, are no longer in common use. Joe spent years seeking out old craftsmen who could teach him their traditional art. His respect for the people who had made and used them is strongly evident. In addition to creating his own, high quality willow art, he is deeply involved in teaching, and accepts both beginners and more advanced students. His comprehensive knowledge, thorough instructions, patient demonstrations, and his eagerness to share his knowledge with others makes Joe an excellent teacher. He also works closely with national museums, and frequently exhibits his work. He is well known to all Irish basketmakers, many of whom claim it was Joe's enthusiasm and energy that got them started in the craft.

Joe and his wife, Delores, live on the shores of Loch na Fooey, a tiny lake situated in a remote, but spectacular region just north of Galway city. Here he is able to grow most of his willow. Legend has it that Joe bicycled into this region thirty years ago, and immediately fell in love with its natural beauty. He bought an acre of land, planted it with willow, and has been there ever since.

Having the advantage of previous, basic willow weaving experience, we were able to work with somewhat more advanced, traditional Irish basket techniques. We started out making potato “skibs” – low sided, round willow baskets traditionally used to strain, and then serve potatoes.

Next, we worked on creels. Creels were working baskets, and could be as large as two to



three feet on a side. The ones we made were miniatures of about 14 inches wide. Creels were very commonly used as human back baskets, or, just as often, a pair would be mounted on either side of a donkey. Sometimes they would be made with

hinged bottoms to facilitate unloading. Creels are quite unique in several respects. First, they are woven upside-down. Traditionally, the weaver stuck the stakes into a patch of soft ground. We used forms Joe had made from thick planks, into which he had drilled holes to accept the stakes. The weaving starts with an unusual stroke called a “mouth wale”. Next, as the sides are woven, a window is left open somewhere around the middle. When the sides are complete, the stakes are “knocked down” and woven through each other to create the bottom. Finally, the basket is wiggled free of the wooden form (or lifted out of the ground, if you are sticking to tradition), turned right-side up, and the stakes are trimmed. Variations might include: creating a stronger, traditional side weave (called a knot) by alternating each row of French rand with a row of anti-clockwise strokes; forming a “D” shape instead of a rectangle; using hazel (a very difficult material, says Joe) instead of willow; or, creating a hinged bottom.

The steps for these traditional baskets, as well as a number of others, are described in Joe Hogan’s book, [Basketmaking in Ireland](#), published by Wordwell, 2001, ISBN 1 869857 51 8. When I looked into purchasing this book a couple of years ago, I was unable to find a store near me in southern Ontario that could get it. I finally ordered it through the basket weaving supplier, RoyalWood Ltd, in Ohio (www.royalwoodltd.com), and this turned out to be cheaper than ordering directly from Wordwell in Ireland.

Joe is presently working on his own web site, www.joehoganbaskets.com. It is still under construction, at the time of this writing, but

should soon provide more information about Joe, and his baskets.



East Coast Basket Hunt **- Linda Dobinson**

My husband and I recently set off on holiday to explore the eastern provinces. We knew that we would spend a week in PEI but the rest of the holiday was only vaguely mapped out at the time of our departure. I had done a search for basketry people on the island and found two locations. The first was the PEI Basketry Co-operative led by Ann McRae McIsaac (tommycod@pei.sympatico.ca) The purpose of the co-op is to keep alive the art of basketry. Ann & her husband, David, prepare all the ash material and several other artisans take turns at weaving and operating the gift shop. (If you visit PEI, look for the shop on the highway going into Richmond on the west end of the island.) These artists are not native but they carry many baskets by natives in the Mi’kmaq tradition. Local sweet grass is harvested from the salt marshes by a native woman and included in many of the designs. It was interesting to learn that all the ash is brought in from New Brunswick and has been for many years as the tree no longer grows on the island. Ann conducts workshops and to keep the skill alive, the group is training younger people to weave. The shop itself was fascinating with lots of basket styles to inspire the weaver and a beautiful display of collectors’ baskets to drool over.

Our second basket stop was at the Lennox Island Mi’kmaq Reserve. There was an interesting cultural center, a restaurant featuring native foods and a gift shop selling native crafts. We soon realized that very few of the baskets on Lennox Island were made locally. Most were sent in through a native co-operative from other reserves. We made some notes and then did a little more searching on the computer at the campgrounds. A lot of that info would later lead us to spots in Nova Scotia and Maine.

On the following day, we drove the northern coast and spent time visiting artists’

studios, gift shops and eating at all the wonderful seafood places. We discovered a fabulous gift shop called the Dunes Gallery that was showcasing some really incredible baskets and, to our surprise, they were created by an Ontario artist, Wendy Durfey from Rockton. You will see these spectacular baskets at <http://wendydurfey.com/index.htm>. She uses silk fusion and incorporates metals into her designs – real works of art! Check the website for her exhibits at shows. Well worth the trip!

At the Lennox Island Mi'kmaq Reserve, we purchased a basket and an interesting book featuring the Ray Sark Collection of Mi'kmaq Baskets. That book sparked off a trip to Nova Scotia as we realized that we had purchased a signed basket by one of the weavers featured in the book. From PEI our trip took us to meet a Nova Scotian Mi'kmaq chief, to a wonderful basket exhibit in Maine and then to an Onieda Cultural center in New York.



Willow in Lunenburg – Frances Thorn

Last summer, I stepped out of my life in southwestern Ontario into a week where baskets were the main event. I took a trip to picturesque Lunenburg, Nova Scotia to weave willow with instructor Heather Sanft and six classmates from faraway places such as Newfoundland, North Dakota and Hawkesbury, Quebec. Two of us were Ontarians, only one student was from Halifax!

Heather is an experienced teacher who has studied in France and woven many commissions, including some for films. She and husband, Dan, operate a pick-your-own blueberry business and the Lunenburg County Winery in Newburne, Nova Scotia. She has planted willow on their farm including a living willow fence. We were treated to a delicious meal there on Thursday evening and later we took the opportunity to shop in their wine and gift store!

Classes were run by the Lunenburg Seaside Craft School's Paulette and Bill Hackman who spared no effort to make our

week a memorable experience. We were cared for in every way, the week began with a reception for the class at their home where we met fellow students. Lunches were catered and the food was first rate. Our classroom on the third floor of the Lunenburg Academy offered a breathtaking view of the town and countryside beyond because the Academy is atop the highest point in Lunenburg.

Three baskets were taught: an English fruit sieve in white peeled willow, a French casserole basket in buff willow and a Swiss berry basket in brown willow, but we had the opportunity to make other baskets as time permitted. Our Nova Scotia student wove five baskets that week! I enjoyed weaving my baskets but had to keep them small so they would fit into my suitcase. Watch for these baskets at the November meeting.

It was wonderful to be a part of this group of basket enthusiasts and to watch each weaver as they created their projects. Some had not woven a basket before and many had not woven with willow. I highly recommend the Lunenburg Seaside Craft School and will certainly return to Lunenburg again to weave willow.



Basket Treasures of Duncan, B.C. - Jennifer Henry

The City of Duncan, B.C. (on Vancouver Island) is known as the City of Totems. In Duncan you will find totems scattered throughout the city streets. Turning each corner you do not know what to expect. For the downtown area, a walking tour is recommended to see the totems. Even on the highway going through Duncan I was pleasantly surprised to see totems at various businesses. Located just down from the train station in Duncan is a wonderful Northwest Coast Native Art Gallery. The gallery is the Judy Hill Gallery, 22 Station Street, Duncan BC. What really caught my eye in this gallery was the top shelf that was all the way around the store. The top shelf contained a private collection of the baskets owned by the curator. There were



hundreds of baskets of varying size. Some of the baskets were very very old. Most baskets were made of cedar but there were also baskets made of birchbark, pine needles and even porcupine quill. There were so many to look at and admire. There was a wonderful basket with a lid of porcupine tufted quill. They were all a real treat to see. There were also lots of wonderful other works of art in this gallery including jewellery and carvings.

One mile south of Duncan is Hill's Native Art. Hill's also has locations in Vancouver, Victoria and Nanaimo. To view some of the baskets at Hill's check out their website at www.hillsnativeart.com

Just on the outskirts of Duncan was a Native

interpretive centre (Native Heritage

Centre, 200 Cowichan Way, Duncan, BC).

There were cedar baskets in this gallery as well as carving, etc. I found a poster on the wall showing cedar baskets. I wanted to

purchase a copy but none were available.

Some names of the basket artists that kept on popping up as I spoke to curators were Effie Durocher and Cheryl Whiteagle.

Of course there is so much to see and do in BC and I was lucky enough to indulge in some basket admiring!!!! I would have loved to take some basket workshops while out there.

Cabbagetown Festival 2005

- Tony Pasman

September 9-11 was a really nice weekend, just right for an outdoor craft show, in this case the Cabbagetown Festival in Toronto. After last year's festival, the Basketry Network had reserved a space for this year. Rather than letting this money go to waste, Donna and Tony decided to try to hastily form a group of members to join and sell their wares. As it turned out, only 4 members were able to join in. For these participants, business was pretty good with sales of about \$1500. Many thanks to Jo-Anne Salter and Michelle Zikovitz for all their help and also to those members who came by to say hello and to show their support. Again this year, Carey Nicholson and Sarah Kern had their own booths and I understand that they were quite content with their sales also. As an added bonus, Sarah was selected as an award winner. Congrats, Sarah!



Up Coming Events:

2006 Southwestern Ontario Basketry Conference – U of Windsor – May 17th – 21st, 2006

Membership List Changes, Additions and Corrections

| New Member | Change of Information |
|--|--|
| Irene Weisner | Gus Janca |
| 128 Ravine Drive | 1023 Sisters Lane RR # 1 |
| Port Moody, BC | Minden, On. |
| V3H 4T2 | K0M 2K0 |
| 604-469-0840 | 705-286-6570 |
| ireneweisner@shaw.ca | gandijanca@sympatico.ca |

Members' Favourite Web Sites:

(send in yours)

Cita Steinmeier's home page
<http://www.willows.dk/> from Frances Thorn.
Check out the Galleri.

Basketry Network Website News:

<http://ca.geocities.com/basketmaking>

Swap 'N Shop (a new feature for our newsletter?)

Interested in trading basketmaking materials, patterns or other craft related things? Send us a description of what you have to trade, or what you are looking for, and we will publish it in our next newsletter. Be sure to include your contact information.

Deadline for our Next Newsletter Submission - January 25th, 2006

DALE ADAMSON CFP, 520 PATTERSON RD.,
FENELON FALLS, ONTARIO. K0M 1N0
TEL. 705 887 6718
FAX 705 887 4313
E-MAIL: psamuels@accel.net

Classes:

Michelle Zikovitz from Richmond Hill Sends Us This Info

Wool Drying Basket

This basket measures 14 x 14 with a vented bottom & supported on oak legs.

Ideal basket for the knitter.

I am offering to teach this class at several locations including:

Saturday January 21st from 10:00 - 4:00
Richmond Hill.

Cost is \$32.50 for the course plus a material fee of \$38.00

Mail Basket

This basket is ideal for collecting mail or storing magazines. Can be used inside or out.

I am also offering this class on two Tuesday evening beginning January 31 from 7:00 - 9:30 both evenings
Richmond Hill

Cost is \$32.50 plus a material fee of \$25.00

I also will be also be teaching a variety of classes at Riverdale Farms in Toronto and at the Burr House Craft Gallery in Richmond Hill. Winter schedule has not been finalized yet. People can call me at 905-884-2736 or email me at mzikovitz@yahoo.ca

Basketry Network Officers

Presently, the position of Chair is vacant. If interested, please forward your name to our Membership Coordinator, Donna Pasman.

Chair

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Treasurer | Lori Bond | (905) 238-1076 |
| Programme Coordinator | Jo-Anne Salter | (416) 485-4969 |
| Membership & Spring Show Coordinator | Donna Pasman | (519) 928-2171 (519) 422-2450 (summer) |
| Member rep. GTA | Sarah Kern | (416) 653-0183 |
| Member rep. Eastern Ontario | Gina Peers | (705) 743-2031 |
| Member rep. Western Ontario | Jennifer Henry | (519) 743-1238 |

Membership Renewal for 2006

Donna will continue as the BN membership secretary. Membership renewals should be sent to her.
Individual annual membership \$30.00 (includes subscription to The Basketry Express).
Two members at the same address \$35.00.

Mail this form together with your cheque, payable to **The Basketry Network**:

The Basketry Network
c/o Donna Pasman
8 Peter St. R.R.1
Grand Valley, ON
L0N 1G0

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ E-mail: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Comments and Suggestions: