OF BASKETS

by Catherine Ingebretsen

"On flat paper, the triangles seem simple enough. When woven in root and shades of red, they take in the light at separate moments, they curve, and form a complete basket."

A basket is composed of many components. Color, texture, design, shape, proportion, and weave are the most obvious ones because they are physical qualities. But they are not only physical qualities. They have meanings.

Ask yourself, "why did this weaver use these colors, this texture?" "What does the design mean?" "Why is the basket formed to this shape; in this proportion?" "What is the function of this weave?" The answers to these questions will not always be known to you. Sometimes they are meant to be communicated to others; sometimes to be held only within the heart of the weaver. The same is true of the question "why did someone make this basket?" But, these answers, whether known to you or not, are part of that basket. They are the part that tells the story of the weaver, the part that gives life to the basket.

"To the uninitiated a fine Indian basket may possess a few exterior attractions, such as shapely form, delicate color and harmonious design, but anything further he cannot see. On the other hand, the initiated sees a work of love; a striving after the ideal; a reverent propitiation of supernatural powers, good or evil; a nation's art expression, a people's inner life of poetry, art, religion; and thus he comes to a closer knowledge of the people it represents, a deeper sympathy with them, a fuller recognition of the oneness of human life, though under so many and diverse manifestations."

Merrill, Ruth E. Plants Used in Basketry by the California Indians. Acoma Books, Ramona, California 1970. (P.O. Box 4).
Tod, Osmo Gallinger. Earth Basketry. Published by Autho, 319 Mendoza Ave., Coral Gables, Florida.

2 George Wharton James, Indian Basketry (Rio Grande Press, New Mexico, 1903), or (Dover Publications, New York, 1972), pp. 15 & 16.

Basketry Reading List

At the By-Member For-Member Basketry Workshop, I said I would have this basketry reading list printed in the Minnesota Weaver. So, for those of you interested, here are some books to consider.

Evans, Glen and Campbell, T. N. Indian Baskets. Texas Memorial Museum, Austin 1970.