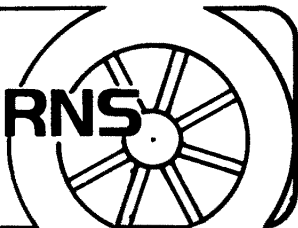


AS THE WHEEL TURNS



During my stay in the Midwest, I was fortunate to travel to many rural towns to give workshops. Without access to classes, these self-reliant spinners and weavers have learned primarily by trial and error. Being a student of error myself, I can appreciate the long hours that have gone into mastering techniques.

I have enjoyed corresponding and exchanging ideas with many of the people I and I met while traveling. I would like to share with you the work and thoughts of some of these talented women.

This month I'd like to introduce you to a very special spinner from Wausau, Wisc. Her letters have been wonderful reminders to me of how healthy it is to have a good laugh on oneself every now and then. So here she is, the Erma Brombeck of fiber arts, Sue John.

In hopes of saving some other poor artist-craftman from suffering the same affliction as I....I am going public with mine. I suffer from neomechanophobia (better understood as an irrational fear of new equipment). I am not sure you would consider a spinning wheel in my possession for 2 1/2 years new, but it was simply because I hadn't used it.

How could 11 1/2 pounds of wood put me into such a panic....making me a quivering mass on inadequate jelly? My feelings of inadequacy go back a long way and there is no point in boring you or me with the details. My interest was and is in a cure. A rational approach to any problem is helpful. It has a way of putting difficulties into perspective.

1. In analysis a spinning wheel is just pieces of wood, metal and a bit of leather put all together.
2. It cannot possibly possess intellect....certainly no more intellect than I.
3. A wheel cannot judge me or my spinning abilities.
4. It is, after all, a tool at my disposal. I bought it, not it me.
5. In these days of inflation who wants to spend money just to feel a classic case of guilt and inadequacy.

The wheel was and is equipment purchased for my pleasure. The only intimidating factors associated with it were the imaginary ones I imposed on it. I did eventually sit down with my wheel to push myself to spin — creating that thick, thin, break yarn familiar to....yes....all beginners. Something I wasn't willing to be....a beginner. I wanted to start off advanced. You know, at the eat-your-heart-out-Rumpelstiltskin-level. I just had to take time out to be a beginner.

Is my neomechanophobia cured? There is a bit of discomfort in the answer....no. You see, it takes me 2 to 3 months to warp my new contramarche loom. I can't believe that is normal. I'm not sure where the cure lies, but I have a feeling the distance I must put between new

equipment and used equipment is in the willingness to be a beginner and to make mistakes....as many as it takes to gain experience and confidence from.

I am less concerned about my phobia, because I licked it once. And someday soon, I hope, I will be able to approach my loom as I do my wheel.....as a friend.

— Sue John

I am currently compiling a study manual for the Range fiber guild to use in their study of color and spinning this winter. The manual will be accompanied by tapes and slide presentations to be used at group meetings. If any spinning groups would be interested in more information concerning the program please write me:

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Pat Boutin Wald
1209 Golfclub Rd.
Lacey, Wash. 98503

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is the best wood for spinning wheels?

Rather than a specific type of wood, it is most important to have wood that has been properly kiln dried so the wood will be stable in your home. We would select Black Cherry, Walnut, or Red Oak because they can be finished without stains. This is a personal preference. Many wheels are stained no matter what wood is used. Rather than a specific type of wood, I would be careful to select a wheel having a smooth finish.

What are your favorite woods?

In order of preference we would choose Black Cherry and Red Oak. Both can be finished with a natural clear finish, and both have good grain patterns. For heavy craft equipment such as looms we would probably choose Red Oak because it is more easily available in 2" by 2" lumber. For spinning wheels we prefer Cherry because the close grain allows for easier cleaning.

Why don't you make spinning wheels out of walnut?

Kiln dried and steamed walnut is an excellent wood for fine furniture and craft equipment. We do not use it because its sawdust is irritating to us. Many of the exotic woods have this problem of making breathing uncomfortable.

— Tony Glaski

