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HANDWEAVERS BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 1961



My dear Handweaver:

This Bulletin is a letter from Europe, or rather, a letter on returning from Europe. This week I am back at my desk after a two-part European trip: the first part to Copenhagen, Stockholm and Helsinki, the second from Amsterdam to Venice to Salzburg to Paris.

It is just so long that the handweaver can resist the impact of the Scandinavian weaving publications. And then, when the opportunity comes, one must be off to see at first hand the textiles of the northern European countries. Contact last winter with Malin Selander, the Swedish guest of U S and Canadian handweavers for almost a year, added fuel to the fires of interest. Miss Selander's beautifully color-harmonized fabrics, along with her philosophy of rigid adherence to traditional design, traditional methods, and Swedish-produced threads, her dictum of, "The teacher decides; the student obeys," was a challenging contrast to the implication of designing freedom, contemporary spirit, and adventuresomeness illustrated in such books as CONTEMPORARY SWEDISH DESIGN by Hald and Skawonius, and TAIDE JA TYO, Finnish Designers of Today. Thus the desire to see the textiles of the Scandinavian countries on the spot and thereby acquire a better understanding of them, grows with time. Conversations with three other weavers last winter disclosed the same desires and curiosities. And so, the four of us, one from Seattle, one from Des Moines, and one from New York, along with me, decided to make the trip to the Scandinavian capitals. Only one of the group visited Oslo first, as other engagements prevented my including Norway. Three of us left in mid-July for Copenhagen, an overnight air flight, and spent four days in this Danish capital, eight days in Stockholm, eight days in Helsinki, and ended with two days in Amsterdam.

The conveniences of air travel today, at actually lower cost than boat travel, make it possible to save most of one's time for seeing. The trans-Atlantic crossing is only seven hours by jet, and air time between the cities visited was about an hour. Since each person who travels is looking for something different, and therefore has very personal reactions, it is impossible to give advice **except** in a very general way. It is certainly true that the most economical way to travel is to sign up **with** one of the innumerable excursions that can be arranged by any travel agency, and one travels more miles, scans more cities and countries and historical sites thus, with a minimum of personal responsibility or effort. But these tours leave little time for pursuing specialized interests unless specifically directed toward one of them. Although the tour protects one from struggling with the great problem of Americans in Europe, the language barrier, this problem is minimized if one keeps one's personal demands simple and is willing to follow the eating and drinking customs of the countries visited, and to rely on oneself rather than asking any than absolutely necessary questions. In hotels, airports, tourist bureaus, and the important stores, English is spoken. In giving directions to taxi drivers, one must write the destinations, as our erratic pronunciation of foreign names is usually ununderstandable. Smiles and gestures are an international language which help all situations. Walking and looking (armed with a map of the city) require no language, nor do museums. Guide books in English are available everywhere, and most hotels supply tourist leaflets and maps. Foreign currency calculation is only a temporary inconvenience. People everywhere are courteous and helpful to the thoughtful visitor.

We chose the method of simply buying plane tickets and arranging through a travel agent for hotel reservations, months in advance. With the help of desk clerks, the occasional English speaking taxi driver, and the tourist information centers in each city, we arranged for sight seeing and general orientation trips within a city and to places of special interest outside. Having a conveniently sized group of four, it was more economical of time and effort, and therefore of money, as well as a means for selecting and eliminating what we saw, to hire taxis by the day or half day for such trips. And as efficient use of public transportation in any city requires practiced familiarity, we saved a great deal by using taxis instead of buses or street cars. But much of the time we walked, map in hand, to the shops and public buildings and parks in the central parts of the cities, taking taxis to museums, parks, restaurants, and buildings in outlying sections. Individual inclinations and interests are apt to vary, and physical energy too, so we often found it advisable on days of rambling to go our ways alone or in pairs, especially after we had each acquired independent ideas of what we wished to investigate further.

During the past two years countless weavers have written me prior to trips to Europe, asking for help in meeting weavers and in finding weaving centers. My best advice to traveling weavers is to purchase books on the handicrafts of the countries to be visited, and to subscribe to any periodicals on the subject, information about which can be secured by writing to the Tourist Information Bureau in the capital city of any country. On arrival in a major city, go to the local tourist bureau and secure information about the shops in the city and elsewhere in the country where handicrafts, especially handweaving, is sold, and find out if there are studios open to visitors. Any commercial shop or studio is happy to have visitors --- potential customers --- and it would seem that anyone who advertises in a handcraft periodical as having articles or services such as instruction, would be happy to have a seriously-intentioned visitor. Sometimes an inquiry to the manager of a shop selling handweaving will reveal a studio where visitors are welcome. Some handweavers make advance arrangement for short periods of instruction in studios which let it be known that English speaking students can be thus accommodated. And I have seen advertisements in HANDWEAVER AND CRAFTSMAN for tours conducted especially for handweavers which include visits to studios which would otherwise be closed, and of European people who are available as guides to handweavers wishing to make weaving contacts. For those who wish to take it, Miss Selander gave a hint on the visiting situation in her diffidence about arranging for further contact with her U S hostesses in Sweden, and in her reluctance to recommend contacts beyond the shops listed in all tourist literature on the country. On the other hand, there are certainly European handweavers who would welcome contact with U S weavers to exchange ideas. Each traveler must use his own judgement on trying to make contacts. My own attitude is that I do not feel free to seek such contacts unless an invitation, or the foundation for an invitation, has been offered in advance, I realize that this attitude is purely personal and a different approach may be as legitimate.

The first shopping place in each of the Scandinavian cities visited, for the person interested in handicrafts, should be the shops maintained by the arts and crafts organizations. In Copenhagen this is DEN PERMANENTE, The Permanent Exhibition of Danish Arts and Crafts. The association of craftsmen and industrial manufacturers in this non-profit organization founded in 1931, maintains a large exhibit and sales store in which every item has passed examination by a rigid board of censors. At Den Permanente are found the best of Danish furniture, stainless steel, pottery, porcelain, jewelry, silver flat and hollow ware, wood and glass, lamps, paintings and sculpture, and, of course, textiles and textile articles from mats to suits. The designs of the thousands of articles for sale are contemporary, with functions perfectly geared to today's living in the sensitive manner we have come to expect of the Danes. Only in the delightful Christmas ornament and souvenir departments are traditional styles emphasized.

There are also several exclusive shops offering high quality crafts and textiles, and the large department store ILLUM should not be overlooked. A word about the department stores: ILLUM in Copenhagen, NK (Nordiska Kompaniet) in Stockholm, STOCKMANS in Helsinki. These carry the work of the textile artists of the country. In each of them there are not only special departments for handicrafts but remarkable handwoven textiles may be found in their appropriate departments: drapery and curtains in home furnishings, rya rugs in floor coverings, clothing lengths in yardages, suits, dresses, coats, skirts and other clothing items of handwoven fabrics in ready-to-weave, handwoven table linens with household linens. The unaffected mixing of handwoven fabrics with power woven ones is a most interesting phenomenon. They are offered to the discriminating customer on the competitive basis of their superior quality and beauty and exclusiveness of design, without the pretention of promoting their "handmade" nature. On the other hand, the designing artist is recognized by inclusion of his name on the price tag and on the sales slip, whether exclusive fabrics are industrially produced or handwoven.

In Stockholm traditional peasant designing and peasant crafts dominate the offerings at the many HEMSLJDSFORBUNDET, or Homecraft shops, which dot the city. Also subjected to rigid craftsmanship controls, the traditional textiles and textile articles of the Hemslojd shops are the ones with which American handweavers have become familiar through most of the Swedish handweaving publications. Although one at first greets these textiles with the warm feeling of meeting old friends, after seeing them repeated innumerable and identically they take on a souvenir quality despite the excellence of craftsmanship.

Although the impression of contemporary design on the traveler in Sweden may be dimmed by the display of Swedish traditional, there are many places where contemporary design at a very high level may be seen, for instance at Svensk Form-Design Center in the ultra-modern Konstfackskolan (Art School). Many small shops emphasizing contemporary handwoven textiles are found along the business streets of Stockholm, perhaps the most outstanding being Foreningen Handarbetes Vanners, a second floor shop where the work of a famous weaving school and workshop may be purchased, and the Marta Maas-Fjetterstrom AB with tapestries and rugs by Barbro Nilsson, Marianne Richter, and Ann Mary Forsberg.

A joyous contribution to our Stockholm experience came through two days spent with Mama Gravander of Mill Valley, California, Sara Mattson Anliot of Cleveland, Ohio, and their sister Gunhild

Tiberg-Kjall who lives in a suburb of Stockholm. An evening at Mrs Tiberg-Kjall's rock and flower surrounded home on the shore of one of Stockholm's innumerable lakes brought us the experience of a genuine Swedish home, revealing an extraordinary sensitivity to beauty, quality and graciousness in the contagious spirit that beauty is the individual creation of a person, and not something purchased.

Helsinki has numerous charming shops of the FINSKA HANDARBETS VANNER selling beautiful textiles, and two shops of the Finnish Design Center, with contemporary textiles only. There is also the exciting shopping at Stockmans department store where English speaking clerks are available and where there is an efficient export department. The art department carries outstanding work such as the small tapestries of Eva Anttila and Margareta Ahlstedt, the incomparable linens of Dora Jung, rugs by Eva Brummer, double weave hangings by Helmi Vuordima and Laila Karttunen, and the works of other eminent Finnish textile artists. Handwoven textiles may also be found in the yardage, drapery, floor covering and table linen departments.

In Helsinki there was a new delight for a handweaver in morning visits to the picturesque market along the harbor. Here, beyond the brilliantly heaped stalls of flowers, fruits and vegetables, and the row of fish and lobster boats, are tables where peasant women bring the products of their looms to sell. Tablecloths in the typical Finnish leno open work, place mats of handspun linen, runners in gay drawloom work, blankets and rugs of handspun, vegetable dyed wool, hangings in Finnweave, all in traditional designs, superb craftsmanship, and the feeling of authenticity and functional honesty.

The high point of the three weeks came for the four of us in Helsinki, where we had several days of weaving with that unquestioned leader among tapestry artists, Eva Anttila. It was a particular privilege as Mrs Anttila has retired from teaching, but took us as a special friendship gesture. Mrs Anttila had met us at the Stockholm airport and with utmost graciousness and enthusiasm had seen to it that we saw the important exhibits and museums and places of special interest in Stockholm. She then traveled with us to Finland where she was responsible for the memorable experiences which came to us through the courtesies of her friends. At one evening reception we were delighted to be joined by Mildred Fischer, the Cincinnati artist and tapestry weaver and a former student of Eva Anttila's. Another special privilege was a visit to the studio of Dora Jung. The lessons in tapestry under Mrs Anttila's subtle and sensitive instruction made a deep impression on each of us, but the details of this experience I shall save for a later Monograph on modern tapestry weaving. (And Shuttle Craft Guild Monograph Four (October 1961) will be on Scandinavian and Swiss textiles. For Portfolio subscribers there will be a collection of beautiful samples.)

In hotels and restaurants one encounters beautiful textiles, handwoven often, and powerloom copies of designs which were obviously originally handwovens. Except in formal diningrooms, table linens are colorful and usually thoughtfully harmonized with the room, the dishes, and the flowers. Cotton table cloths are used with as much respect, and perhaps more imagination, as linen. I was particularly pleased to find double woven table cloths with patterns in two or more blocks. This is a use to which handweavers seldom put double weave, and a highly practical use, as the double fabric gives a pleasantly padded table top. The 3/1 broken twill and the satin weave in two or more blocks are more usual, however, and informal eating places use tabby stripes and plaids. A particular joy encountered in hotels is the luxurious linen damask towels, so soft and absorbant and beautiful, and occasionally even damask bed linens. Bath towels were often of almost sheet size of waffle weave cotton, soft, absorbant, and thoroughly delightful. Such linens are luxuries seldom found in our own hotels, but which the handweaver could easily enjoy at home.

Looking for yarns, we found that department stores are well stocked for the weaver, and yarn shops are for weavers as well as for knitters. Large stocks of weaving yarns are carried, in considerable color range, but in limited sizes and types when compared to our own great selections from our standard sources. Woolen yarns dominate, and there are practically no worsteds. Cottons and linens are offered in singles, with only a little ply yarn. One yarn much used in Sweden but unknown in this country is cottaleen, a blend of cotton and linen. Rug yarns for rya rugs, including the characteristic yarn containing cow hair, are easier to get than in this country. I did not feel that to anyone familiar with the great range of weaving yarns from our standard sources in the U S, the Scandinavian yarns were superior in either quality or color range, except for a few specialties, and they are certainly more limited as to type and fiber. Well stocked though the shops were, no shop anyplace could possibly carry the tremendous variety of types and colors which we find on the Lily Mills color cards, for instance, and no where did we see a shop just for weavers which could compare with the San Francisco Yarn Depot. We in this country are most fortunate in our yarns.

Shops carrying yarns also stock shuttles, templates, reed hooks, reeds, hand bobbin winders, and other bits of weaving equipment. On asking about looms, I was always shown catalogues from which looms could be ordered, but no one in Stockholm or Copenhagen was able to tell me a place where looms could be purchased directly. So evidently the loom situation is much the same as in this

country. In Helsinki I was intrigued to find that shuttles and other small weaving equipment is sold in the kitchenware departments of department stores, along with pots and pans and egg beaters, and that looms are available in furniture departments. In addition to the traditional counterbalanced and contra-march looms, in the Helsinki stores I saw a sinking shed, add-a-harness, eight shaft jack loom of simple, clever construction with a folding X-frame. This loom was surprisingly inexpensive, though not nearly as sturdily constructed as our best folding, jack looms.

It is plain to the visitor to these three Scandinavian centers that the arts and crafts, and especially those which relate to textiles, are an integrated part of both the culture and the economy of the countries. This may seem surprizing, since the period of natural association of handcrafts with agrarian structure and self-sufficient social units is almost a century dead. With the natural links to tradition broken, or at best only delicate, tattered strands, the contemporary handcraft developments are the result of two types of government sponsered activity: the industrial design societies and the homecraft organizations, both of which maintain schools giving thorough training in design and specific techniques. This sponsering has developed for the artist and the craftsman a status far exceeding that of the craftsman in the United States, and it has lead to good design and high standards of quality in industrial and studio production which directs discriminating Americans to foreign markets for well designed furniture, textiles, clothing, and other everyday necessities. We might here find both a warning and an inspiration.

But any new city, new country, has much more than specialized pleasures to give the traveler. In each place we visited there were historic sites, cathedrals, castles, and museums to be seen, operas and concerts to be heard, and lunches and coffees in flower-filled sidewalk cafes and dinners in famous restaurants to be enjoyed. The visitor to these northern capitals receives the impression of neither poverty nor ostentatious affluence, but of solid, modest, self respecting prosperity and a strong sense of social responsibility. The character of the city begins to emerge upon arrival, and the awareness of individuality in each great city grows deeper each day. Trips into the countryside and to nearby towns help one integrate the special culture historically as well as geographically.

Copenhagen is a city of supreme charm, with a contemporary spirit anchored to a long, solid past. The city is beautiful, exoitic, dynamic and traditional, all in one. The people are strong, handsome and gay, with a controlled lightheadedness one seldom encounters. The beautiful Tivoli Gardens, splendidly depicted in a June issue of LIFE magazine, are as charming a spot as one could find. Four days was a stupidly short time to spend in Copenhagen, leaving one wishing for four times four days and with hopes for a return as soon as possible. Stockholm on the surface seems like any well regulated, large, modern city, which might even be in the United States. But as one walks the streets, becomes familiar with the narrow ways and tall, ancient buildings of the Old City, and the confident impression of handsome, vigorous people with a deep appreciation for man's creations as well as nature's, which can come only through creative activity, this city takes on a special flavor. No visitor could help but gasp in pleasure at the plaza in the center of the business section, a plaza filled with flowers and fountains and a band shell, which are not unusual, but also plate glass cases with displays of Swedish arts and crafts, many benches for resting or simply enjoying life, the tourist bureau headquarters, and an enormous open air restaurant, most unusual touches. In such a spot the visitor feels he is welcomed as an honored guest. The outskirts of Stockholm, of water, trees, rocks, and towering apartment clusters, is a refreshing development of the suburban fringe.

Helsinki is a difficult city to evaluate, and one to which each person must react in an individual way. With wide streets, modern buildings, rows of trees, and a feeling of industry and spaciousness, it can also seem gray and forbidding. The Finnish people appear to go determindly about their own affairs with a quiet good humor and a great shyness. One can feel within the city of Helsinki, though most of the scars have disappeared, the determination of the winter war of 1939-40, the years of wartime suffering, and the brave rebuilding of a great city. Strength is the dominant impression, and this is enhanced by the surrounding landscape of deep pine forests softened by clumps of slender, white birch, blue and green lakes, small emerald hay fields, rocks and crags, and an enormous sky.

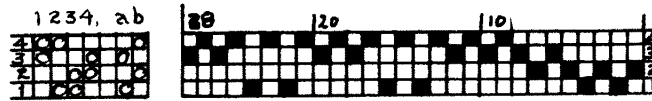
Beauty is everyplace in these three flower-filled cities --- the beauty of magnificent water and green land, of ancient buildings and modern housing, and of neat cleanliness stemming from orderly thinking and living. If one were to pick just one overall impression, I suppose it would be of flowers: brilliant flowers, perfectly tended and always seeming in peak bloom, everyplace. In fact, one carries away the thought that every window in Europe has a flower box and every balcony is flower decked.

The latter part of my summer was different enough to be considered a separate trip. With a different group --- five congenial people traveling in two cars --- we wandered from Amsterdam up the Rhine, through the Black Forest, across Switzerland by way of Zurich, Lucerne, the St Gothard Pass and Como, to the ancient cities of Verona and Padua, on the way to Venice. Venice, almost unbeliev-

A COLOR STUDY from an APRON FABRIC

For your weaving, I have a lively, contemporary spirit APRON. The warp is my long-time favorite, red in 24/2 cotton, set this time at 32 ends per inch. A thirty inch wide warp is woven with weft stripes which are used vertically, and generous width comes from weaving a full yard, to be gathered on the waist band. Weft is the same material as the warp, in four colors which correspond to the Lily Mills palette: 1447 raspberry, 767 light green, 1449 medium jade, 920 skipper blue. Weft colors are used in the order given, in three inch stripes. Stripes are separated by polychrome borders, almost an inch wide, for which the pattern treadles are used in twill order:

The slightly asymmetrical overshot draft, with standard tie-up, and treading, color order, is:



Treadle 1 and 2 light green, 3 and 4 raspberry, 5 times
 " raspberry " light green, "
 " skipper blue, " light green, "
 tabby light green, 3 inches.

Treadle 1 and 2 medium jade, 3 and 4 light green, 5 times
 " light green, " medium jade, "
 " raspberry, " medium jade, "
 tabby jade, 3 inches.

Treadle 1 and 2 skipper blue, 3 and 4 medium jade, 5 times
 " medium jade, " skipper blue, "
 " light green, " skipper blue, "
 tabby skipper blue, 3 inches.

Treadle 1 and 2 raspberry, 3 and 4 skipper blue, 5 times
 " skipper blue, " raspberry, "
 " medium jade, " raspberry, "
 tabby raspberry, 3 inches.

The color sequence with treading coordination is given in detail because the order is a logical scheme, giving an extraordinarily effective harmony. For any weaver interested in studying the use of color, the above sequence merits special attention, and even setting up as a sample in various harmonies. Notice that the four weft colors follow the ancient rule of a dark (raspberry), a light (light green), a greyed (medium jade), a bright (skipper blue), while three of the hues are analagous (blue, jade, green), with a soft contrast of raspberry, all woven on the strongly contrasting red warp. Treadles 1 and 2 in the pattern weave a square, and treadles 3 and 4 a rectangle. Notice that in the sequence, while the previous tabby color is first retained for the larger block, the next tabby color is introduced in the square; this relationship is reversed for the next block: In the third block the large area remains that of the new tabby color, while a new color is introduced into the square. Thus, the pattern stripe provides first a strong departure using the old tabby color and a gentle introduction of the new tabby color. Then the new color is strengthened, while the previous color is diminished, and finally abandoned with the suggestion of a color which will come still later. The sequence of colors can be plotted on a circle diagram.

The most effective color harmonies are logical ones. Try this system using a different group of hues. Fine thread is much more effective in producing shimmering color effects such as these, and smooth threads are more emphatic than rough ones. This design would be especially effective if woven of the Lily Supersheen set at 40 to 45 ends per inch.

The weaving system for the pattern borders is usually called "bound" weaving, because the unbroken treading sequence binds in the pattern weft without the requirement of a tabby binder. Weft in this case does not completely cover the warp, but it weaves with about twice as many wefts per inch as there are in tabby, which balances warp and weft. With this overbalance of weft in the stripes, it is necessary to lay the weft in the shed considerably more loosely than when weaving tabby, if drawing in at the borders, and undue shrinkage of the borders on washing, is to be avoided.

The apron from which this study was made was purchased in Europe, Switzerland, I believe.

able, like a giant Tivoli Garden created only for the visitor's pleasure, gave a much too short pause. Then northeast through the Dolomites, loitering in the fairyland of the Tyrol, to the next objective of Salzburg for Mozart operas. On to Munich, and westward through Metz and Rheims for a final four days in Paris. The majesty of the Alps, the ancient monuments of peoples of the past, the unspoiled charm of the Tyrol and Bavaria and Switzerland, the ugly but time-softened scars of wars, not only those within our memories, but successions of twenty centuries of recurring wars, the dynamic industrial sections of western Germany, the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages, all gather together to give a better perspective of time and our world.

In Amsterdam we had left the major centers of handweaving interest, as the handicrafts have not had a government-sponsored revival in most of Europe, and handicraft traditions are tenuous. However, through the courtesy of a Shuttle Craft Guild member in Amsterdam, we were privileged to visit a small tapestry workshop where a group of charming and talented young women execute commissioned tapestries. It was a joy to find here the spirit of the great tapestry eras of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the weavers working from artists' sketches and cartoons, creatively, instead of reproducing paintings with stenographic exactness, as is the system in the French ateliers.

Although one finds in the spas and resort towns of Austria and Germany small weaving shops which are not too different from those in similar places in the United States, we encountered only one further significant handweaving movement. This was in Switzerland, where beautiful HEIMATWERK shops are found in the major cities. These shops market the products of art and craft schools and of the work of village craftsmen. The high standard products offered for sale are both contemporary and traditional. To the foreign visitor they offer an exciting place to purchase fine textiles and textile articles, as well as other crafts traditionally associated with the Swiss people.

Returning from Europe, a one day stop-over in London was the opportunity for a view of the latest Collingwood rugs and a talk with Peter Collingwood about a Shuttle Craft Monograph on new textile techniques and rug weaving, which he is preparing for us.

With great trepidation on this trip, I was intimately accompanied by a camera and fifty rolls of two and a quarter inch color film. To my amazement and joy, I actually have transparencies, many of which exceed the definition of satisfactory. I hope that in time to come I shall be able to share some of these textile pictures with many of you.

And what is at the end of the glorious weeks? Home, and back to work, and nothing could seem better. One inevitably returns with a deepened appreciation for our own magnificent opportunities and a resolve not to waste them. I was often reminded of the words of a casual stranger in Lima, Peru last winter. Changing money in a bank, I laid my passport momentarily on the counter. The man in line behind me touched my shoulder and, in accented English said, "Pick that up. It is the most precious thing in the world, an American Passport. Don't ever let it out of your hand or your heart."

And now for a few mundane announcements. Let me remind you that under the new system there are three Shuttle Craft Guild Bulletins a year and three Monographs. Bulletins are mailed early in March, September and December, Monographs in late January, April and October. All subscriptions now start with January and are due in September. One policy change for 1962 subscriptions is necessitated by a very costly period last winter, after the mailing list had been revised for 1961. We shall now list Shuttle Craft Guild subscriptions and renewals at \$8.50 a year. However, for all new subscriptions, and for renewals sent before the end of 1961, the old price of \$7.50 will hold. Portfolio renewals sent after 1961 will be \$18.50, but before the new year, and new subscriptions, \$17.50.

Portfolio subscribers will notice that there is not a sample enclosed herewith. We plan to concentrate more on the Monograph Portfolios this year, and therefore abandon the single, loose sample which has accompanied Bulletins. Also, Portfolio separates in single issue will no longer be available. Only enough for the subscription list and the estimated late subscriptions will be made up.

Mr Veren of Craft and Hobby Book Service has sent me a new catalogue of "Books For The Weaver." I like his new system of listing in two parts, Part One having the new books added since his last catalogue, and Part Two with the old faithfuls listed alphabetically, by author. It appears that this new catalogue, with many enticing new books, is going to be hard on my pocketbook, and probably on yours too. But this is a kind of hardship we enjoy.

It has been a great pleasure to me to read the many pleasant reviews of my Macmillan published book, THE WEAVERS BOOK, and many letters from appreciative letters. If your local book dealer does not have this book, you may order it from the Craft and Hobby Book Service, Big Sur, California.

Harrist Tidball