



Mrs. Judy Homan . . .

# Spinning A Tale Of Wool

by Sally Bair  
Farm Feature Writer

Weaving and spinning are crafts which were once practiced in every home - out of necessity. Now they are enjoying a tremendous popularity which grows not from necessity, but from a desire for creativity and uniqueness.

Judy Homan, 127 Musser Avenue, Lancaster practices both primitive crafts in her home, and enjoys sharing her knowledge of the arts with others.

Her interest began when she was a graduate student in art history at Ohio University. She had waited several terms to take a weaving course offered at the University and finally enrolled and began learning to weave. But the course was short-lived: it was the year of student riots and the University closed down after Judy had completed just six weeks. From then on, she says, she taught herself.

She explained, "Weavers give each other help. As soon as you say you enjoy weaving, everyone tells you the name of someone else who weaves."

Judy takes her craft seriously, and has taught herself well. She has two looms in her home, both of which she picked up at auctions. She says, "It really is possible to find looms, especially if you contact other weavers." One of hers she bought at the Fulton Auction for just \$30. But, according to Judy, usually the price is higher. Her \$30 loom is a large floor loom and her husband Eugene helped rebuild and refinish it. Now it's in perfect operating condition. Judy adds that you must have some idea of what you're looking for if you want to find a bargain.

Judy says, "You can also make your own loom, starting

with something very simple." And, of course, you can buy new ones.

But after you've got your loom, just where do you turn for supplies? Judy points out there are many sources for wool and yarn, mostly through the numerous spinning and weaving magazines. But Judy believes in carrying out the art from the simplest origins - she buys her own wool, dyes it, spins it and then creates something on her loom.

Her source of wool is a local shepherd and sheep shearer who supplies her with fleeces. He raises his own sheep and shears for others, so there's a bountiful supply. Judy says there is a specific way of rolling the sheared fleece, and if done properly, then anyone can unfold it and prepare it for spinning. She adds, "Each part of the sheep is of different quality, which one should be able to recognize." She claims not yet to have such a fine distinction.

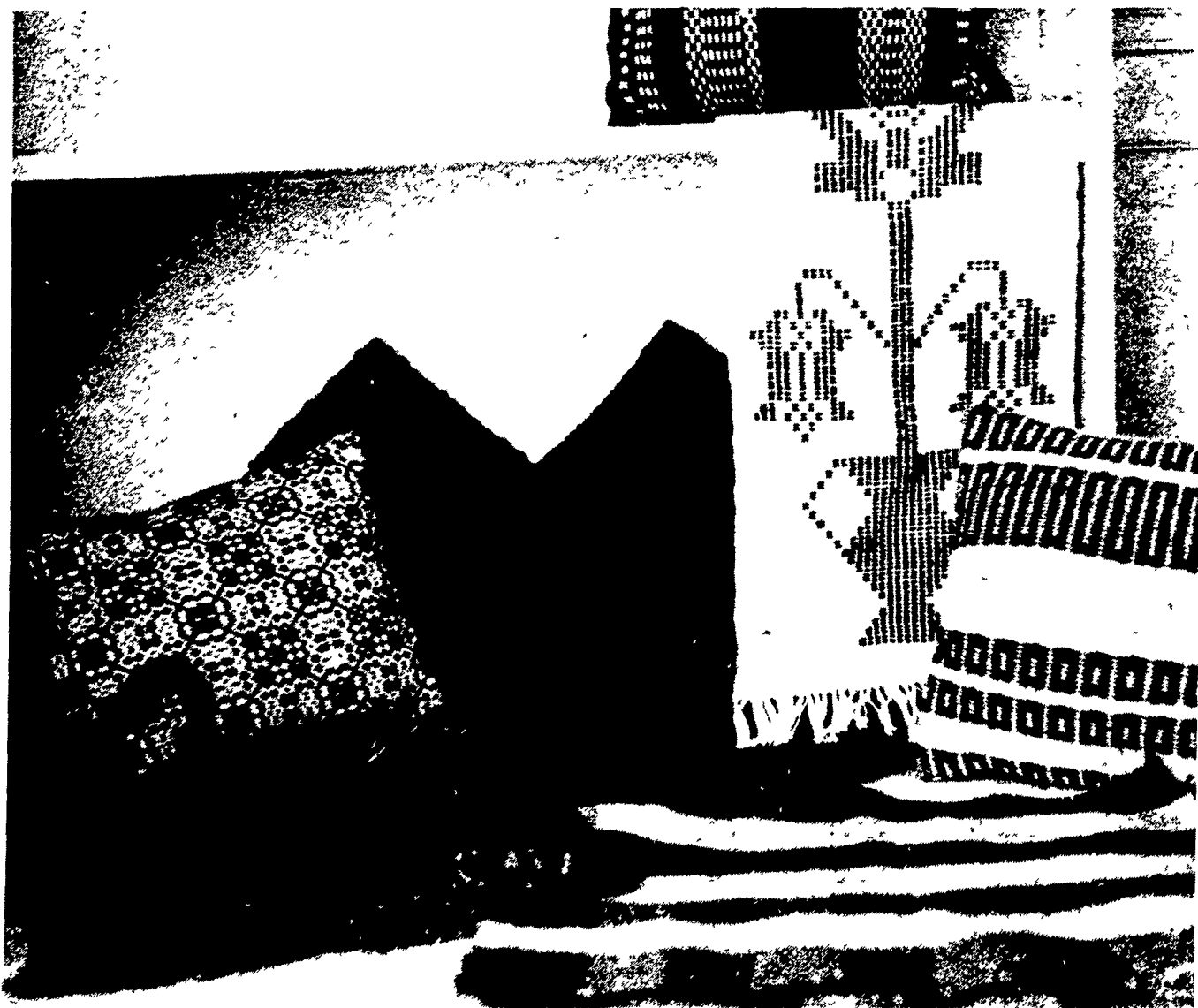
The shepherd has one black sheep in his flock and Judy is obviously thrilled to get a black fleece occasionally. She says, "People tell me that the chances of getting a really good black fleece are one in a thousand."

There are two ways of handling a fleece, according to Judy. You can wash it before spinning, or "sign it in the grease" which means simply that you do not wash it and it still has the natural lanolin in it when you're spinning. Which method you use, says Judy, "depends on how dirty the fleece is to begin with."

"I found I didn't like spinning it without washing it, so I wash it in mild soap. You keep rinsing and rinsing, and lay it on screens to dry." Judy says it was traditional to put fleece



It looks like child's play as Judy Homan shows how to use the "drop spindle." A basket of the finished product is at her feet.



A wide variety of items can be created on the loom, some with very intricate designs and some

very simple. Pictured are a purse, pillow, tablemats, poncho and wall hanging.

in burlap bags and place them in running streams to clean them.

Next the wool must be carded. There are two methods of carding it. With one card, a "worsted" is created, according to Judy, and this means that the fibers are parallel when finished. With two cards a "wollen" is created, and the fibers are actually in a spiral.

To maintain authenticity, Judy likes to dye her own wool using natural dyes. The colors are soft and lovely. Judy has successfully used marigolds: "I have a recipe. You boil them and extract the color and then put the skein in the dye bath." Marigolds produce gold, onion skins give an orange color, poison sumac a tan color and sassafras produces pink. Judy says, "There are lots of known dyes in nature and I'd like to experiment with more." She adds that she has dyed both skeins of yarn and the wool in its natural state with equal success.

For spinning Judy had been using a New Zealand spinning wheel. She says, "New Zealand produces the best spinning wheels because all the women spin there. There are really fine craftsmen there - they care about producing a quality product." She has sold hers, but will soon be receiving another and be a distributor for this particular type of wheel.

She is currently using what is referred to as a "drop spindle" for her spinning. It is a simple instrument which spins the wool as you feed the wool with your hand. Judy explains the name, "It's called a drop spindle because you drop it so often while you're learning to use it. It takes some practice at pulling out the wool at an even rate before you

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