

Peg Mearns spends many productive, challenging hours at the loom

BY SALLY BAIR
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GETTYSBURG — For Peg Mearns, weaving is a continuous source of pleasure, helping to build confidence and offering the challenge of making productive use of retirement hours.

Peg took her first weaving course when she was in college 50 years ago. She loved it then, but it wasn't until she retired that she was able to pursue her interest and turn it into a cherished hobby-business.

"The little seed lay dormant in the back of my mind, so I decided

to see if I enjoyed it," she said. With money given her for retirement, she took a week-long course at Mannings in East Berlin, Adams County. There happened to be a blizzard that week so she was the only student, and she recalls, "I got all the attention, and I got more than a week of training."

That was the beginning. She says she loved it so much that she gave pieces of her work to friends, neighbors, aunts and nieces. Some friends suggested that she take her things to a fair for the "aged," a word Peg hates, and she says with surprise, "It was very successful



Peg Mearns is a study in concentration as she puts the warp on her four-harness loom. Peg works in a remodeled washhouse adjoining the farmhouse she and her husband, Bill, retired to in Adams County.



Peg winds yarn to begin the work at the loom. She works with cotton, linen and wool yarns, using them individually and in combinations.



This summer kitchen or washhouse is the scene of Peg Mearns' creativity as she works at one of her two-harness looms. The fireplace has been restored to working order, and the windows were added to give her not only a summer's breeze, but also an inspiring view of the countryside.

and I got all kinds of inspiration from that."

Although she admits that it took a while for her to think that people would pay for her items, she now runs a successful business selling woven items from her home.

Working from the washhouse of the old farm house halfway between Gettysburg and Littlestown where she and her husband, Bill, moved six years ago. Peg works at

her leisure, although she spends a large part of every day there. The room is cozy, and has its original fireplace restored. Peg says they never consider burning it because of the hazard of fire with so much dust and other fibers in the air.

The walls are lined with books and yarns, and samples of Peg's work abound. They added windows to the small washhouse, giving it a comfortable cross breeze in the summer, and a beautiful view of the pastoral countryside. "What a vista I can get! I treasure the space around us," she says.

Indeed, the countryside does seem to offer endless inspiration to creativity. The Mearns' son Bill and his wife Raiana live on an adjoining dairy farm and farm the land. Their 18-month-old son Benjamin is a frequent and welcome visitor to his grandparents' home.

Peg has two looms in her work space. One is a four-harness loom which can handle material up to 36 inches wide, and the smaller loom handles material up to 24 inches wide. "It's very helpful to have everything in this one room," she says.

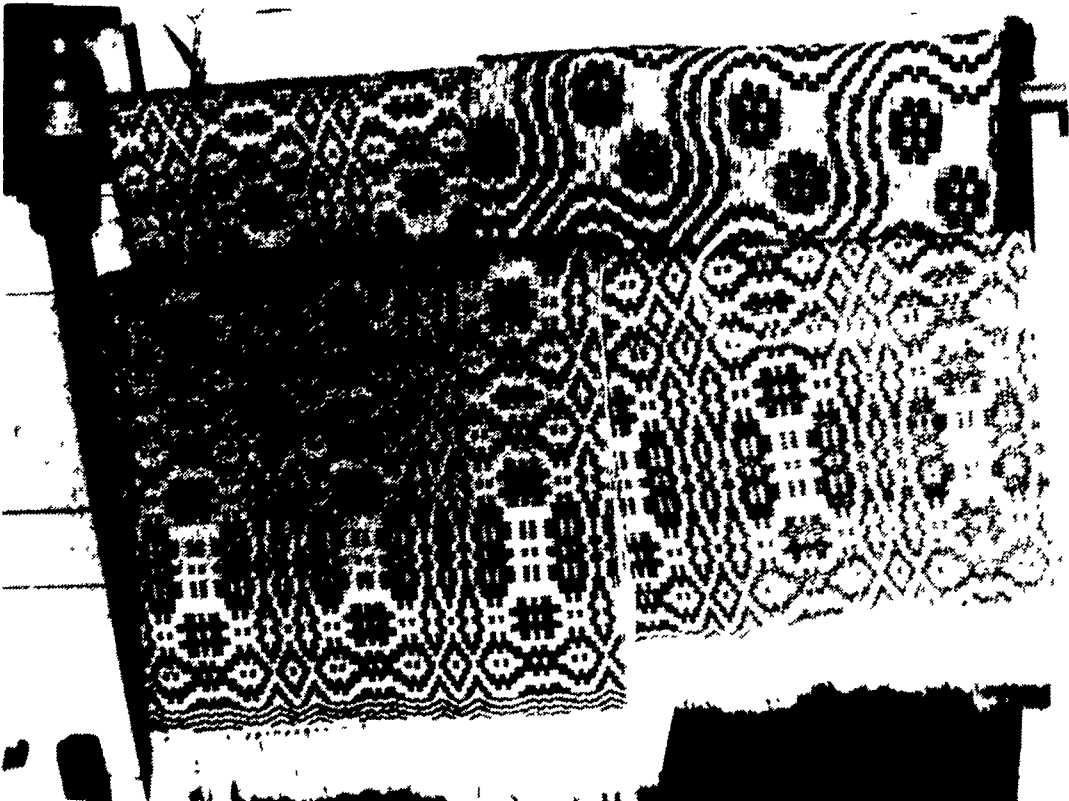
Asked how much time she spends at her looms each day, Peg says with a laugh, "I don't like to dust baseboards, so I will do all kinds of things to stay busy. I have orders to keep me busy all the time."

She adds, "I took my watch off when I retired and haven't put it back on." She calls herself fortunate to have a husband who is interested in what she is doing.

The work itself is never boring, of course, but there is a great deal of labor involved in setting up the loom for any given pattern, and that is tedious, careful work. The variety in weaving is what makes the work interesting to Peg. "If I get bored with what I'm doing, I can do something else," she says. That's the advantage of having two looms. "I always look forward to the next project."

Since she makes anything from placemats to scarves to runners to coverlets, Peg has any number of items she can work on at a given time. She said she especially enjoys doing coverlets and larger items, but adds, "I have to keep

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Working from old patterns found in her wide collection of weaving books, Peg created these coverlets. She enjoys making the large pieces although they require more concentration during the weaving process.

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