

# Grandmother's, Granddaughter's Love For Weaving Benefits School

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— There is no generation gap between Hazel Reist and her 13-year-old granddaughter Meryl Reist.

Their two lives are intertwined by their shared love for weaving. The two work side by side at the looms set up in a spare bedroom of Hazel's and her husband's Century Farm in Mount Joy.

"I like that my grandmother and I can weave at the same time and talk. If I have a problem, Grandma can help me," Meryl said.

Under her grandmother's tutelage, Meryl has become so adept at weaving that she recently placed first in textile competition at Kraybill's Mennonite School in Mount Joy. This means that Meryl's weaving project will be entered in competition with all Christian schools in the Mid-Atlantic Christian School Association, which covers several states along the East Coast.

The school will also benefit financially from the weaving talents of Hazel who has woven a finely detailed coverlet for the school's annual benefit auction to be held May 8.

The Whig Rose pattern coverlet is woven in blueberry and natural colors. The coverlet is reversible and measures about 80x100-inches, for a full-sized bed.

Hazel is also donating another major work of art to the benefit sale. It is a watercolor of the Donegal Witness Tree, a historical landmark in Mount Joy.

The Witness Tree achieved historical interest because it was the location in 1777 where a courier arrived at the Donegal Presbyterian Church to summon the militia to help General George Washington in his attempt to protect Philadelphia from the British. The congregation joined hands and gathered around the white oak tree in the church yard and pledged their lives and allegiance to independence. The white oak became known as the Witness Tree and an annual celebration is held in remembrance of the occasion.

It's a scene that is now etched only on canvas or captured on earlier photographs because the Witness Tree needed to be taken down because of decay in 1991. Hazel had painted the scene that shows the Witness Tree with the church during the 1950s.

Hazel honed her artistic talents when as a teen-ager, she attended art school in Philadelphia, where she focused on technical design with wallpaper and fabric, and

received national recognition when she won first-place for a wallpaper design contest that she entered in 1948. Hazel's rural background was reflected in the design she created on the wallpaper, which shows the new and old methods of reaping wheat intertwined with morning glories. The wallpaper was silkscreen printed. In addition to prize money, the company gave Hazel rolls of the wallpaper, which she used to paper the dining room wall in the farmhouse.

But, Hazel did not learn weaving until 1983, when her daughter-in-law recommended that she take a weaving class at Elizabethtown College.

"The course was basic and elementary enough to whet my appetite," Hazel said.

When the Reists heard of a loom for sale, they purchased it.

Hazel regretfully recalls that her first reaction after seeing the loom setting in her home, caused her to say, "What am I going to do with this monstrosity?"

That question was in response to the overwhelming realization that she had no idea how to dress the loom and no directions to do so.

"Now I consider the loom a piece of fine furniture," Hazel said as she lovingly ran her fingers over the well-made wooden frame.

Fortunately, Hazel soon learned of a weaving class being offered by Mannington's in East Berlin. There she learned to dress the loom and the many other details needed to produce fine coverlets.

Hazel's weaving time is tucked in between her daily chores, but it is an art that always fascinated her granddaughter Meryl. She spent many hours watching her grandmother "dress the loom," with 1,008 threads, divided into 21 sections with 48 threads per section.

When Hazel offered to teach Meryl loom weaving, Meryl proved a conscientious student. By following a chart that details the pattern that is made by pushing the four harnesses controlled by foot pedals and by throwing alternate shuttles through the separated threads, Meryl produced a plain weave pattern pillow cover last year. This year, Meryl wove a beautifully designed pillow cover in a Queen Ann's lace pattern. Color in the weft helps give a pattern.

Wool thread is used for the coverlets, and cotton acrylic for pillow tops and placemats. All



Hazel and Meryl Reist weave on the looms while Meryl's sister Dana, center, watches.

pieces are washable.

It takes a lot of time to set of the loom, but it is worth it both Hazel and Meryl said.

Hazel's husband, Henry, helps wind the warp on the warp beam, and he purchased another loom in 1986 on which he intends to weave.

"As if that will ever happen!" Hazel said, skeptic that her husband will ever slow down enough from his seed business to weave.

In the interim, Hazel is thrilled that her granddaughter finds weaving fascinating.

Hazel has woven coverlets for each of her sons, with names, birthdates, and wedding dates woven into the fabric. She also made miniature coverlets for the grandchildren and many placemats for gifts. She would like to weave a coverlet for each of her 11 grandchildren, but isn't sure if she will find the time to do so.

"It's frustrating to want to weave when everyday duties need to be done," Hazel said.

But Hazel loves the thrill of finishing a coverlet. "I like to create something special, unique, hand woven. Coverlets have both beauty and utilitarian qualities."

Hazel is a long-time member of Farm Women Society 4. She and her husband spent Easter 1992 in Moscow when they paid a return visit to Moldavians who had toured their business and farm during a Friendship Force visit several years ago.

Henry and Hazel live on their 1828 Century Farm. The original house is no longer there, but the Reists' home was built in 1833. The Reists raise steers and sheep and rent crop-land to a neighboring farmer. Henry and his son, Dave, operate Reist Seed Company, which was established in 1925 in Mount Joy.

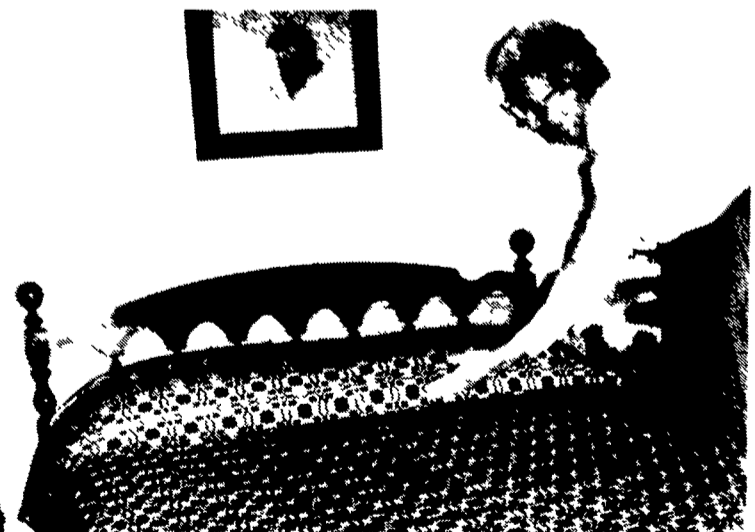
The Reists have four sons. Dave (Meryl's father), his wife Pam, and four daughters built a two-story house on the farm, which enables



This pillow top that Meryl made for competition at her school placed first and will advance to competition among schools in other states.

Meryl to run over to her grandmother's home to work on the loom. Meryl's talents are not limited to weaving because she also

placed first in piano and flute playing and will advance to regional competition.



This is a coverlet in the Whig rose pattern that will be sold at the 16th annual benefit auction of Kraybill Mennonite School.



A watercolor of the Witness Tree, which Hazel painted, will be auctioned on May 8.

## Benefit Auction To Be Held May 7, 8

In addition to the coverlet, the 16th annual Benefit Auction at the school will also feature a large variety of quilts, art, and collectibles.

A pig roast will kick off the two-day auction beginning Friday, May 7 at 5:00 p.m. to 8 p.m. A craft and plant sale, plus the

quilt and art preview will also be held during those hours.

On Saturday, May 8 from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., egg omelets, home fries, pancakes and sausage will be served.

The auction will begin at 9 a.m. with 21 quilts to be sold beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Strawberry pie, chicken barbecue, home-baked goods, homemade ice cream, and other food will be available all day long.

For more information, contact Kraybill Mennonite School at (717) 653-5236, 598 Kraybill Church Rd., Mount Joy, (717) 653-5236.