

# SPINNERS: Artists card creations

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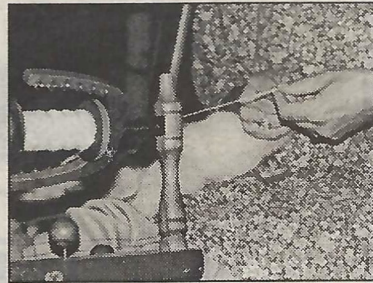
Sheep-to-Shawl demonstration. A local sheep is shorn, and the fleece is spun by guild members and then woven on a loom into a shawl.

All of the group's activities are designed to support the craft of turning threads into art.

"It's magic, or at least that's what children always think," Carrier said. Despite the fairy tales that have been woven around the spinning wheel, the art is actually very scientific. The wheel spins the fur fibers and pulls them into long threads that are then spun around a bobbin.

Many of the guild members enter the process much sooner — when the fur is still growing on the animal.

Sally Hoople says her interest in raising goats, rabbits and



sheep contributes to her interest in fiber arts. She owns several sheep that she shears for their fleeces.

Once the fluffy wool is shaved from the animal, it is washed in hot water and soap. It then can be carded, which is a process that combs all the fibers in the same direction.

"This hobby is not the cheapest," Hoople admitted. With the cost of raising the sheep and the time involved in processing the

wool, many spinners choose to buy the wool when it's already prepared for the spinning wheel.

"You can buy wool at any point — super refined, or right off the sheep," Hoople said.

Once the wool is prepared, all the artists need is a spinning wheel. And of all the wheels in the Valley, Carrier's is among the best.

"It's a beautiful wheel," Carrier said. "It's like a work of art." Even Hoople agreed that the myrtle wood spinning wheel is one of the nicest she's seen.

Three years ago, Carrier ordered the \$1,000 spinning wheel from an elderly craftsman who now has a 10-year waiting list for his wheels.

On Oct. 26, 1994, the spinning wheel was delivered to her home. She remembers the day clearly because she also had another special delivery in her home that day — her youngest son.

Carrier manages to squeeze brief interludes of spinning with her special wheel between home schooling her children and taking care of her home, "whenever I have a free moment," she said.

"For me it's like meditation," Carrier said.

She said Mahatma Ghandi encouraged people to spin their own clothes so they could be in touch with the basic elements of their lives.

"And if it's good enough for Ghandi ..." Carrier said. She said the hobby is a part of simple living, of getting back to basics.

In addition to the spiritual quality of spinning wool into yarn, Carrier said she enjoys the historical significance. She said the entire process of turning fleece into sweaters and hats allows her a glimpse into America's past.

"For me it's like a connection to our foremothers," she said.

Hoople said she also feels the threads of wool tie her to previous generations.

"My grandmother knit. My mother knit," Hoople said. "I learned when I was quite young."

However, Carrier pointed out that in early American his-