

# The magic of the spinning wheel

*By Judy Ross*

In 1964 as a young newly married woman living in Charleston, WV my first experience with the magic of the spinning wheel began. As we would go to the Laundromat each week and while waiting on our laundry to finish we would walk around the block, we would pass an antique store with a spinning wheel setting in the window. I would comment about the wheel how beautiful it was. Not knowing what I would do with it, but it kept drawing my attention. The price was \$100.00 and that was certainly out of reach for our small budget, but each week I would stop and visit with the wheel. The gentleman in the store said it was from an old farm house in WV. I would touch the wheel and think about who might have owned it and what they had made from the yarn they spun.



One day Tom came home with “my wheel” he had saved money for months to give me this special gift. I looked at him with astonishment and said, “I will learn to spin”. The wheel sat in our home as decoration and I would spin the wheel around and around with my hand. Our daughter was born and as she grew it was something for her to play with as she would push the treadle up and down and sat her toys on it. Now as a busy mother, thoughts of the spinning wheel diminished and became less important to me.

We attended the WV arts and craft fair, once again the magic of the spinning wheel caught my attention. There in front of me large wheels, small wheels, and women spinning and talking. I stood for a long time watching and then approached the women telling about my most beautiful spinning wheel. No one offered to let me sit and try the wheels before me, my heart longed just to sit and try for a moment. I went home that day and sat at my wheel, I had no thought of what to do next and again the wheel was set aside. Years went by and I kept watching the spinners at the arts and craft fair, finally someone shared with me how to take cotton twine and make a drive band. Ok – now I will spin! It did not happen as I had expected, discouragement was what I felt that day. What are the hooks for I thought to myself, how do I thread this thing? I needed more instruction so the wheel sat for another period of time with school kids now playing and spinning it as fast as they could and once again it became just a decoration.

Time has passed so quickly and now 1996 we are proud owners of llamas with bags of fiber stuffed in our outbuilding. We would go to llama shows and other fiber events and the draw of the spinning wheel once again was before me. We were invited to attend a "spin in" ladies and wheels everywhere. Today it was my turn to sit at the wheel and learn. So I purchased my "new" beautiful Louet wheel. Well you guessed it; I now had two spinning wheels that decorated my house.

Fate would not let me give up on my first dream; I was invited to take spinning lessons from the most gifted wonderful woman than I grew to love, Billy Bannerman. Thirty five years after the draw of that first spinning wheel my dream of learning to spin is now a reality. The circle is almost complete as our fiber guild has been invited to demonstrate spinning at the WV Arts and Craft Fair. I now sit and spin and ask anyone watching, "do you want to try my wheel?" I now am an experienced spinner teaching others about the magic of the spinning wheel. As the fiber slides through my fingers, the sound of the treadle and the whirl of the flyer, allows me time to reminisce and smile as I think about the magic of the spinning wheel and what it has given to me.