

THE BRAIDY BUNCH

By Nancy Tracy – 2007

I remember talking with Virginia Harvey during a session of Fibre Forum in the early 1990's. She was inviting a few friends to meet at her home to discuss some braids she was interested in at the time. Would I like to join them? You bet!

Initially, the group included: Bill Dyer, Mary Black, Jean Nelson, Virginia and me. We decided to meet once a month at Virginia's home. Sylvia Tacker quickly joined us, and for at least a year I brought Bonnie Tarses. Virginia invited other people now and then, but this became the core of the group. And since our primary focus was on braiding techniques, Bill's partner, John, labeled us "The Braidy Bunch".

In the beginning Virginia was corresponding with Naomi Speiser, and was questioning her analysis of some braids. We also looked into D'Harcourt, Japanese and Peruvian braids and related techniques wherever we could find them. Virginia was working on an interlacement for a Space Tether for Dr Robert Forward, who was working for the Space Program. He joined us several times to explain his project. Rodrick Owen visited the group and gave us an assignment after a session at Fibre Forum. Bill shared some notes and techniques from the work of his friend, Mary Frame. Leslie Grace brought samples from her collection for us to analyze and discuss. Martha Stanley, while visiting Virginia, joined us several times and discussed her work on woven Indian sandals. Later, Mike, a designer from Nike joined us. He eventually developed a shoe with a braided upper for Nike.

We shared ideas and interests. We stimulated, challenged and supported each other. We became very close, meeting monthly at Virginia's until she suffered a stroke and passed away. We tried to keep the group going, but it was never the same and soon faded away.