

LUISE ZIEGLER

A ball of rags, a bit bigger than a softball, sits just inside one of Luise's studio cabinets. It is a little faded long: long ago the rags were stripped and sewn and wound by Luise's mother and aunts, sitting in their front yard in the warmth of an Indiana summer. Luise inherited this stock of rags from her mother. She keeps the last ball to pass on to her weaver nieces as a remembrance of their grandmother and great-aunts, and of their tradition of working with the hands, and of sharing and giving to one another.

The Ziegler family also has a tradition of excellence, which Luise learned perhaps most directly from her German immigrant father Otto, a woodworker by avocation, whose craft was so thoughtfully and meticulously practiced it ranks as art. Through Luise, he became quite involved in the weaving scene of the late 1950s and early 1960s, getting to know a number of the leading figures through his research on the loom and other pieces he was designing for her. The loom he made is a unique and beautiful instrument. It is a 45-inch, 12 harness loom, made of clear-finished curly maple, with solid brass in many of the places one normally expects steel. The castle is decorated with two inlay pictures, one showing his Washington cabin, and other the home they left behind in Indiana. The action is basically that of a Macomber loom – old Mr. Macomber gave one-time permission to use his design. However it has custom refinements to maximize the loom's efficiency and ease of use, developed from Otto's own observations of the weaver's needs. For example, he studied how much pressure the weaver had to apply to the treadle to move the harnesses, then delicately optimized the weight-balancing so that the harnesses move with mere touch on the treadles—which he color-coded by making them of different woods.

Luise remembers his saying that a thing is worth doing well if it is worth doing at all. She also recalls that he insisted, too, on applying it to *her* products. While she was gone at work, he would check her weaving. On one project, which required 23 shots per inch, he informed her, when she returned, that she needed to take out the last 4 inches because the density was varying from 22 shots here to 24 shots there, and that was not accurate enough – it must be 23! So we know how Luise came by her exacting standard and taste for complex projects.

Though her mother liked sewing and embroidery and would have liked to weave, Luise came to weaving the hard way; by buying a book and a loom (a Le Clerc) and teaching herself. She completed her very first project in 1953; it was 45 inches wide and in 20/2 linen! She struggled basically alone for several years, learning from Mary Black's and Mary Meigs Atwater's books, and later from members of the Seattle Weavers Guild, which she joined after moving from Indiana in 1956. In 1959 a visit to the Williamsburg spinning house moved her to add spinning to her skills, on a wheel made by Otto. In the early 1960s she went to Pendleton, North Carolina to study with the niece of Lucy Morgan, and found inspiration and support as well as good teaching in the environment of the Penland School. In 1964 she wove for the first time on her personal loom, making a linen tablecloth as a family piece, in a 13-shaft pattern. She already had exceeded the capacity of her new loom, doing the 13th shaft as pick-up. Since then she has acquired and enjoyed a draw loom, as well as 8- and 16-harness table looms. She has documented her work carefully over the years, and has a 40-year record of her projects, starting on art paper and ending on computer disks.

Luise has been a member of WWG since 1973, and has served the guild as Treasurer, as well as filling the Membership Chair of the Association of Northwest Weavers Guilds (ANWG) for four years. She has been staunch, cheerful, and unflinchingly sweet tempered over many years work at the guild's booth at the Island

County Fair. She has produced and distributed the guild's yearbook/directory since it was conceived about 5 years ago, and for longer than that she has handled the mailing of this newsletter, getting it out meticulously on time.

Long a member of the WWG's Crazy Eights study group, Luise still prefers to work with fine linens (50/2 and 40/1) using complex weaves based on traditional weave structures. Her specialty is fine household linens, woven usually for family members. However, over the years she has also produced upholstery fabrics, yardage for shirts and other clothes, and at least two sets of rag rugs from that stockpile of her mother's. One of her favorite projects was a set of church linens; altar cloth, pulpit fall, minister's stole. And in recent years babies baptized at Trinity Lutheran have received one of Luise's christening cloths. Her special challenge for some years has been an annual project set by Cross-Country Weavers (CCW), a group of some 30 weavers chosen by invitation only, across the U.S. The annual project, she finds, always tests her skill and ingenuity. Her piece "Life Begins at Forty", a celebration of CCW's 40th anniversary (which we enjoyed at Guild), was included in the recent display of art by cancer survivors at the Would-Be Art studio and gallery in Bayview.

Though Luise identified herself as "a treadle weaver, not at all a finger weaver," she greatly appreciates those who work in other styles. She has special praise for Suzanne Ramsey's tapestry work for Trinity Lutheran (a fortunate church with two weavers!), and dominating the entryway in her house are two Navajo rugs, one by Sarah Natani. She has also given much time and effort (and learned much, she says) in helping with the documenting the work of earlier weavers. For Virginia Harvey's 40-odd-volume documentation of the Bateman weaves, Luise did the original keyboarding of text. For Sigrid Sample Piroch's book documenting the work of Elmer Wallace Hickman, she found or wove samples to prove his directions. From such work, from studies in the Midwest and East, from Cross Country Weavers, from Fiber Forum and Needleworks here at Camp Casey, she has built up a wonderful network of connections and friendships with other weavers throughout the U.S.

It strikes one that most of Luise's work is done for someone other than herself: family, friends, church, and organizations she supports. One of those organizations is "Habitat for Humanity, which she has helped—no, not as a weaver—as cook and food organizer. She is after all a former dietician (at Swedish Hospital in Seattle, and before that in Indiana) and the retired owner of Das Lamm Bakery and Tea Room in Freeland. Luise and cousin Nan moved from Seattle to Whidbey Island and opened Das Lamm in 1973, Luise directing the bakery and kitchen and Nan running the tearoom and retail shop. They tried to retire in 1979, leasing the premises to an operator who was finally unsuccessful, so Luise returned to operate the bakery in 1985-87, when it was sold to become the Blueberry Hill Restaurant. Though she is no longer in the food business, Luise is still regularly called on for infusions of cookies for church bazaars

Though she is restricted at the moment from energetic pursuits (such as baking) by on-going chemotherapy, her hands are far from idle. Next to her favorite armchair is a pile of designer doll-clothes she has knitted (very perfectly) to be sold to raise funds for the school that her great-niece and -nephew attend.