

From Weaving Silk to Weaving Silver

By Frances Timbers

Ever since I was a little girl, I have made stuff: by sewing, embroidering, crocheting, knitting, paper making, weaving, pottery, beading, and quilting. Before my mother would let me use the sewing machine, I designed Barbie doll clothes by hand. After I learned the basics of sewing in a Home Economics class in high school, I made most of my own wardrobe. Some of it was wonderful; some of it was weird. Then one day I was touring around with my mother and we were in someone's house where there was a loom. And hand-woven coverlets, like the pioneers used to make. I was in love. I kept that image in my mind until I happened upon weaving classes in Yorkville, when Yorkville was populated with hippies not yuppies. I learned the basics from The Village Weaver and developed the rest of my skills through books and magazines. Before the course was even finished, I bought a loom that came in four boxes that barely fit into my VW bug. My father, ever curious of things mechanical, helped me to assemble it. I doubt that he had ever seen a loom before in his life.

Everything I do I take to the nth degree, so I eventually became certified as a Master Weaver through the Guild of Canadian Weavers. I taught workshops all across Canada, and my work in fine linen and painted silk were featured in several handweaving journals. By this point, I was a professional weaver, marketing at One of a Kind in Toronto and a wholesale venue in Philadelphia, as well as the Apsley Studio Tour. But textiles are hard to sell. A weaver's competition are beautiful machine-woven scarves from the East that sell for pennies. I returned from one of the markets in the States discouraged. Maybe it was time I grew up and got a real job. But what? At this point, a nine to five occupation would have made me suicidal.

Academia to the rescue!! I had never gone to university after high school. So I enrolled in Trent University in Peterborough with the intention of getting a quick B.A. and B.Ed and teaching high school. But, since I have this tendency to take everything to the nth degree, instead I got a B.A., M.A., and PhD in the next eight years and started teaching university at several institutions. My creative energy went into writing instead of weaving. But writing does not satisfy the desire to make stuff, even when the writing is published in the form of three books.* During the years of studying, researching, and writing, I took up knitting and quilting to feed my textile junkie's soul. Complicated sweater patterns kept my hands and brain engaged. Each year I made a quilt for one of the members of my family.

Now, scroll ahead a few years. I found myself spending most of my winters in Panama. Too hot to wear sweaters or put quilts on the bed. At the same time, I finally had the time and money to pursue another interest of mine — silver jewellery. When I was in Canada in the

summers, I took courses at the Haliburton School of Fine Arts, which confirmed my love of making stuff. But there were two issues: silver is an expensive medium and I couldn't just keep making earrings, bracelets, and necklaces for myself or to give as gifts. I already had six bracelets on each wrist! And I don't have that many friends!! And, the equipment needed to set up a home studio was much more expensive than a pair of knitting needles. It was clear that I needed to sell some of my creations to sustain my addiction. Where better than among my friends and colleagues on the Apsley Studio Tour. I was no longer resident in the area, but I was welcomed as a guest artist, first by woodworker Britt Olauson and then by painter Lisa Mace. It felt like coming home. Many of the tour visitors remembered me as a weaver and embraced my transition from weaving silk to weaving silver. Thank you for supporting my need to make stuff.

* My publications include *Magic and Masculinity: Ritual Magic and Gender in the Early Modern Era* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2014); *The Magical Adventures of Mary Parish: The Occult World of Seventeenth-Century London* (Truman State University Press, 2016); and 'The Damned Fraternitie': *Constructing Gypsy Identity in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 2016). *Magic and Witchcraft in the West: Sabbats, Satan, and Superstition* (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword Books Limited) is forthcoming in 2019.

Jacks Lake Association

Presents:

**JLA Kids, Cops &
Canadian Tire Fishing Derby**
Must be 4-12 years of age

**Saturday July 7, 2018 in front of
Anchorage Trailer Park**

**Fishing between 9:00am and
11:00am (must check in day of event)**
**Lunch (hot dog and drink) will be provided
for all anglers. All others may purchase
lunch from the Apsley Lions Club.**

**Wild Frontier
Interactive Presentation to follow**

**Registration is July 1st to July 5th
at Anchorage Marina
and Forest Glen Marina**