

PB: ...history project. This is April 5, 19—2008. I am Phyllis Borden

RS: And I'm Ruth Shrijak [phonetic]. And we are today are going to discuss the Easton Rug Hooking class. This class was formed in Easton in 1966 with 12 members. Ruth and I are the only ones left of the original 12. Do you think we should tell who the 12 were? Why not?

RS: All right. I can't read it, Phyllis, you'll have to do that.

PB Okay. The original 12 were Ruth Shrijak, [phonetic] Molly Austin, Phyllis Borden, Clara McNall [phonetic], Bernice Booth, Martha Idleman, Gladys Coffin, Ruth Wrap , Verena Wells, Tilly Poster, Estella Johnson and Alice Pruxler [phonetic]. We met once a week at Burton Hall. Our teacher was-

RS: Alyssa [phonetic] McDonald.

PB: ...from Hudson Falls.

RS: Fort Edward.

PB: Fort Edward. And, uh, at that point all but—see—It was—three had had previous experience, the rest of us were all beginners, I believe.

RS: Well, yeah. Well, what had—what had happened was Verena Wells was the instigator of wanting to have, um, a rug hooking class in Burton Hall. And she went to this then supervisor Bill Sharon [phonetic] and asked if we could use the hall. And he said yes we could. And, uh, she and her husband would open it up and clean up after us. I don't know what else to say about that. But anyway, what happened was, um, Verena was instrumental in getting a woman, I believe her name was—Oh, I can't think of her last name. Um. She used to run the, um, Adult Education rug hooking class in Greenwich School.

PB: Oh, Marion Roverson's mother.

RS: Was she a Roverson?

PB: Wasn't she Marion Roberson's mother?

RS: I don't know who she-

PB: No. That wasn't her name, but I...

RS: ...but anyway she, she induced her to come down to Burton Hall in the month of July. Um. I can't remember what year that was, but, um—and she invited various people to come down. And, um, Molly Austin was one, I was one and, um, she had her—um, introduced us to rug hooking once a week. Well, having done that none of us could

proceed any further without a teacher. And she said, "Well, come to my house." And she lived outside of Greenwich. And we went there for, uh, once a week for a month and she announced that she was going to marry a minister and moved to Utica. So there we were all ready beginning to hook with no teacher. And she said that there was a teacher up in Fort Edward and she was having a rug exhibit at a church in Fort Edward.

And we went down there and that's where I saw my 8 by 10 rug that I decided I was going to embark upon. And, uh, I spoke with her and she said that we could—she would take us as pupils. And we met in someone's house, her name was Ruth Cullings and um, Molly Austin and Verena and I went up once a week for three years. And finally, we induced Alyssa, that was our rug hooking teacher, Alyssa McDonald. We induced Alyssa to come down, and she said she couldn't come down unless she had—it wouldn't pay her because she didn't drive and her husband was the driver and he'd have to bring her down with all her equipment unless she had 12 people.

So we had a meeting at my house and we had 12 people. And at the last minute three of them dropped out. So Martha Idleman recruited Alice Pruxler, Ruth Wrap, and I guess she was the third person, so we ended up with 12 people. And that was the beginning and that was in 1966 that we moved to Easton. That much I am certain of.

Q: What was the day of the week? [inaudible 4:28]

PB: Thursday.

RS: Thursday.

PB: Thursday. We have met Thursday's ever since.

RS: See, we used to—When I went to Glens Falls it was a Wednesday class and we were the Thursday class. And it's been that way ever since.

PB: That's right because Alyssa had [inaudible 04:41]

RS: Right. But Alyssa at that point had—She taught uh, Adult Education while hooking up in, I guess, the area of Fort Edward and she had about 100, um, pupils. She was, uh, an excellent teacher. And, um—I'm trying to think of what else to say.

PB: I was—You don't remember when our first—our first, uh-

RS: Well, no because—

PB: ... show was?

RS: ...What happened—I don't remember the year. But what happened is we started in '66 and it takes about three years to mount a show, to have enough material. So, uh, I would say about three years from '66 we decided to have a show and we really didn't have that much,

so, um, a, a station wagon load of, of items came down from the, uh—for her other pupils and they [unintelligible 05:37] out the show and that was our first show and we actually charged 50 cents—and it was a success. And the money that we made—We had raffles and things like that and the money that we made was given to the Easton Library.

And, uh, every three years after that we had a show and eventually there was a dried flower show in the library, so we tied it together, there was the flower show on one side of the road, the rug show on the other side, and the church always gave us a luncheon, which helped bring people in. It was a big help to have that luncheon. Uh, can you think of anything else?

PB: I know, um, at first, the money went toward the library-

RS: Right.

PB: ...upkeep, I think. One year I think we advertised—We were trying to put a roof on the library.

PB: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

Q: Hm-hmm. Hm-hmm. [affirmative].

PB: So this was what, what we were striving for, the monies to go for that.

RS: Right. But everything that we made in the beginning always went to the library and then as the class evolved and every time we had a show people would come to see and then they would want to hook. And I mean, Alyssa got to a point where she had to cut it off because she simply couldn't do it anymore. And, uh, somewhere in there Ruth Wrap became the last...

PB: Jane McGowan. McGowan.

RS: Jane McGowan, certified Jane McGowan Rug Hooking teacher. And so, she picks up a lot of the people and had her own class, um, because Alyssa could only handle so many people.

Q: So people joined the original 12?

RS: Oh, yes.

Q: And then got-

RS: It, it, it fluctuate—People-

PB: It did...

Q: ...you couldn't [unintelligible 07:18]

PB: It got to the point—what we had—we had about 20-some-

RS: Right.

PB: ...22 or 24 before Alyssa said, "I, I can't get around-

RS: Right.

PB: ...to each person to help them and it wasn't fair for them to come-

RS: Right.

PB: ...pay money for a lesson and then not be able to get any instruction.

RS: Right.

PB: So, she cut the number off. Then Ruth...

RS: Ruth has had a class-

PB: Yes. Ruth had a class at her house.

RS: ...class at her house, uh, up in Easton. And then eventually, uh, as time went on, uh, Alyssa lost her husband and that was her drive. So we had trouble at one point getting her back and forth. And, um, eventually it got to the point where she became ill and she was paralyzed with a stroke. And so, we went out and found ourselves another teacher.

Q: How many years has Alyssa been teaching?

RS: Oh, a long time. I honestly don't remember.

Q: Like, more than 10 years?

RS: Oh, definitely, definitely.

Q: Oh. Oh.

RS: Oh, yes. I don't remember when—Do—You don't remember when she died, do you? No, I don't either. But anyway, uh—So we had to find a teacher. So Millie [phonetic] Shore-

PB: She was with us better than 20 years.

RS: I would say so.

PB: I can remember there—a retirement party for her.

RS: Well, I have pic—I came across pictures of that party and Judy planned a surprise party in Burton Hall as her 25th anniversary as a teacher.

Q: At Burton Hall? Her 20—Do you remember...

RS: No, as a teacher in general, I would say of her teaching career. And, um—I should've brought those pictures with because it had dates on it. I—and I didn't think of doing that. But in any event, um, after she became ill we had to find ourselves a new teacher. So, uh, we had a woman come down. I don't remember her name, do you? The woman—

PB: From, from—

RS: They interviewed someone up in north and she, she had gave private lessons to about five or six people and we asked her if she would come. Well, she came and she didn't know how to circulate very well. And, uh, people were dissatisfied with the lack of direction they were getting, and so poor Millie Shore took Judy Lindberg and they went up and they fired the poor woman. And in the interval, we had Rose Korb [phonetic] come into work last and—Where does she live?

PB: Cambridge.

RS: Cambridge. All right. And she came into the class and she was a talented hooker, and we asked her to teach and she did. And she taught fine hooking. And in the meantime Dick LaBarge joined our class and, um, he turned out to be an excellent hooker. And, uh, he also started dyeing. And he and Rose would dye. And that's a very important part of rug hooking is to have the material that you need to do your peace. And so, um, he taught primitive hooking and Rose taught fine hooking. And then family matters made it impossible for Rose to continue to hook anymore, so we lost her and Dick became our teacher. And, um, at that point my husband became ill and I had to drop out so you'll have to pick up what happened there because I wasn't around any longer to.

Q: Yeah.

Q: Okay [unintelligible 10:47] talk about, like, in your days when you first started. Like, what—what happened in the class. Like, how did you build um, to such a point that you actually have a shop and what? [inaudible 11:00] but what types of things did you make?

PB: Well, what hap—What would...

Q: Like, what types of things did you make?

RS: Well, everybody chose what they wanted to do.

Q: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

RS: And, uh, what our goal was at that point having had one show was not to show what you had shown before.

PB: Every show would have all new...

RS: All new—all new pieces. It would not—there would be no repetition of showing-

PB: I mean-

RS: ...and I mean that we had such prolific hookers that, that, that was a—that worked and we were able to pull it off every three years.

PB: And people did tend to hook their preferences, so to speak. Some people hooked just rug. Other people hooked almost complete pictures.

RS: Right.

PB: Remember the lighthouse that-

RS: Oh, yes.

PB: ...that Bernice Booth did?

RS: And remember the Riese [phonetic] that was sculptured?

PB: Yes.

RS: I mean, that was a beautiful thing.

PB: Yeah.

RS: I mean, people branched out because see, Alyssa had—she, uh, had catalogs and we didn't just hook with, um, Mrs. McGowan because she had died and her daughter had continued her catalog. But we still are using other catalogs and that brings in other different types of hooking. I mean, we did pillows. We did pictures. We did...

PB: Handbags.

RS: Yes. Handbags. Oh, good Heavens.

PB: That was a big rage one year.

RS: Yeah. Right. And, um, we had one woman design, um, bird pictures on wool and we hooked on wool so you didn't have to do a background. And they were all pictures. And when I think of the things that I've hooked in—And hookers gave things away to their family and friends. I have very little in my house, I gave everything away.

PB: I think—one of the first things I remember, one of our—maybe it was our first show. Um, people would come in who were not familiar with the club or with hooking and, uh, I know one woman thought that everything that was there was on sale.

RS: Oh.

PB: That you could just come in and select-

RS: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

PB: ...and buy something. And she was so astounded when I said, "No. I wouldn't part for that for the world." I would give it away-

RS: See.

PB: ...to a family member but I couldn't sell it. And she couldn't understand that.

RS: I don't think—I don't think—I, I know that—See, when Verena had hooked before and she would hook things and sell them. And, uh, I don't know of one rug hooker that I know that ever sold—Well, I, I shouldn't say that. Uh, no. No. They mostly just gave things away.

Q: Did you sign them? Like [unintelligible 18:02]

RS: Well, what, what we—what, what we did,—What I did-

Q: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

RS: ...you had to sew tape around the back. And what I would always do was take Alyssa's initials and my initials and the date I started and the date I finished. Uh, because without her there would've been no piece.

Q: What did you do?

PB: Yeah. So most, most of them, uh, sign in the corner hook, hook in initials and a date.

RS: Well, some people hook, hook it on top of their piece.

PB: Yeah.

RS: I always put mine on the binding. But some people would put their initials and maybe the date in their piece-

PB: Right on—right on the date.

RS: ...on the top.

PB: Yeah. That's what I did mostly.

Q: With what?

PB: Put, put the initials on, on the—on the piece, particularly if it was a rug. I wouldn't so have to do it in a picture because...

RS: It would intrude.

PB: Yes. It would sort of intrude in the picture. That way you could sign it on the back. As I've gotten older I have tended toward pictures because they were smaller. I—When you start—At this point when I start I like to see the end.

Q: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

PB: Not—I could remember, uh, Ruth started a—What was it, 8 by 10?

RS: Well, see, what happened was I didn't know what to do and I had never been exposed to it. So, um, I had an antique three-corner chair and, uh, this Mrs. whatever her was, the lady that came down from Greenwich, she sold me a piece that was like floral pansies and things like that. And I remember trading a lilac bush with Estella Johnson for some material because I didn't have anything. And Alyssa was so nice. I mean, she would give me different things. In fact, in one—in, in my first rug which is a half round rug called "Young Man's Fancy."

It was, um, daffodils, pansies, pussy willows and a twisted ribbon. I have Welling Wells, Verena Wells' husband's scarf is in there. He gave that to me. I mean, it—You know, when you start out you really have to—And then we started going to, um, the rummage sales up in, in Glens Falls and buying, uh, like, old bathrobes and, and they had beautiful skirts.

PB: They had, you know, Pendleton-

RS: Oh, yes.

PB: And he did Pendleton, but you needed to have something that was all wool.

RS: It had to be 100 percent wool.

PB: Yes.

RS: And I mean, um, my basement unfortunately, and it still is quite full of wool. In fact, Henry said some day a moth is going to come along and the house is going to fly, fly away.

Q: Because once you got started you couldn't stop, right?



PB: Yes, that's right.

RS: No. I mean, it was an addiction—it was an addiction. And one time Linda and I went up, um, oh god, it was Shelburne, I believe it was, and on this ship they had a rug hooking display. And this woman had beautiful wool. And I said, "I've got to buy that." And my daughter said, "Dad will kill you." And the man in the back said, "I told my wife if she buys any more wool I'm going to start raising moths." I remember that man so—but no, it's an addiction, it really is. You know, you, you have to...

Q: Especially when—You, you wouldn't know if you could find it again, right? [inaudible 16:36]

RS: Well, I mean—See, nowadays so many blends have come in, even, um, what you would think would be quality well, isn't necessarily 100 percent wool and that is what you need. And plaids, um-

PB: Hm-hmm and things like that are especially-

PB: Especially nice.

RS: ...versatile, for want of a better word. So.

Q: And what's your favorite piece that you had? What, what would you say was—

RS: I—

Q: Is that a hard question?

RS: I—For me, I don't think so. I think my favorite piece is a half-round that I did. I've given it to my daughter Kathy [phonetic] because it was the first thing I ever did and I can tell who gave me what to make it happen. And I was just so pleased with myself because I— and then unfortunately, I went to a rug show and I fell in love with an 8 by 10 rug and I was doing fine hooking, and Welling Wells said to me, "That's going to take you 10 years," It's half-done and it's under one of my beds in a bag. It never got finished, because Alyssa led me up the garden path. I used to come and drag this rug and the cat that was a resident in the house where we hooked used to sleep in the folds and, and she said, "Ruth, you, you can—it's repetition."

It's called Fields and...Woods and Felds is the name of the p—of the piece. And I had got quite a bit of it done. She said, "Now you can do that at home. You can hook other things because you"—I saw these beautiful things happening. So then I fell among thieves, so to speak and I started hooking pictures and different rugs. And then supposedly when I went home I was supposed to do to that but it didn't—it didn't work out right.

PB: This rug that she speaks of is a light-green background with all kinds of leaves-

RS: No, no.-

PB: ...going around.

RS: It's, it's, it's not—

PB: : Your, your big one?

RS: No. The big one—the big one is basically beige. And-

PB: Beige?

RS: Oh, yeah. And Alyssa—

PB: See, I don't remember the right thing.

RS: No, wait. I went up to Alyssa's house and I had to soak—It's a good thing we had two bathrooms. I had to soak the wool in something called pluriso [phonetic] which makes it wetter than wet so it will accept dye. And we went up to Alyssa's. And I don't remember the shade that she put in but she tented the background. So it's not green but it's toned. It was too flat she said.

PB: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

RS: So I went up there once and we did a batch. I had 29 yards of material that I had to cut-up. That's what she figured would be the background amount. And, um, the kids came home one day and said, "What is that horrible smell?" Well, I, I had the wool soaked in the tub and I couldn't take it up because we had had a, a snow storm or something like this and the bathroom just smelled terrible. But anyway, eventually we died all three batches because we had to go back to her house so that the water wouldn't be different. And I've got 29 yards of dyed material in cans in the basement, well, what's left that I haven't used. But, um, we, we had a wonderful time and, um, it was, you know, very sad when we lost Alyssa.

PB: Yeah. It was—it was nice because not only that but we developed friendships and...

RS: Right.

PB: Because we had a, a common-

RS: Right.

PB: ...cause, a common bond-

RS: There's something about-

PB: ...and we helped each other out. You know, if somebody said, you, you need something

of-

RS: Right.

PB: ...this color I'll see what I've got-

RS: Right.

PB: ...and we shared.

RS: You did share. And, uh, also—I maybe shouldn't say this, but rug hookers are good cooks. And I've gotten some of the most wonderful recipes in my collection. We also traded and we always had, um, a Christmas party and then we had a farewell luncheon. And Alyssa would hook from September until, I believe it was the end of May. And then she and two of her long-time friends from up north would go down to, uh, West Virginia and she'd take teacher's classes. And, um—

Q: So, were you on your own from May?

RS: No. We did—we didn't hook in the summer.

Q: Oh.

RS: See, because all of us had kids and if the kids were home you just couldn't do that. We, we hooked during [unintelligible 20:56] school year-

PB: School year. Yeah.

RS: And that's how that went.

PB: So...

Q: And how long were you together on Thursdays, an hour?

RS: We started at 9:30 and we hooked until 2:00 within—with just brief break for luncheon.

Q: Okay.

PB: Well, it really wasn't worth a teacher coming down-

Q: Right. Right.

PB: ...from that distance to—for only an hour.

RS: No, but even for her classes up there when she taught locally. It was all—I mean, you had—If you even put some time in you weren't going to do anything. Uh, she always taught

from 9:30 to 2:00 no matter where it was she was. And then she did have, as I say, nighttime classes with the, um, I guess you call it Adult Education-

PB: I think it was Adult Education. Yes.

RS: ...up there.

Q: It wasn't the type of thing that you can—you could do and, like, catch up with one another at the same time? Like, what—there was conversation [unintelligible 21:41].

RS: Oh, sure. Some people visited and you just talked across the room or you broke up once in a while and would visit among yourselves. But, um, I was going to tell you something and now it, it got away from me.

PB: No. And another thing that we always did was keep track of what other people were doing. Not get so engrossed in your thing.

RS: Right.

PB: You couldn't appreciate what somebody else's talent was.

RS: And some of them were so beautifully talented.

PB: And, uh, they get to the point where a hooker has his own distinct style like a painter would or something-

RS: Alyssa says it's like handwriting-

PB: ...that, uh-

RS: The way you hook-

PB: ...you could almost tell-

RS: ...is distinctive-

PB: Yeah.

RS: ...from somebody else.

Q: So you could go to a show and see a piece and know who it's from? Who, who made it.

RS: Well...

Q: Like, among yourselves.

RS: Among ourselves we might. George Broaden [phonetic] comes to mind. I mean, when they had that show in Victory Mills Dick had a show there, oh, a number of years ago. And I mean, his work, work is distinctive. You can tell. And that—and that's another thing that happened. Uh, Dick LaBarge was the first man to join our class. And he said, "You don't know what courage it took for me to walk into, into the room with all those ladies." And, uh, I wasn't there when that happened because I had broken my leg and so I never got to see him come in. But he turned out to be, um, a talented person to the point where he has been teaching. And, uh, he has classes in Victory Mills, and still does.

Q: And some of that used to be [inaudible 23:13]

PB: With black shutters. Antique shop your interest—You know that in Victory Mills? That's the people.

Q: Yes. And I know that was Pat [unintelligible 23:20] and several other people have, have learned through him, right?

PB: Yeah.

Q: Right.

RS: Right.

Q: That through this [unintelligible 23:26]

PB: But he, he has an entirely different concept of it.

Q: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

PB: He teaches what is called primitive. Pieces are cut wider and the technique is different. You outline and then fill- in. In the n—in the fine hooking that that Ruth and I learned you did a lot of shading with different colors, which is where the dyeing-

RS: Yeah.

PB: ...came in to be so important. Because if you were making a, a rose you would have eight shades of a color.

RS: Right.

PB: So, so as you-

RS: We, we had to-

PB: ...hook it would make—take shape.

Q: And you would do your own dyeing?

PB: No. I didn't...

RS: Some, some people did. I, I tried dyeing and I wasn't very good at it.

PB: I, I, I decided that it wasn't for me.

RS: It's very—It was time consuming.

PB: I had—I had one stove and one sink and I was not going to mix dying with cooking. And those people who did the dyeing fixed a place for themselves to do just that.

RS: Right. And see, what happened was when Dick, um, we h—the—When we started the class, Elizabeth Vaughn lived up—I just can't remember where she lived. Um. And she was our class dyer. You—If you wanted something she would dye what it was you wanted and in fine hooking when we started it was—shading was the premiere requirement tran—so that you had to transition. In primitive hooking you can have jumps in color. I can't describe it in a better way, uh, because it was primitive. Years ago they would cut-up whatever it was they had.

One, one time when I first started, um, I couldn't stop and I was downstairs hooking and Henry came downstairs and he said, "Do you know what time it is?" And I said, "No." He says, "It's 20 of 2:00 in the morning. There's got to be something the matter with a woman who will sit there pulling little pieces of wool through the holes in a burlap bag." But you get hooked, you can't help yourself, really. It—But I mean, um, Dick really, um—from becoming a pupil became a teacher through sheer talent. I'm dyeing—Remember how we was dyeing with...

PB: Rose.

RS: Who was he dyeing with? He started dyeing with, um...

PB: Oh. Somebody from over...

RS: And, and he started dyeing with somebody in class and then he switched and he hired this girl to work with him, one of our classmates. And they did some beautiful dyeing. I mean—But his concept was a male concept. Um, it was—it's very different from—What we did was traditional. It was—be like a painting. His was different because of all—because you were using the wide kind of quarter of an inch. You have to be—You can't really shade too much with a quarter of an inch wide piece of fabric. But we met some wonderful people. We had some wonderful times. And as I say, um, I just had to drop out because Henry became ill. So Phyllis is really the last practicing of the 12.

Q: And...

PB: That's a good place to stop, isn't it?

Q: It is but I have more questions. It's, it's a good place but the tape is almost done.

RS: Okay.

Q: But, um, you didn't talk about your favorite. You didn't say anything about that.  
[unintelligible 26:54]

PB: I think. I think at the time the favorite is what I'm working on.

Q: So. [unintelligible 26:59]

PB: Yeah.

Q: Yeah?

PB: Yeah. As you—as you—Uh, the last—the last-

RS: She's saying sent some beautiful pieces.

PB: ...the last five years or so I have designed-

RS: Yeah.

PB: ...[unintelligible 27:09] on what I have done. And so, um, it's what takes my eye in what I like to do. So it's kind of nice, too.

Q: And where are your, um—Uh, do you have, uh, rugs in your houses?

PB: Oh, yes.

Q: Or do your children have your rugs?

RS: Well, see, ev—I, I have one rug in my house plus the one under my bed, and I have two pictures. And everything else I've given away. So.

PB: I've given some things away but I'm waiting to see, you know, if the grandchildren really are that interested. Because I, I don't want to give them something to have them put on the floor for the dog to sleep on.

RS: That's what happened to Marion Sullivan. She hooked a beautiful piece, gave it to her daughter and she used it as a, a rug in the entryway and the dog used to lay on it, so she took it.

Q: I would've done the same. Just pick it up and go out the door.

RS: Right. No. But it's been a wonderful experience and I miss it and of course, now I'm so arthritic I can't hook, because I have two things I want to finish. I've acquired recently two more great-grandchildren, and for the first one Dick designed, um, a, uh—Everything was supposed to be—Now who was that person with the honey pot?

PB: Oh. Winnie the Pooh.

RS: No.

PB: No?

RS: It was a bear.

PB: Yeah, Pooh Bear.

Q: Oh.

RS: All right. Uh, Pooh. All right Pooh Bear. Well, he designed Pooh Bear with the honey pot and there were blocks there. So I—His name was Alexander and I said to Dick, "If you think I'm going to write on [unintelligible 28:46], you're crazy." So I said, Alex and his birthdate. And, uh, I hooked that for him. And then we had a little girl named Anna born two years later and I got carried away because I'd seen a piece in rug show and it was Noah's Ark. And it was big. And I hooked Noah—It took me two years. I hooked Noah's Ark for Anna. So now, I have two more great-grandchildren in the same family and I don't know what I'm going to do about them, because I would like to hook something for them but I don't know what I'm going to do. But, uh, it's, it's been a trip.

PB: Yeah. It's been an experience.

Q: Did anybody ever—Like, did, did she—I, I can't remember what you said.

RS: Aletha. [phonetic]

Q: Aletha ever comment on the longevity—evity of the group, um, that it went on and on and on? [unintelligible 29:39]

RS: No. Because you see she had been teaching for so many years. It seems that she learned to hook with a woman named Mrs. Moss. And they had a big class up there for years-

Q: But then [unintelligible 29:49]

RS: ...and Mrs. Moss died and the class had no teacher and the pupils asked her to become a teacher. And she said to me, "I was awake all night long thinking, 'What am I going to do?'" But she just stepped in. And I mean she'd been teaching for years before we met her.



PB: She was an excellent teacher.

RS: She was a wonderful teacher.

PB: And I find—I find—I go back and I, I I—If I'm doing something I said, "What would Aletha have said?"

RS: Right.

PB: Would she have approved of this?

RS: Right. That's true.

PB: And I find that she is my goal.

Q: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

RS: Right. Oh, she did wonderful-

PB: Yes, she did.

RS: ...wonderful pieces. I mean. Uh. She did a, a huge rug. I, I would go up to her to see her once in a while at her home or something. And, um, she had a rug in her dining room, I think it was an 8 by 10, and it was a—it had a big band like this of all fruits, if I remember right.

PB: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

RS: They—Oh, it was just—you, you wouldn't want to put it on the floor. Oh, look at Millie Shore. Now, she—I mean she's hooks like a spider. She just, just turns out—and she has all these, uh, n-nieces and nephews and everyone has something of hers. And her house is full of beautiful, beautiful things and she still...

Q: [unintelligible 31:05] the shows, right? I mean, that [unintelligible 31:07] show became famous because you turned out so much and you had to haul all of...

RS: Well, they, they were very prolific. And I mean, as I say, we had different people come and g—They was the core, but then people came in and left as circumstances dictated, you know.

Q: But people would come from Albany years out, right?

RS: Yeah. Oh, oh, yes.

Q: People would travel to see your work.

PB: Yeah.

RS: No. After...

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Q: ...talking about like, back then how much it cost, how much you paid the teacher when you started.

RS: All right. Are we on?

PB: Hm-hmm. [affirmative]

Q: Yeah.

RS: All right. Well, when—When we began the teacher was paid a whole dollar for teaching from 9:30 to 2:00 with a break for luncheon and we did not pay any rent. But then as time went on and we branched out, um, we started paying rent, uh, to Burton—for Burton Hall. And I don't—I think it—Aletha just was still getting a dollar as, uh, far as I can remember.

PB: I don't—I don't remember that she had raised it greatly.

RS: I don't remember that she raised it. I don't think she raised it the whole time we taught that.

PB: I think she figured if, if we had enough pupils—If we had 20 pupils she would get, you know, \$20 dollars a time.

RS: \$20 dollars. But, I mean, she was not—she was not in it for the money because-

PB: If you signed up though, um...

Q: If it's not right [unintelligible 00:54]

PB: If you sign up to be in it, uh, you signed up for X-number of weeks. And if you weren't there you still were supposed to pay.

RS: Right.

PB: Because she was there. You could've come—You know, if you would come you would've had your lesson. But she was there putting in her time, so she didn't think that just because you didn't come you should not have to pay.

RS: No.

PB: And that's, I think something that we have kept.

RS: Right. Yeah. I mean, if you, you, you—Well, now I think you, you had been doing 10-week—at one point they were doing like, 10-week periods. And so you'd paid for that. I mean, if you didn't come that was your problem. But you had to pay because the teacher was there. And if you weren't that was—you know, it wouldn't be fair not to—not to contribute.

PB: But, for several years now we have not had a teacher.

RS: No, that's correct. I forgot about that.

PB: And, uh, so we haven't taken on any new people, but the ones who come—ones who have hooked long enough that they can proceed on their own except if, if they want advice everybody is there to help.

RS: Help.

Q: So, how many come now, like, on average?

PB: Uh, 8, 10, 12 depending on who's in Florida, whatever.

RS: See? That's another thing, too, uh, some has gone on even when I was hooking, uh, a good group would go away for the winter. And, uh, quite a few of them would. But, uh...

PB: Whatever.

Q: And then, um, the shows. Like, when was the last show? Was that, uh, [unintelligible 2:28]

PB: That's a good question. That, that is where I go by not putting dates on things.

Q: Do you remember...

PB: Here's, here's a show of 1995. Now that could—I think that might have been our last one.

RS: Was it that long ago? You haven't had, had a show...

Q: How many—Uh, do you remember like, when it was the largest show, like, how many people came to see your work?

RS: See? Now that's where my records would've come in handy because I kept track of how many people came in, because eventually it got to the point where we charge a dollar admission. And, uh, so some—part of what we took in was, was traffic, if you want to put it that way. And then some from the raffles that we had okay, uh, would come in. But, um—And see, what happened is when, when we had, uh, the flower show, too, it all tied

in together and, um, whatever, whatever was realized was given, uh, only at first to the li—Easton Library, and then as more people came in from outside, that would be like [inaudible 3:33] and so on. The suggestion was made that they—and Judy took care of that because by that time my husband became ill—and I, I wasn't coming on a regular basis. But, uh, they would decide what group was worthy and...

PB: We have given to re—different rescue squads.

RS: Right.

PB: And, and to animal shelter. Um. Those, those are what come in mind right now.

RS: And at one point they went and replaced the silver in Burton Hall. I remember that, with some of the money that we made. And I—What else did—Didn't we do something for the hall beside that, I can't remember? But I know that we replaced the silver. But in all it...Well, when you're rug hooking depending on the size of your piece it's—you have to be very patient because you just can't hook, uh some—We asked one time how long it would take to hook a square inch—I'm sorry, a square foot of background, and she said eight hours. And that's without—If you're shading then you can't make time. [OVERLAP] It's a very—a very, you know, precise process. And you can't be impatient, rug hookers are patient people. Around over there. But we've met some wonderful, wonderful people, made wonderful friendships, had wonderful parties and so on. And, uh...

Q: Do you want to tell me more about Vera?

RS: Well, Verena was the one—Verena Wells really wanted, um, a class here. And as I say, she talked, talked that woman into coming over to Burton Hall for four weeks and then she took us to her house for a few weeks and then announced she was leaving town. And that's how we acquired Aletha. And so, um—But before that, Verena, Molly Austin and I went up every—I think it was Wednesday, we went up to Glens Falls and hooked in this woman, woman's house. And, um, her name was Ruth Cullings and she was a wonder—And not only was she a wonderful, uh, hooker, but she also—they were all talented in sewing like Aletha. She was making clothes and so was Ruth Cullings for their grandchildren and they would—they just were into everything.

I mean, they—We'd go up there and we'd have coffee before we started and then we'd hook and have lunch. And then we hooked until 2 o'clock. And we made some really, really interest—met some interesting people. It was very nice, it really was. But Verena was the key to bringing the class to, to Burton Hall. So. And she hooked until she went into the nursing home, and hooked beautifully. Really did.

PB: I think that probably tells our story quite nicely.

RS: So that should do it, I would say. Have you any questions?

Q: Um. I could ask more questions [inaudible 6:40] For today we'll...

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