

Pat Morrison: All About the Women.....

by Moe Lyons in collaboration with Pat Morrison May 2022

Pat Morrison has been crocheting, sewing and knitting in the Slocan Valley for 52 years, having moved with her family to Winlaw in 1970. "I dreamed of raising my children in a rural area so we could be in Nature."

"I was the one who made a living in my family so I had to work full-time." With a group of friends, including Julie Davis, her family bought a quarter section for \$3,000, up the hill directly across from where the Threads Guild is now.

The Guild began when a group of women got together to order yarn from back east. "I worked full-time and couldn't get to most meetings but to me that was the beginning of the Threads Guild."

She says when she got to the Valley, "I realized I knew things I didn't even remember I knew. I knew the lifestyle already. I knew how to grow food." As Pat was growing up during WWII, her mother and grandmother gardened extensively. The men were gone and every front and back yard was a Victory Garden. "Right away I grew all the food. We raised chickens and I butchered them." The only thing Pat wouldn't do was milk animals. "With five children and working I had limits."

Family has always been central to Pat's life. She is proud of her "kids," saying, "My children are all healthy and intelligent so they haven't had some of the problems other kids have had, and we're very supportive of one another." She does, however, regret that she worked so much while they were growing up. "I wish I could have been with my children more."

The main reason she became involved with the Threads Guild from its beginning was because she wanted women in her life, a place to share and be with women. "Julie Davis and I were close friends so it was easy for us to join together. I wasn't that active at the beginning but became more and more involved over time. I took on many Guild roles like organizing classes and being a member at large. I helped with donations and several times with the Library, and always fully participated in our Yard and Yardage sales and worked making blankets and quilts for fundraising."

Pat donated fabric, yarn and notions to Yard and Yardage every year right up until she closed her own studio when she moved and sent all the remaining materials from her 'stash' to the Guild.

*Pat with Guild member Sharon Block at Pat's Pre-moving 2021 Garage Sale. Threads Guild members were invited to shop early and many great deals went home with happy shoppers!
Photo credit Lois Lawrence.*



"For me," she says, "the deepest meaning was being with other women, having their support. I learned so many skills from the other members. The work was always secondary. Because of my job I didn't have a lot of social time even with close friends. I was so busy with five kids and little time to socialize. I needed to be with women. That was the essence of all those years. In those days we were closer because there weren't so many of us. I would have had difficulty getting through some of those years without the Guild women. They were always there for fun, sharing, wisdom and caring."

"I am so moved at what women go through. My whole life has been motivated by helping women." She was the first educated midwife in the Slocan Valley and worked to help midwives become legal, especially in the local hospitals where she practised and worked. Pat is featured in "Midwifery is Catching," by Eleanor Barrington, the book about the history of midwifery and the work toward legalization in Canada.

While Pat always earned a living, her life was also filled with gardening, making quilted items and bags, crocheting baskets and making hats, mitts and scarves for her family. Being part of the Threads Guild fit into her life as her core group in our community.

J. C. Bradford, who was President of the Guild for many years, encouraged Pat in all her textile work. It all started because Pat crocheted large storage baskets out of the hemp twine from bales of straw she used for gardening. "I needed baskets and designed them myself. J.C. saw them at a meeting and encouraged me even though I thought they were funky."

To J.C., the baskets were works of art. "Oh!" thought Pat, "She thinks these are good!" "It was such a big encouragement to me." And so it began. "Julie and J.C. always encouraged my handiwork for so many years and now I have become inspired to create original wall hangings for a large project!"



*Pat with one of her beautiful wall hangings
Photo credit Sharon Block*

"The Threads Guild is one of the most successful organizations in the Valley, largely due to our Yard and Yardage event. Some people started coming because the food was so good.....and they spread the

word." "I most absolutely love the Guild's Library," she adds. "It is the best craft library in the Kootenays. Our current Librarian, Barbara Mack, has continued to update our books with great dedication and knowledge."



*Samples of Pat's crochet work from the Guild's "6 inch square" project
Photo credits Jane Murphy*

Along the way, Pat taught several workshops to the other members, like Beading and Folding Stars. She loved and joined Gab and Jab whenever she could. She worked at collecting and storing donations at the Guild and donating equipment when needed. Although she was always immersed in the organization she was never a Board member. Nonetheless, her participation was recognized as significant and she was honoured with a lifetime membership in 2016.



A typical Gab and Jab evening in 2014 with left to right: Sharon Block, Lois Lawrence, Pat, Brenda Elder, Haya Maor, and Monique Groom. Photo credit Val Mayes

Most of what Pat made she gave away. "After years of learning techniques, I knew I could make anything. Baby blankets, beaded work, backpacks sewn from upholstery fabric, capes for a wedding, purses, bags, place mats, quilts and wall hangings."

"For my friends and family I would make shawls and scarves but mostly bags, ranging from simple shopping bags to intricate beaded and embroidered items. I made one friend a bag for her knitting about every other year."



One of the many fabric bags Pat has made over the years. Photo credit courtesy of Pat Morrison

These days Pat is doing bigger pieces, a huge dragon and wall hangings inspired by her experiences and love of gardening. She says it can take a few years to do one of these. "When I started 40 years ago I couldn't imagine what I am doing now."

Pat retired from working 22 years ago. Her family is grown and gone. She is determined to wind up in a small community where she will have the kinds of connections she has had throughout her life in the Slovan Valley. She tried living in Nelson for a while and is moving back "to the woods, where I belong, living in nature and doing handiwork as long as my fingers work."