

The workshop I participated in was Sakiori and Zanshi Weaving: Japanese Rural Cloth taught by Tom Knisely. Tom describes the techniques as the “ultimate in recycling,” which is exactly what made the workshop so attractive. While ‘recycling’ evokes images of rinsing aluminum cans, these techniques are a bit more like ‘upcycling,’ or taking previously loved fabrics and fibers and turning them into new items with their own significance. I saw it as a way to honor the memory of my mother and maternal grandmother. During the workshop, I completed two scarves, one in each technique.

Sakiori provides a way to reuse things we love and don’t want to simply throw away or give to Good Will. There are many ways to do this, such as quilts made of beloved t-shirts, or a father’s ties. I am particularly interested in those objects one might deem ‘matrilineal,’ or things that have come down through one’s mother’s relatives.

My work in weaving has provided me with a way to honor those women who came before me. Doing so through the undervalued and often unrecognized work of weaving, which women have been doing for thousands of years to keep their families clothed and warm, allows me to illuminate the ways much of women’s domestic work goes unpaid and undervalued. I look to demonstrate to the people who take my class and attend the Guild program how they can value their own work and the work of their ancestors.

There’s a story behind my inspiration for all this. My mother, who passed in 2007, introduced me to all things fiber as a child of 7. Without this experience, I would have never sought out weaving and would never have learned to spin. My father got remarried and I needed to clear out some of my mother’s things from his house, like her wedding dress, (the finest in 1959’s polyester taffeta, New Look silhouette), and her mother’s wedding dress, (a silk, bias cut slinky number from the 30s). What, though, to do with these things? Cut them up and weave with them, of course! I thought I would add my own by cutting up the silk skirt I made for my own wedding. Of course, they’ve been sitting in boxes for the last five years.

I am still in the process of designing the scarves I will make for myself and the three female cousins on my mother’s side, sharing heirlooms that have, up to this point, been hidden away in boxes - ticks a third. One cousin has two daughters, and there should be plenty of fabric to make them scarves as well.

My first official goal for the fellowship was a Guild presentation about MAFA, the class I took, and my experience, which I delivered at the December 2019 meeting. We have many new Guild members who haven’t attended MAFA and don’t know what it is all about. It took me several years to decide to attend MAFA, and I wanted to share just how meaningful the experience can be. I also shared what I made and the connection to my mother and grandmother.

My second goal is still in progress. I continue to work on planning a class for the WGGB Weaving School on Sakiori weaving. This will include putting together a workbook for participants, weaving samples, teaching the course, helping with loom warping, cutting fabric to be used, and weaving projects.

The Guild presentation went well. I have attached the power point presentation used. Half a dozen people indicated they were interested in taking the class from the 35 that were at the meeting. There were several insightful questions, and one member had excellent suggestions for including more color into the scarfs I am weaving with the strips I made.

My goals were partially met. Unexpected work demands meant I was not able to achieve all I wanted. The class is not yet ready to run, and will take another six months or so. Preparing samples to use for a class is my biggest challenge at this point. I have fabric, but simply haven't had time to do the weaving.

I wouldn't have done anything differently, other than be independently wealthy so that I could spend all of my time weaving. We simply have to roll with what life gives us.

Being a MAFA fellow has been a wonderful experience. It would have been easy to put my weaving away and have it end up one more thing 'in process' in my stash room. Instead, I have had to carefully articulate what I am doing and why it is important. I have had to be mindful about recording my work so that I can share it with others, which is actually quite enjoyable.

Sharing my work with friends has led to two commissions. Woohoo!

Perhaps the most meaningful thing I will take away is a commitment to push others to apply for the fellowship grant. I don't know that I could be any more enthusiastic about weaving and spinning, but I can certainly encourage others to attend MAFA.



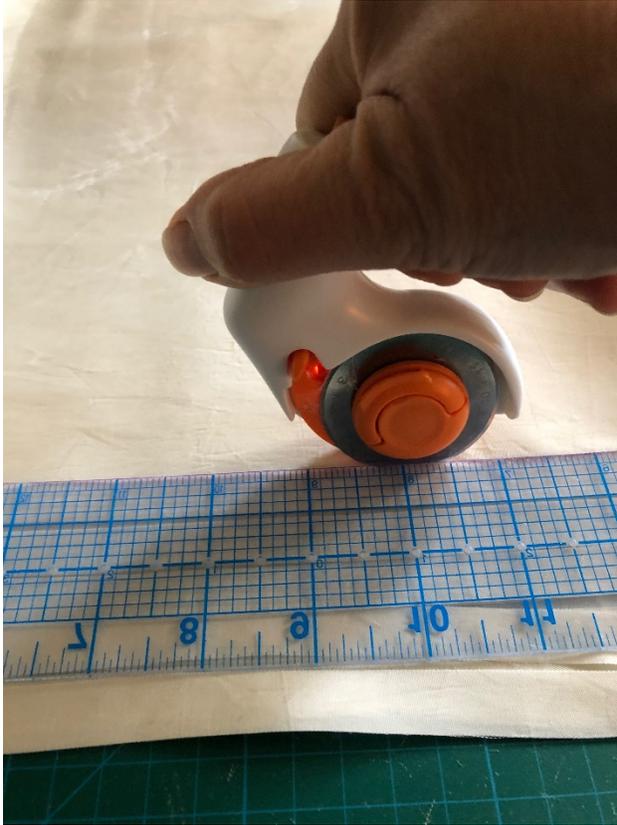
1 Display for WGGB presentation



2 Bodices from 1959 and 1935



3 My mother's skirt, with strips from my grandmother's dress and my dress



4 Cutting technique learned in class



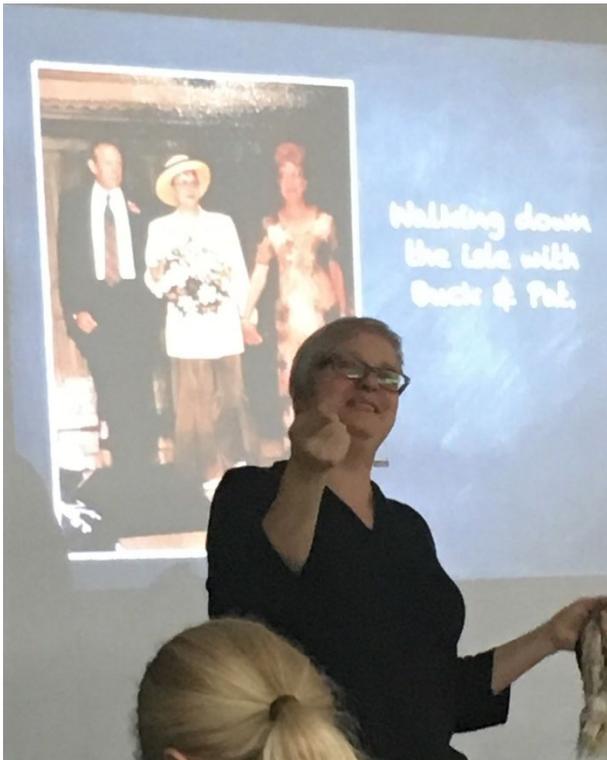
5 Nice clean lines



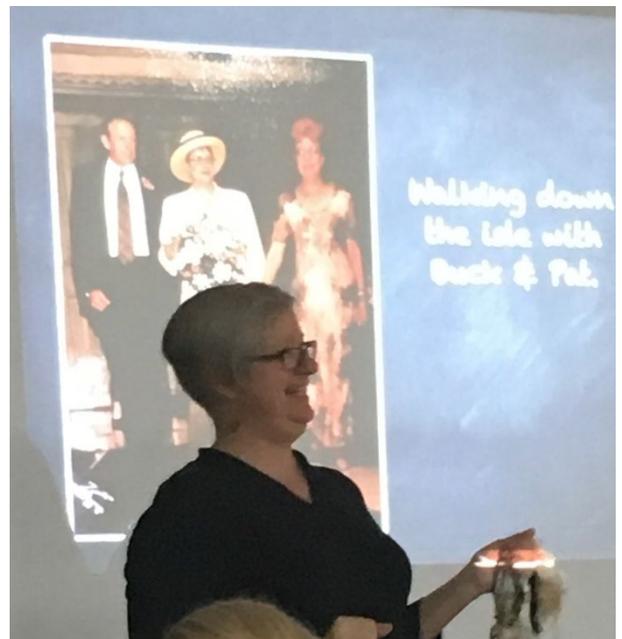
6 Zanshi woven at MAFA 2019



7 Sakiori at MAFA 2019



8 Guild Presentation A



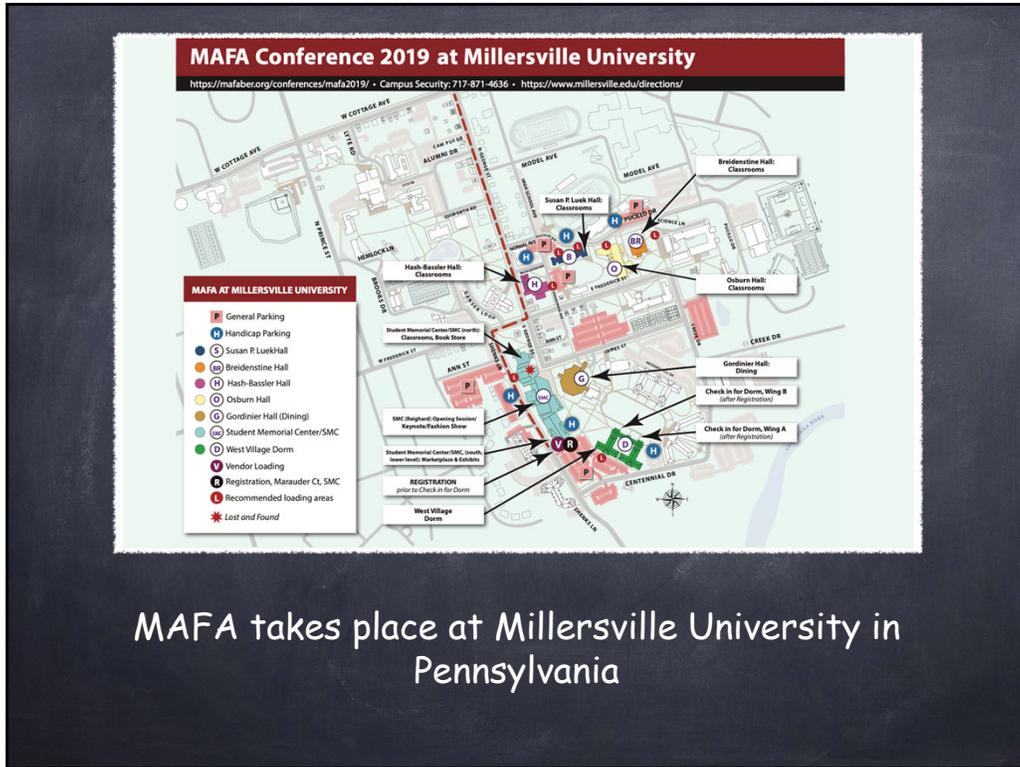
9 Guild Presentation B



1



2



MAFA takes place at Millersville University in Pennsylvania

3

What can I do at MAFA

- There are many different workshops divided into categories
- These include beginning, intermediate and advanced classes
- In 2019, there were 37 from which to choose

MAFA 2019
UNITED IN FIBER

WORKSHOP CATEGORIES

- 100 Series: Weaving
- 200 Series: Spinning
- 300 Series: Dyeing
- 400 Series: Felting
- 500 Series: Other

4

With so many options, how do you choose?

"The questions I would ask.....What's your main purpose in attending? Do you want to advance a particular skill or simply try something new? How "taxing" do you want the experience to be - both in terms of the prep beforehand and the on-site mental concentration?

"Do you have goals for your weaving? Which class will take you down the road toward your goal?

"Which teachers/topics are available to you elsewhere and which are you mostly likely to get a chance to learn from only at MAFA? For example, we're close to Red Stone Glen so there are other opportunities to take Tom's class. Jason Collingwood teaches the rug class at Harrisville Designs every summer.

"Remember, if you're struggling to decide or don't get into the class you want, Pat, Peggy, Deb and I would like to hear which classes interest you. Perhaps the weaving school can offer the topic or the guild can invite the instructor to do a workshop for us. We are ALWAYS looking for ideas!" Deb Herrin

5

With so many options, how do you choose?

- Before I read Debbie's advice, I was actually thinking of not going.
- Did I really want to spend all that money if there wasn't a class that compelled me above all others?
- Debbie's advice, though, reminded me about a project I've had in mind for a long while.

6

Honoring my ancestors

My mom first plopped me down in front of her Singer sewing machine when I was seven. She was a depression baby, so most of what we call 'fiber arts' were taught to her as a means of getting by and making things last.

I remember, at about ten, spending Saturday afternoons at quilting bees where the women were tying quilted faces to the backing. Three or four girls would sit underneath the quilt frame and grab the needle poked through and send it back up to complete the tie. This was a great way to learn the current gossip!

7

Honoring my ancestors

Mom taught me how to embroider, knit, crochet, cross stitch, and needlepoint. In junior high, I took the requisite home economics courses, and ended up working as a default teachers aid during the sewing semester. In high school, my first job was as a clerk at House of Fabrics, and I made my own costumes when I was in the musical Oklahoma.

I started college as a theatre major, and gravitated immediately to the costume shop. Here, my sewing skills bloomed; I learned about dying and how fabric really worked. While I ended up graduating with a degree in philosophy, I was a student worker in the costume shop, dressed community theatre, and worked at Knott's Berry Farm in costuming and park decorating. Thus, up until I entered graduate school, fabric was a major part of my life.

8

The MAFA website workshop description



WORKSHOPS

(112) Sakiori and Zanshi Weaving – Japanese Rural Cloth ~ FULL

Sakiori and Zanshi fabrics are the ultimate in recycling. Sakiori is a fabric woven with very narrow strips of fabric, much like a rag rug but with a subtle hand that makes it possible to wear as clothing. Zanshi cloth is woven with leftover threads of previously woven fabrics. The broken warp threads, leftover bobbin threads and thrums would be tied together to make a continuous length that could then be woven to make a new fabric. These ingenious textiles were woven by people who had very little to call their own. In this workshop, students will learn history of these two fabrics and the fundamentals of weaving Sakiori and Zanshi. There will be examples to see and handle of both Sakiori and Zanshi, Japanese samples from the 19th and 20th centuries and samples I have woven as table runners, scarves and shawls.



Sakiori and Zanshi Weaving – Japanese Rural Cloth

9

All about the instructor

112



Sakiori and Zanshi Weaving – Japanese Rural Cloth ~ FULL

Learn the history of Sakiori and Zanshi and the fundamentals of weaving the fabrics.

[Tom Knisely](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

Tom Knisely



Tom Knisely has been studying and teaching others about weaving and spinning for more than four decades, making him one of the most well versed fiber arts instructors in North America. In addition to teaching weaving, Tom weaves professionally and is a frequent contributor to *Handwoven* magazine. Tom is a resident instructor at Red Stone Glen Fiber Arts Center in York Haven, Pa.

10



11



12

Buck & Pat Crosby

Pasadena, Ca
June 28, 1959

My mother's wedding
dress, which provides the
majority of the fabric for
my project.

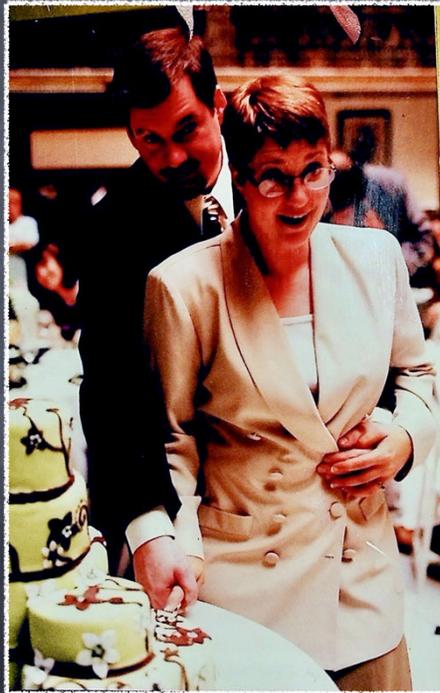


13

Michael Bradley & Joanna Crosby

Baltimore, Md
May 21, 1999

A hint of the skirt I
cut up.



14



Walking down
the isle with
Buck & Pat.