

Berta Morrison, founding member of the Prairie Handspinners died unexpectedly June 6, 2007. Berta received the MAWS Living Treasure award in 1998. A fantastic spinner and knitter. Berta excelled at colorful fair isle knitting with her handdyed handspun. Spinning exquisite fine yarns on her Ashford Traveler, she was a great resource for all guild members on any level of knitting project.

Berta became interested in spinning when her husband Bob inherited an antique wheel that been sent to his grandmother from Sweden in the 1890's. Finally her wish came true when in 1979 she signed up for an adult education class taught by Pegee Haman. Berta found it difficult to spin on the antique wheel because of its high ratio and speed. She ordered an Ashford Traditional wheel for \$45 and continued taking lessons.

An avid knitter, Berta's goal was to spin wonderfully warm wool to knits sweaters, socks, mittens for herself and children and grandchildren. Berta was intrigued by the history of spinning and knitting. She knitted all the traditional patterns including Aran, Fair Isle, Latvian, Norwegian, Scottish, Bohus and many more. Many of Berta's projects were colorful stranded knitting which she knit in the round using traditional techniques including steeking and cutting. Although Berta enjoyed all fibers, she found wool to be the most useful and versatile. She especially enjoyed Cynthia Coe's Border Leicester because of the sheen when she dyed it. Truly a prolific knitter and spinners, Berta completed many projects each year. Berta credits spinning every day with the quantity of yarn she produced saying she sat down to spin each day when waiting for things. Berta raised natural dye plants in her garden, but mostly used chemical dyes to achieve the marvelous colors for her knitted items.

Berta participated in almost every activity the guild ever held during her 28 year membership. In addition to her fiber arts interest she pursued strong interests in natural history, archaeology, geology, children's literature, the care and treatment of dogs, and botany, especially the growing of orchids. She was a founding member of the Big Sky Orchid Society, Prairie Handspinners, the local Audubon Society, the Montana Wilderness Society and Friends of the Library. She was an active volunteer for many organizations, helping with book sales for Friends of the Library, doing greenhouse work for Special K Ranch and organizing exhibits for the Western Heritage Center, among others. She was also a Master Gardener and worked closely with the Yellowstone County Extension Service to foster programs for cultivation of flowers and food plants. Eighty year old Berta received the Friends of Library Volunteer Appreciation award in 2006.