

MARGARET P. WHITNEY

1910 – 1995

Margaret began weaving in the late 1940's, and joined the young Missoula Weavers Guild in 1950. During her long and very productive weaving life, she explored every aspect of her avocation. She wove rag rugs, including one that covered her living and dining rooms wall-to-wall and was in use for some 30 years, and she wove delicate fabrics and household linens featuring close setts, fine threads and an extraordinary color sense.

She was especially well known to her weaving friends for the careful and beautiful finishing of her weavings. She made frequent use of finger-manipulated weaves to highlight loom-controlled patterns.

Over the years, Margaret taught hundreds of new weavers, through the Guild, as private students and as an instructor at Montana State University (now the University of Montana) for several years. She was always available to anyone having questions, needing guidance or asking for help with weaving. She demonstrated a practical approach, claiming that she had made every mistake that could be made in weaving and that every problem had a logical solution, even if the solution was to cut the warp off the loom and start anew.

During all her weaving years, Margaret maintained an amazing collection of sample books. She kept records and samples of everything she wove, including drawdowns (done with India ink on graph paper), samples of threads used, notes on sett, threadings, treadling variations, draw in, shrinkage in finishing, and intended use, among other things. The records were kept in large three-ring binders, each weave structure in its own binder. The collection occupied several feet of bookshelf space. Many of her sample books are now included in the Library of the Missoula Weavers Guild.

She was a strong supporter of the Missoula Weavers Guild, the Montana Association of Weavers and Spinners and the Association of Northwest Weavers Guilds, seeing them as means of sharing the excitement and creativity of weaving. She served her guild by holding a multitude of offices over the years, teaching classes, and by being an inspiration to all.

In recognition of her contributions to weaving in Montana, she was recognized as a Living Treasure during the MAWS Conference in 1994.