# The Massie Messie Messenger

A Quarterly Newsletter Issue N° 8- Summer 2011

# **Massie Rug Hookers**

by Renie Fedun

Traditional rug hooking, "a craft of poverty", probably started in the 18th century in New England. Rugs are made by pulling loops of yarn or fabric through a stiff woven base such as burlap, old rags or old wool coats. A bizarre-looking crochet-type hook mounted on a wooden handle is used. The wool is cut by hand using a device appropriately named a cutter. It creates spaghetti-like strands of yarn which are then dyed in solid colours, tie-dyes, even tartans. In the past few decades new materials and techniques have been introduced, such as finecut hooking which uses finer shading accomplished by overdyeing wool in swatches in gradations of colour.

Rachel Miller, who started rug hooking 14 years ago, exhibits an

RICE

infectious enthusiasm for her craft. Currently the president of the Georgian Bay Guild, she discovered the craft while trailer camping in Tobermory with her family. A friend was sitting on the beach hooking and – pardon the pun – Rachel was immediately hooked.

Rachel eagerly displays some of her finished work, a dozen pieces of varying sizes, shapes, designs and functions which represent less than a third of her output to date. She purchases some of her patterns: examples would be Aztec designs or those created by William Morris, a renowned English wallpaper designer, or quilt designs such as the famous log cabin. There's also the beautiful rug with a Celtic design shaped like



Rugs hooked by by Rachel Miller. The one above is a William Morris design called Strawberry Thief



"The Homestead." A Bluenose pattern from Nova Scotia hooked and prodded by Mary Janet Mustard in 2010. and now hangs in her cabin.

Photographs by Mary Janet Mustard

the letter "R". Other rugs Rachel designs herself – these often involve dogs or cats like the one she did to honour her own kitty Bob! Many of the "rugs" are wall hangings or pillow cases. To my amazement, Rachel has never sold a piece although she's done many rugs – on request – for family and friends.

Every two years in the spring, the Georgian Bay Guild organizes a rug hooking show at Lee Manor where Grey and southern Bruce guilds display their work. This year, Mary-Janet Mustard was honoured for her contribution to the craft.

Mary Janet started rug hooking in 1972 when Nora Campbell agreed to teach the little craft group in Massie. Since then MJ has been totally immersed in the craft, first joining the Georgian Bay Branch of the Ontario Hooking Craft Guild, then starting a group called the Country Rug Hookers of which she is still a member. In the early 1980's she had a small rug hooking supply business called Log Cabin Colours. In 1998 the directors of the rug school in Peterborough resigned and Mary Janet and two friends took it over under the name Trent School of Rug Hooking – she's still there 13 years later.

Mary Janet uses a lot of recycled wool, especially old blankets which she's been known to strip off spare beds when nothing else was at hand. She enjoys the dyeing as much as the hooking. No doubt she inherited her love of the craft from her grandmother who bequeathed two rugs to Mary Janet which she cherishes.



"Last Ride Before Bed" designed by Shelby Atkinson and hooked by Mary Janet Mustard for her grandson Daniel Mustard in 2010.

Every year Mary Janet attends the Chantry Rug School in Southampton and travels further afield – Ohio, New York and Massachusetts – to attend workshops whenever she can. She passes on what she's learned to anyone else who's keen at her Hookin at the Cabin gatherings at her log cabin on Strathaven Road. This year it will be on Wednesday, July 20th from 10am onward. Call Mary Janet at 519-794-2216 or e-mail her at mjmrughkr.gmail.com.

Few young people are showing an interest in this venerable old art even though the annual province-wide gathering brings together "hookers" (predominantly women and certainly not lacking a sense of humour!) for a lively, informative weekend. One year the event was held in Stratford and the participants were delighted to receive a guided tour of the costume department at the Stratford Festival.

Many elderly women still hook rugs though, including an 83-year-old friend of Rachel's. Certainly Mary Janet shows no signs of slowing down and, by the look of her rugs and her blush of enthusiasm, I'm willing to bet that Rachel will be hooking well into her 80's as well.

# In Memoriam James Harvey Taylor 1924 - 2011



"I've had a good life," Jim Taylor told us more than once! Judging by the stories his family and friends tell about him, it was an interesting life as well.

Jim grew up on the family farm on Veterans Road (then the Sixth Line) but took time out for a short stint with the Canadian Air Force, an apprenticeship in clock repair with DC Taylor and marriage to Margaret Tottenham. When he took over the farm, his mechanical aptitude and thrifty values served him in good stead. He never threw away tools saying, famously, "That may come in handy someday."

His nephew Larry Keeling referred to Jim as a genius: "There wasn't anything that man couldn't fix – tractors, manure spreaders, bicycles, thrashing machines, cars..." Jim had an old Edsel with its own set of challenges. He was always fixing something on it, but then it seemed that he was the only one who could figure out what was wrong with it!

Jim was methodical in his approach. When Larry and his cousin, Danny, Jim's son, couldn't get the

cars to start so they could chase each other around the orchard, Jim would patiently rhyme off all the possible reasons, "Did you check the spark plugs, terminals, battery...?" and invariably an answer would emerge.

The Reverend Dr. Brad Clark, Jim's nephew-in-law, referred to him in his eulogy as "a country philosopher". Lynne Taylor offered examples of her father-in-law's nuggets of wisdom: "You should never be in a hurry to make a decision...or do anything." "Maintain a positive attitude." "Take pride in your community." (Wasn't Massie lucky to have him?) "Pass on stories to your kids and grandkids." (And your in-laws!) "Laugh a lot and cry a little." At his funeral, in packed Massie United Church, there were more than a few tears but much laughter too.



# John Miecznikowski at the McMaster Museum May 21 - August 20 2011

The McMaster Museum of Art in Hamilton is presenting a survey exhibition of sculpture, drawing, and painting by Massie's own John Miecznikowski. The exhibition includes more than 60 works from private and public collections.

Miecznikowski appears to follow the tenet of the 16th century Baroque sculptor Cellini who once wrote "I say that the art of sculpture is eight times as great as any other art based on drawing, because a statue has eight views and they must all be equally well made". Sculpture that is actually considered in the round is clearly expressed in Miecznikowski's artBut, more than that, Miecznikowski is able to capture the very essence of his subject, and it is this precise ability, more than any other aspect of Miecznikowski's art, that makes these works of art fresh and innovative.

#### Bridget Reeves

John, who has lived on Veterans Road since 1980, has had exhibitions of his work throughout Ontario, in Newfoundland and the United States. Out of his home studio he fashions exquisite bronze sculptures, portrait drawings and landscapes. John has produced numerous private and public portrait sculpture commissions, for the Banting Centre in London, Ontario, City Square in Guelph, the National Research Council, National Sports Association and McMaster University.

#### **Bringing Butterflies Back to Massie**

by Renie Fedun



Monarch sipping nectar from Swamp Milkweed flower

Photograph by Carol L. Edwards

The young folk wouldn't know any better but us old-timers (okay, middle-agers) remember the days when Monarchs were plentiful and we'd see lots of other butterflies too (Mourning Cloaks, Black Swallowtails, Viceroys....). Connie Neelands remembers when she and her siblings would walk to school along the country road and see butterflies congregating in puddles. The kids would run up to them so that they'd take flight, a flurry of colourful wings.

Where have all the butterflies gone? There are many reasons for their decline: extreme weather and deforestation in Monarch wintering grounds in Mexico, habitat loss and pesticide use are the main factors.

Many butterflies, in their larval stage, are food specialists and the

Monarch is the classic example of this. The larva or caterpillar is an eating machine (like all babies!) but the only thing it can eat are the leaves of milkweeds. This plant – not loved by farmers – has a chemical defence system that protects it from a variety of predators. However, Monarchs have co-evolved mechanisms that overcome the plant's defences and enable them to obtain the nutrients they need. Essentially, no milkweeds, no Monarchs.

The good news is that we have different species of milkweeds to choose from; some are quite showy like Swamp Milkweed with its large pink, landing-pad flowers. Many would suggest that Swamp Milkweeds are prettier than the Common Milkweed we see in ditches and fields. The other advantage, as far as butterfly caterpillars are concerned, is that the leaves are smaller

and more numerous – more to munch on. Don't be concerned about this. If you grow a variety of plants (and several of each species) the damage to the plants will be minimal – you may not even notice it. All this to say, Swamp Milkweeds make a gorgeous addition to our gardens and, despite their name, they require no special habitat: they will do well in regular garden soil and full or even partial sun.

Many sun-loving native plants provide nectar and breeding sites for different species of butterflies (and adult Monarchs will feed on these plants too!). Choose from many species of Asters, Black-eyed Susan, Joe-Pye-Weed, the rich red Beebalm and its relative the pale mauve Wild Bergamot, Turtlehead, Pearly Everlasting and Goldenrods. Despite common belief, Goldenrods are not usually allergy-

inducing, and there are many species much better behaved than the invasive Canada Goldenrod!

Don't forget trees and shrubs, especially Willows, Birches, Poplars and Dogwoods. We live in a richly treed area – if you don't count the huge fields and vast lawns. And we plant trees in our yards. But many of the non-native trees sold at nurseries have leaves that are unpalatable to butterflies and other pollinating insects. "That's why we planted them," you may say. Maintaining flawless vegetation is all fine and dandy except that natural habitat around the world is shrinking and, as a result, we're rapidly losing our beautiful pollinators. They are finding it harder and harder to survive. Wouldn't you love to help repopulate our county with butterflies?

Other things you can do: Leave some bare earth in your yard – when it fills with rainwater butterflies will congregate around these mud puddles searching for water and nutrients.

Since the province of Ontario banned the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes a couple of years ago the butterflies are happier, and soon more numerous, we hope. Please consider minimizing the use of chemical fertilizers or avoiding them altogether in favour of compost, manure and other natural amendments.

Finally, don't be so zealous in your fall cleanup – leave branches and leaves on flowerbeds or large corners of your yard. The pupae of the gorgeous Mourning Cloak, and many native (non-stinging) bees and other pollinators, overwinter in garden debris.

If we all did something just for the butterflies what a difference it would make. Here's Ed Neelands' offering: "I am 'cultivating' a small growth of milkweed in the road ditch at the bottom of my hill on the Massie Road. I do miss the Monarchs." Don't we all?

### **Protecting Birds**



Male Bobolink

Photograph by Connie Miller

Here in Massie we are very fortunate to have Bobolinks nesting in our fields since the species is becoming increasingly rare – in fact, it has been designated as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Species (COSEWIC). Under the province's Endangered Species Act, the nests and habitats of this bird are now protected. Identifying the locations of nests in hayfields and scrubland and making an effort to

avoid them would be very much appreciated. Ed Neelands has a good approach: "I will often cut around a nest that I see in the hayfields and leave the nest undamaged. I remember my Dad always doing this."

Barn Swallows and Eastern Meadowlarks, another grassland species, are also declining in numbers and have likewise been designated as Threatened by COSEWIC.

#### On Massie Pond



David Wells and Preslee Neelands demonstrate the finer points of Standup Paddleboarding.

Photograph by Rocky Neelands

# **New Lighting Installed for Massie Sign**



Photograph by Connie Miller



Digging the ditch for the electrical cable for the new lighting system from left to right: Mackenzie Miller, Alex Mustard, Bruce MacDonald, David Wells, Matt Martin and Glen Martin. It was a big job but somebody had to do it!



Photographs by Ralph Bergman

# Yard Work Day a Success

Many thanks to all the residents who came out to help clean up the church and hall grounds and inside the buildings. It was a beautiful day, the company was excellent and so was the food. And lots got done too! Thank you!



# **Dedication of McPherson Stained Glass Window**

The new stained glass window in Massie United Church was dedicated at a special service on May 15, 2011. This beautiful window was presented in remembrance of Clarence and Jean McPherson by daughters Beth and Leone, families, and friends. It features a white dove with an olive leaf in its mouth and the background is blue to represent the sky. Taking part in the service were Ed Neelands, Clerk of Session, Beth Boyes and Leone Diebel who told of their parents' work in the Church and community, as well as Pastor Melinda Cornfield. Present at this dedication service were five of Clarence and Jean's grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and several other relatives and friends, one of whom was Jean's brother, Robert Hewitson, who is over 90 years of age.

#### "Live @ Massie Hall" Coffeehouse 2011

#### Kevin Moyse with Justine Maw-Farrar Saturday July 16th, 8 pm Doors open at 7:30 pm



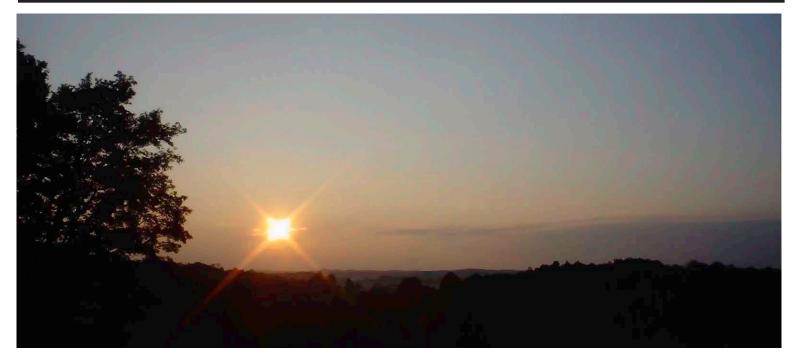
Local songwriter Kevin Moyse (The Lounge Lizards, The Shards), with singer Justine Maw-Farrar, performs a series of songs he has researched and written about the shipping traditions on Georgian Bay- the people, the ships, the tragedies.

A full evening multi- media performance featuring live original music and songs, video and slide show, costumes, stories.

#### Trevor MacKenzie and Alfie Smith

with very special guests Tara MacKenzie and Nicole Christian
Saturday September 10th, 8 pm

Massie Sings He Blues



Photograph by Ralph Bergman

- July 16 8pm Songs of Georgian Bay Music by Kevin Moyse with Justine Maw-Farrar followed by a 50-minute multi-media presentation including live songs about Georgian Bay Shipwrecks. \$16 per person. Massie Hall .Contact Pete Miller @ petemkit@xplornet.com or call 519-794-3652
- July 10 11:15pm Massie Church Service @ Mary Janet Mustard's cabin. Potluck lunch bring your lawn chairs All welcome
- July 20 10am onwards Hookin at the Cabin rughooking at Mary Janet's cabin on Strathaven Road all welcome call 794-2216 for details.
- 3pm Massie Hall Fish Fry

  Music by Rainbow Country Way on the outdoor stage from 3-7pm, Food 5-7pm. Reserved tickets only, \$13 call Jerry or Lisa @519-370-2050. Bring your own lawn chairs
- 8pm Massie Hall Sings the Blues Massie Hall Coffeehouse with Trevor Mackenzie, Alfie Smith, Tara Mackenzie, and Nicole Christian. Contact Pete Miller @ petemkit@xplornet.com or call 519-794-3652
- Oct 2

  11am Massie United Church's Anniversary Celebrating 143 years of worship in Massie and 116 years of worship in our "new" church Guest Minister Rev. Ted Creen from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Owen Sound Lunch & fellowship following the service All Welcome!

#### **Editorial Board**

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