



# TIDINGS

Volume 20, Issue 3

July 1, 2019

## The President's Pen

by Vicki Cartos

**GOURD WEAVING**  
With Debbie Wilson  
Visiting Teacher



Have you ever heard of this expression: "out of one's gourd"? Here is an example: If you think that I can weave that basket in just eight hours, you must be *out of your gourd*. From the context of that example, you realize that "out of one's gourd" means "crazy." TBG members will soon have an opportunity

to weave on gourds which I promise will NOT make you go "out of your gourd."

**Debbie Wilson**, an accomplished gourd weaver, will be coming to First Christian Church in Hampton on Friday and Saturday, July 26 and 27, to teach her four "gourdgeous" designs which are pictured throughout this article. This design is a colorful overprint with a coiled rim which currently happens to have the most signups. By the way, her husband accompanying her as they celebrating their wedding anniversary at this same



will be  
will be  
time.

Debbie was most gracious allowing me to interview over the phone back in May. We had a wonderfully pleasant conversation which not only included her personal information and love of gourd weaving but also some historical data about gourds in general. After talking with Debbie, I was inspired to do a little gourd research. In this article I want to share Debbie's story from our phone conversation as well as some information I learned from my research.

### Interesting Gourd Facts

The gourd is a fleshy fruit with a hard skin that comes from the same family as the melon, squash, and pumpkin. It is believed that gourds originated in Asia and were eventually grown in Africa, Polynesia, and the Americas. Today in the USA, it is not a popular fruit for eating because of its unappetizing, bitter taste.

The common gourds which we are familiar with are the soft-shell, ornamental ones that we see during the autumn season that are used for decorations. Contrarily, the hard-shell gourds can be dried and can last forever because the skin becomes like a soft wood. It is this type of gourd that has functional uses as containers, tools, musical instruments, masks, toys, artwork, and craft decorations.

Debbie told me that gourd use has been around long before basket use. Indeed, archaeological digs have discovered evidence of gourd use as far back as 13,000 BC. Whoa! It is believed to be the earliest plant domesticated by man. Debbie stated that gourds were used as storage vessels to hold water, food, seed, and oil. They were used as handy bowls and canteens. The inside of the luffa gourd was used as a sponge to exfoliate the skin.

The **maraca** is perhaps the most recognizable musical instrument to be created from the hard-shell gourd. It is a dried out gourd in which seeds are placed to strike the hard shell thereby making a percussive noise.



In Western cultures the most popular use of gourds is for decorative purposes. Gourds are painted, stained, carved, sculpted, and etched to create beautiful works of art. Perhaps you have seen a decorative birdhouse made from a gourd.

### Gourd Decorating with Debbie Wilson

Debbie Wilson is a southern lady from South Carolina and a retired art teacher. She enjoys quilting, woodworking, and basket weaving, but possesses a special passion for gourd weaving.

(continued on page 2)

When her family moved to Greenville, South Carolina, she participated in an open weave with a local guild; and, behold, another lover of basket weaving was born. Since that day, she has been a self-taught basket weaver for the past 20 years.

Roughly 18 years ago, Debbie attended a guild class on gourd weaving and was hooked. Her gourd weaving has evolved to include her love of natural materials such as pine needles, various grasses including sweetgrass, honeysuckle, and grapevine. To give the gourd a sculptural quality, Debbie likes to add coiling. If you sign up for Debbie's "Black and White Affair" gourd, you will be twining with round reed, coiling, and creating "slots" for accommodating the flat reed.



Debbie obtains the gourds primarily from a gourd farm in South Carolina. These gourds sit in a field for about a year before they are harvested. She completes a curing process which includes washing dirt off surface, cutting to eliminate seeds, and



cleaning/sealing the inside. After drying, Debbie may have to drill holes, sand, dye, or paint the hard-shell surfaces to ready them for our classes. All of Debbie's preparation allows us to create her amazing designs such as this gourd with tortoise shell, cane, and wrapped handle which you may choose to weave in July.

Creating sculptural using mixed media particular favorites Debbie's. This gourd can be coiled paper fibers such or Danish cord. Consider signing up for this splendid "stamp doodle and coil" piece.



pieces are of woven with as rush

Debbie's love of gourd weaving is evident in her designs, and she shares that love as she travels the south teaching classes and attending gourd weaving events. The Gourd Gathering at Cherokee in Cherokee, North Carolina, is an event she chooses not to miss. Notice that she is already excited about next year's gathering!



On July 26 and 27 at First Christian Church, Debbie will be teaching the four woven gourds that are depicted in this article. Please consider adding this type of weaving piece to your collection. To sign up, contact Tina Plageman at [witchie24@mchsi.com](mailto:witchie24@mchsi.com).

Internet References Used:

*What Are Gourds?* by Brendan McGuigan.

*History of Gourds* by Cyndee Newick.

*Gourd*, [Wikipedia](#).

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## Vice Presidents Corner- Tina Plageman

Hello Weavers!

Where is the time going!! Can you believe it's well in to summertime already!! With the warmer weather, it seems like our lives get busy with gardening, yard work, vacations, outdoor activities, etc. and we seem to put weaving on the back burner.

Looking back on the last few months, at the April meeting, we had Rami McKinney teach us how to decorate basket handles with a Butterfly Knot. This was done on a paint stick so that we may save it for future reference.

On April 13th, our spring Open to the Public class was held at LUMC in Norfolk. Sherral Nelson and Diane Short had 9 first time weavers in the class!! Our next OTP will be in October.

At our monthly meeting on May 5th, our guild member, Kristy Engel, set up a beautiful display of her white oak baskets. She shared information on how she harvests the materials and how she creates her baskets. Thank you, Kristy!! It was enjoyed by everyone!!

The Beginners' Weaving Project began at the May meeting with 3 new weavers. We also passed out the bags for the Mystery Baskets. It sure looks like the 11 participants are on their way with a bag of 10 weaving items, six of which were to be used in the basket.

Our class that was scheduled on May 18th with Marcy Murphy teaching waxed linen and Tina Plageman's Caddy class was canceled due to a church commitment.

Our June meeting was a fun one!! Our Mystery Baskets were revealed! Oh, the interesting things that they found in those bags!! Some members really had to put their minds to work, but I can tell you.....the finished baskets were AMAZING! Thank you to everyone who participated and made this a fun first-time activity. I hope we can do it again!! Rami McKinney taught 14 members a wall hanging Sand Pail basket. The sand dollars and star fish added a cute finishing touch! Check out our website for upcoming classes and events!!

*Tina*

### WHITE OAK WEAVING

During this past May's meeting, I was so happy to be able to share my baskets, my process, and a little bit about my story with the members of TBG. Since joining TBG I am constantly surprised at the paradox between how traditional and unusual my basketmaking journey has been. I earned a living making baskets for roughly a decade, and yet so much of the terminology tossed around by fellow weavers is foreign to me. I can turn an oak tree into splits, but GW 2019 was the first time I had ever used a pattern, or wove a basket using reed!

I have been making hand split white oak baskets for roughly 13 years. I learned this traditional craft while working as a basket maker at Colonial Williamsburg. For over 50 years there, the knowledge was handed down from one individual to another just as it had been for hundreds of years in rural areas from one family member to another. My apprenticeship was all hands-on learning and repetition, with the focus being strictly on reproducing the historically correct forms. With the termination of the basket program in 2017, I began making baskets on my own. While I enjoy the new freedom of creativity in form and design, the simple sturdiness of my white oak baskets is what I love most about them.

Each basket I produce begins with a walk in the woods to find the perfect white oak tree. Since I don't own my own forested land, this step for me is the most challenging one in the entire process. Once I find someone willing to let me cut, I have to find a usable tree. What's usable? It must be white oak, between about 6-8 inches in diameter, free of major blemishes knots and bug damage, and as straight grained as possible. I cut at the base of the trunk and just below the first major branch.

While the log is still green, I need to split it into material. I start with a series of wedges and a large wooden maul and split the log down its length in half...then each half gets split in half...then each quarter gets split in half...etc. The heart wood (center) of the tree I will split out and save for handles and rims. The sap wood (outer) I continue to split. I switch to a knife and put it parallel to the growth rings to start the split and use my hands to continue it down the length. I can split to one growth rings thickness, and will scrape the splits under my knife if I need them any thinner.

Once the material is split, it needs to dry for a day or so to let it do any shrinking. I have recently been playing with some natural dyes, but usually I just enjoy the variety of natural color variations in the white oak. Weaving is done dry, with

no need to ever soak it to make it flexible. I don't use molds and many of my baskets tell me as I weave what shape they want to be. The handles and rims are bent into shape (still no need to soak). After a few days of being held in the desired shape, they will stay and can be attached to the basket. The final result is a sturdy unique basket. How long does it take from tree to basket? Your guess is as good as mine. There are too many variables and each tree and basket have their own personality. The white oak makes you work for it...but I think that's why I love it so much.

### *Kristy Engel*



**Guilders' Weave 2020****Weaving...  
For the  of it!!**

The last few months have been filled with ideas, suggestions, scratch pads, scribbles, etc. It's now getting REAL!! Teacher submissions started coming in May 30th. We received 34 teachers' proposals and had to cut that almost in half. Some tough decisions were made by the jurying committee on Friday, June 14th and I think you will be very happy with the classes that were selected for you. Thank you to Wendy Holcombe, Susie Waters, Shirley Murphy and Sherry Matthews for helping me in the decision making. Be looking for the GW 2020 info to be published around the beginning of August.

We need your help. Please consider helping us in any of the following ways:

**WE NEED GIFT CARDS!!**

Our theme basket will be "I love..." and we need your help! If you would be willing to purchase a gift card in any amount, from any place and donate it for our Guild Basket, please let Shirley Murphy or Tina Plageman know (or give it to them at the next meeting/activity). Maybe you have received one for a gift and will not use it.... we will take it!! Restaurants, craft stores, movies, Amazon, Ebay, Visa cards, home improvement...we would **LOVE** it.

**BASKETS, BASKETS, BASKETS....**

Would you like to weave up a small basket, one that will fit in your hand (4-6") and donate. This is a great way to use up scraps!! If you weave it, we will take it!!

Do you like to weave with paper? Seagrass? Waxed linen? Round reed? Pine needles? Cane? We are looking for a big variety of baskets. What we are doing with them will be a surprise that we think you will "love"!

**CLEANING OUT??**

Do you have any supplies that you don't think you will ever use! We will use them for door prizes! Who doesn't like to have their name called and get a "mystery bag"!!

We can't make this Guilders' Weave happen without your help!!

Tina 

**Drum Roll Please!**

Teachers for Guilders Weave 2020 are:

Greg Barco, Jan Beyma, Anne Bowers, Pati English, Gail Hutchinson, Carolyn Kemp, Jean Koon, Annetta Kraayeveld, Karen Maugans, Barbara McCormick, Rami McKinney, Mary Normand, Judith Saunders, Linda Scherz, Elaine Sinclair, Joyce Smith, Polly Adams Sutton, Eric Taylor, Jamie VanOekel, Bill & Charlene White, and Pam Wilson.

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**FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The nominating committee has been tasked with gathering nominations for the office of President and Secretary. Each office has a two-year term. The nominating committee consists of Sandy Doyle ([sandydoyle73@gmail.com](mailto:sandydoyle73@gmail.com)), Pam Crosson ([MCROSSON@cox.net](mailto:MCROSSON@cox.net)), and Shannon Lovvorn ([ultrablueretired@msn.com](mailto:ultrablueretired@msn.com)).

If there is someone you want to nominate for one of these two offices; please check with them first to confirm their interest and then share the name with one of those on the nominating committee. Our slate of officers will be finalized at the August meeting. The slate will be posted after the August meeting. Voting will be conducted at the September meeting or by email to the committee if a member is not able to attend the meeting.

Our two incumbents: Vicki Cartos (President) and Marcy Murphy (Secretary) are willing to serve for another term. Nominations are always welcome.

If you would like to check the responsibilities of each office as you consider nominations; the presidential responsibilities are outlined in the policy manual online on pages 7 and 8, the secretaries' responsibilities are listed on page 10.

Sandy Doyle

**Visiting Teacher**

A special thank you to Susan Dirsa, who traveled from the Allentown, PA area to teach for two days on June 21 and 22. Guild members made beautiful twill tapestries on Friday.

On Saturday, a couple of members returned to join several others to make a round reed trash can and the Cross-Stitch tote.

FYI--Susan shared with us that she and her husband are the inventors of the ever-popular Lash Buddy! Her husband is a tool and dye guy and came up with the mold to cut the brass pieces and form them into that little tool we love so much. Susan threads the bead on to the colorful cord and ties it on to finish off the tool before hundreds of them are shipped to basket weaving supply companies all over the United States!! And....they are in the works of designing a smaller one for lashing with smaller reed or cane!!





**BIG SHOUT OUT TO CINDY STANTON!**

Thank you Cindy for ALL of your hard work on the website. You may have noticed the group emails are showing up in your inbox again. If you are not receiving the emails please contact Cindy at [webmaster@tidewaterbasketryguild.org](mailto:webmaster@tidewaterbasketryguild.org)

*PS... a little birdy told me she has been hard at work getting GW classes up on the website! Keep an eye out for updates.*

**Are you keeping up with Friends of TBG on FB?**

**Check out our FB page for great pictures of baskets and updates about TBG activities!**



**TBG OFFICERS/BOARD MEMBERS  
2017-2018**

- President..... Vicki Cartos
- Vice President..... Tina Plageman
- Secretary.....Marcy Murphy
- Treasurer ..... Shirley Murphy
- Membership ..... Wendy Holcombe
- Historian.....Sybil Magrill/Jamie VanOekel
- Communications ..... Christy Newman
- Refreshments..... Shannon Lovvorn
- Webmaster.....Cindy Stanton
- Open to the Public .....Sherral Nelson
- Open to the Public ..... Diane Short
- Guilders Weave 2020 ..... Tina Plageman

**TBG Membership News**

*Have you paid your dues?*

Because we are updating the notebook, we also ask that you **print a membership form** and send it in with your \$20. This can be found on the TBG website under the CONTACT US tab. If you're not sure please contact Wendy.

**The new year will begin October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.**

Wendy Holcomb is our membership chair.

Mail it in to:

TBG  
P.O. Box 55133  
Norfolk, VA. 23505  
Attn: Membership

*Tiding's is posted quarterly*

<u>Deadline Dates</u>	<u>Publication Dates</u>
December 15	January 01
March 15	April 01
June 15	July 01
September 15	October 01

Any news, corrections, comments, suggestions, ideas, or photos should be sent by the designated deadline dates. If you have any articles please forward them to [bchcrzn@yahoo.com](mailto:bchcrzn@yahoo.com) Thank you!

Christy Newman  
Newsletter Editor

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