

Sarah Fletcher

Where: Ben's Old Loom Barn

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Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

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Sarah Fletcher (b. Canaan Valley) is a weaver, retired nurse, and the owner of Ben's Old Loom Barn in Davis, WV. She is the daughter of Barbra Dorothy Mayor Thompson (August 5, 1920-October 1, 2008), a weaver and National Heritage Fellow who learned to weave at the Arthurdale Homestead.

Learn more about Ben's Old Loom Barn: <https://www.facebook.com/bensoldloombar/>

EH: Emily Hilliard

SF: Sarah Fletcher

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SF: She was one of those, you know during the Depression, Mrs. Roosevelt, they brought Mrs. Roosevelt--the story is, they brought the Friends--Quakers--brought Mrs. Roosevelt up to Scotts Run. You know where Scotts Run is?

EH: Yeah. Mmhm.

SF: And she went back to Washington and told Franklin they've got to do something, and said they want a homestead! So that's what they developed the homestead program.

EH: Yeah, I interviewed a few who grew up in Scotts Run, a Black woman, Sarah Boyd Little. Okay. So could you introduce yourself and tell me who you are and where we are right now?

SF: Okay, well I'm Sarah Fletcher. Excuse me [phone quacks] my timer went off. Okay. I'm Sarah Fletcher. I am a daughter of Dorothy Thompson who was a well-known local weaver who came from Arthurdale and grew up in Arthurdale and learned weaving and she married a farmer here in Canaan and she came here to the farm, so I grew up on the farm knowing about farming and a little bit about weaving. And I'm the oldest daughter in the family and I chose to go be a professional, so I left in '61 to go to nursing school and then I worked as a nurse for a number of years and then I got interested back in weaving and started working for my mother some on weekends. And I was the weekend weaver and then when I retired I moved in with her and took over the management of the Loom Barn [Ben's Old Loom Barn outside Davis, WV].

EH: Could you tell me a little more about her and how she learned?

SF: My mother is Dorothy Thompson. Well actually she was Barbra Dorothy Mayor from Arthurdale. The Mayor family were among the first pioneers that came in the first wave into Arthurdale in 1935. Mrs. Roosevelt had started that homestead community with after interviewing the people at Scotts Run who told them that they would like a place where they could grow their food and call their own. So they developed the homestead concept and on that most of the homesteads had 1-2 acres. They had a house that was built--a solid house--with hot and cold running water, a bathtub, a coal furnace. And my mom said it was just heaven. We went to heaven when we moved in there. And then they had a community center and they taught a lot of programs through the community center. That's when my father got there to teach agriculture, 'cause he had a college degree in agriculture and they asked him to teach agriculture through the National Youth Administration. So they met in Arthurdale. Got married in '42 and she moved to the farm and then eventually she brought her looms from her father Alex Mayor was a cabinetmaker and he could make looms, and he could forge. So he did a lot of woodwork. And they brought, he brought the looms and I grew up with looms in the house. And yes I learned to weave, but I wasn't always that interested when I was young. But as I got older I developed an appreciation for it. Then about the mid--what was the mid-80s, I decided that I wanted to get back in weaving and so I started working with my mother on the weekends when I was, I started to work at an agency and they laid us off to 4 days a week, so I had Friday, Saturday, and Sundays and I would come up here with a friend and we would weave with my mother and we learned more about weaving, 'cause she had this loom barn and she had a weaving school attached to the loom barn. So we were part of the weaving school. And then eventually over time, the number of students and everything decreased but some of us and I retired and I came back to live with her in the summer because I was still--in the fall--because I was still working until I retired. And then

when I retired I became the full time manager of the loom barn and working with her. And I was privileged to work with her until she passed away in August, no October of '08.

04:53

EH: How would you describe her (tape cuts out briefly)

SF: Well she actually was, as she said, we are traditional hand weavers. So when she in the school there, the vocational aspect of Arthurdale had a weaving program and actually her mother Rosemare (sp?) had an ability to weave so Mrs. Roosevelt arranged for Rose to go, I think it was to the John Campbell in North Carolina to learn. In fact to learn weaving, 'cause I found her notes and some scribblings from her when she went to school. My mother says she remembers her being away for a while. And she came back and she, they had a weaving room so Rose, Grandma Rosie ran the weaving room and of course then my mother had weaving in high school. That was part of the vocational program in the high school. And her mother taught her through the high school. Then Mrs. Roosevelt saw that my mother had a very natural ability so she arranged for her to go, to study with Lou Tate at the Little Loom House in Louisville, Kentucky, which is still there. It is still an active weaving consortium called the Little Loom House and it's up in Louisville and I visited it once in about 1988.

EH: Okay

SF: And so I know it exists and anyhow, so she went there and she was after high school, and she was learning weaving, and what happened, the war broke out. They declared war in '41 and she said nobody had any money. She didn't have any...she had a very thin stipend. She didn't say how much she got, but I take it it wasn't very much. And so she--I found a couple booklets where there are pictures of her doing weaving. And so she said she made enough money to buy a bus ticket and came back to Arthurdale and started weaving with her mother in the weaving room and that's when she met my father who was teaching there and they got married the next year in '42 and she came to Canaan Valley. Now this is Canaan Valley in the 1940s. They did have electricity. They didn't have much else! But it was a farm and anyhow, so she got pregnant and she went back to Arthurdale to have me and then my brother 18 months later because there was no doctor here. And the nearest hospital was in Elkins which is rather an arduous journey in those days. And so she did and then she also, her father loaded up the looms, now this is the story, on the top of his Model A! Would fasten 'em down and 'cause the looms were able to be taken apart. The looms that he made were very sturdy and you could take 'em apart and put 'em back together again. And so he brought the looms, he brought a big loom and a small loom and a warping reel, and that's what I grew up in a small house with. And then she expanded and got some other looms and in 1962, the Board of Education came to ask her if she would teach weaving to people. So my mother also, during the time though, that I was growing up, she made a lot of things--tablecloth sets, luncheon sets, they called them. She made bedspreads which are 3 pieces. She made a lot in what they call the overshot pattern-- [?] rose-- and she would sign them too, that she'd learn signing too when she was at Lou Tate's. And this is where you put the date and who wove it and what the pattern is and it's a pick-up technique that you put in the hem of the garment or the hem of the bedspread or something like that. And so she would do that. So I have a lot of her stuff which is dated with a pattern and when it was woven and everything. But she would make things for family and people would order things and then they wanted her to teach this Adult Education Program. And so she started and they had a 2-room schoolhouse here in Canaan Valley called the Cosner School. And they actually, they only used 1 room for 1-6 with one teacher. And I went there for my first 6 grades of school, and then went to town, town being Davis and then Thomas. Davis for Junior High and Thomas for High School. And I graduated in 1961 and left home.

In the meantime, she started this program at the schoolhouse and we have, I found a couple articles about the first programs where the ladies had to be interviewed, they had to take an aptitude test and she had about 7 people in her first class. And then some of them brought their own big fashion, what some people call barn looms or frame looms and they had only known, as my mother said, one way to weave because that's who had the loom, taught them how to weave. So she said, "I was able to expand their knowledge." And that's what she did. Of course she ordered looms and everything and she taught from 1962 clear through off and on until about 2000. But she had in the schoolhouse, but what happened was the schoolhouse was starting to fall down and of course the county Board of Education had abandoned it so it was getting pretty raunchy--I mean it was leaking, there was you know the, they couldn't weave in the wintertime 'cause they had coal stoves and it's very hard to keep a coal stove going 24 hours a day to keep yourself warm. So anyhow, they would close down in the wintertime, but anyhow, that was a very successful program and then she built, she and my father decided to build the Loom Barn and the Loom Barn was a one-room, I think she got, it was done very, it wasn't very elaborate--she didn't have an architect or anything like that. I think it was something they just drew out and they built and they had an upstairs to it and so she brought all her supplies and then she had looms in here and she taught weaving school through this for a number of years and that's actually where I was when I started working with her was here in the loom barn.

And we would come on Fridays and Saturdays. I lived in Elkins at that time. So then I retired in '99 from my job at a non-profit agency that worked with teens and parenting program. And so moved in with her and the lady who was managing the books and running the shop said it was my turn. And so she, I was able to take over the management. And over time I was able to expand it, excuse me (coughs) I get hoarse. And so about 2007 and 8, we started talking about expanding, that we really needed some more room. And actually I had looms in the basement, I had 2 looms in the basement of the house that they were fairly large looms and I said, you know, it would really be nice to get a lot together. And she had a lot of the school looms. So what I did was I sold some of the, I got permission, we got permission to take over the looms from the county Board of Education, that were marked, what their looms were and they said since we were taking care of 'em, we could have them. And I had a letter to prove it so, 'cause I sold several of 'em to kind of clear out the space and then was able to move in the looms. But we said we needed more space. So I got an architect to design an addition on the side of the barn and I wanted a porch because there was no porch and the door was right open to the Northeast and anytime it rained or snowed or it was, it really, especially with rain and Northeastern or something, the door was just like, it wasn't even a barrier. The water would just run in. (customer comes in)

EH: Yeah, do you want to pause?

SF: Yes.

EH: Okay.

SF: Okay, let me go check with her. Is that alright?

EH: Yeah, yeah no problem!

14:05

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SF: We were...I think when she started weaving school.

EH: Oh yeah, right.

SF: Okay. Well anyhow, to continue on, I'm not quite sure. Can you run that back a little bit, maybe I..

EH: I can't play it, yeah.

SF: Oh okay, well anyhow. Well I know, well I'm retired and moved in with her when I started managing the business and then we decided to expand and again I got the architect and I wanted the porch and everything and in the meantime my mother got very sick and she actually outlived all her siblings except for one, who was actually only 7 years older than me, her youngest sister who lives, is still living in Florida. But anyhow, she passed away at the age of 88. And she leaves a legacy I think and a lot of the people...I have 3 people in my shop besides myself who took lessons from her at one time when she was, in her weaving school. And so what I'm trying to do is expand a lot of that. I have a lot of her stuff and every now and then I take something out and sell it. And as I said, she and my father were both very community-oriented, they helped a lot with the community. We had a farm and actually my dad said nobody ever made any money farming up here until they started selling their land when we were discovered and when I left in 1961 to go to school in DC it was farms, and when I came back to live with my mother in '99 it was a destination resort.

EH: Yeah.

SF: And so, but we have you know, we have some good spots. Canaan Valley is very unique. I actually appreciate it more as I got older. When we were 18 we couldn't get out of her fast enough but then a lot of us retired and moved back and are still living here. Actually out of all the farm families there's only about 4 families left and we're second and third generation.

EH: Wow.

SF: But only one or two of us have anything to do with farming anymore. I kinda manage hay fields on some trust property that allows me still to use it as a farm, to qualify as a farm and sell the hay and my niece has part of the farm and she sells her hay and that's all we do. We don't do anything else. But in the meantime, with the expansion of the Loom Barn and then I changed the signs to a much better sign for the roads and so people found a way. I have done some of the modern social media things to get our name out. We're very known now and people do find us by different ways. Word of mouth is probably my best advertisement.

EH: So you had 2 women weaving here today. Are there regular weavers who come in here all the time?

SF: Yes, yes. Patty is a summer weaver. She comes from Alabama but she has looms in her house down in Alabama so she weaves in Alabama, but she is considered a summer person and she comes and she's always got a project or two that she weaves. Joanie Newpert (sp?) is my production weaver, I call her. She's got 4 looms that she works on here plus I think she has 4 looms in her house that she also works. She started out as a basket maker and took up weaving and my mother would always say, 'cause my mother would do baskets and teach, taught basketry in the early years at Augusta Heritage Days in Elkins, at Davis and Elkins College. But mom said if you can weave, you can make baskets. If you can make baskets, you can weave.

04:17

And she, as I said in the early years, she taught weaving there and then she and I went back in the 80s and taught a class together for Augusta. I think it was their 25th anniversary year. So we did a class together for weaving. And then I did one subsequently for the people in beginning weaving, but I decided that that was not my forte. I preferred being up here and retailing and having you know, the shop open for people. I found that was just a lot easier.

EH: Are there other people who come and weave here?

SF: Well I have Patty and then I have Joanie and then I have Val and then we do individual lessons. I do individuals. I've had several students through. I usually find that they need a chunk of commitment of time. I say, "Okay what do you want to do. This is what we can offer, but you gotta stick to it. You gotta finish your project. Especially on the loom. If you're gonna wind a warp and put it on there and you're gonna, you need to finish it." And most people to and some people go away and they really decide that that's what they want to get into and other people say, "I didn't realize there was so much work to it!" It looks so easy! Well, I said, yes it is easy. Of course we're more traditional and they have a very excellent teaching program at what they call Red Stone Glen up in Pennsylvania with Tom Knisely. So I recommend sometimes people, if they really want to expand, to go and take lessons with Mr. Knisely. He used to be at The Mannings which was a very well-known weaving center there right outside of Gettysburg, and they closed up because the owners wanted to retire and they closed their business. But Tom and his daughter bought this old mill in a place and then they have a retreat and a weaving center. And he is one of the nicest people you ever met and well-knowledgeable and very good. He's been recognized nationally as a teacher.

06:32

EH: So if you were starting someone out as a beginner, what loom would you start them on and what project?

SF: Well I usually ask them, I have a loom with has a warp on it and we make mug rugs--small pieces--and let them try that first to see if this is really what they want to get into and then we start, well usually they like to make a towel. Towels are very popular. We have the warp supplies and everything here and they usually plan a project. We have a Davison's book of Weaving Patterns, it's probably the Bible of weaving patterns and they can pick something in there if they want to study a technique and everything and I've had several people do that and complete a project. Or one girl I knew, she made family tartans--small scarves. She made tartan scarves for everybody. Took her 2 years. It literally took her 2 years but she did finally get her warp woven off. She says, I just don't think I'll be doing that again.

EH: (laughs) Was there a community that came out of Arthurdale of weavers?

SF: Well, some of the people, they do have weaving now back in Arthurdale. They have a heritage center and then through the heritage center, they were offering weaving. They have looms and things like that I understand, in one of the buildings, and they had hired AmeriCorps person who was teaching weaving. So that, you know, there are. We have a Weaver's Guild. We have a small group of weavers here. In Elkins there is the Mountain Weavers Guild which has been there for many years and I used to be with them, work with them and everything when I lived in Elkins. And they are still, they have a weaving center in one of the local churches. And they have their looms there and everything and they do a lot of weaving too. So there are spots of weaving in different places.

We get a magazine called Handwoven and it always has a lot of projects in it, which is another inspiration. You can go through that and think, "Oh I think I can make that." Or "Yeah, I'm gonna try that." Something like that. There is a couple meetings that we go to. We go to the Maryland Sheep and

Wool Festival and there you meet weavers. And you also have some, get access to a lot of beautiful threads. Especially in the yarns and the fiber yarns and everything. And then there's also a convergence which is a Hand weavers Guild of America every other year, it's always on the even years. And they meet in one of the cities. They alternate between coasts and I attended one convergence in D.C. for a day and a half and said I'm going back. And then another girl and I went all the way to Atlanta, Georgia and attended convergence there. And I took some classes there. It was real interesting. I learned something. It's, but you really almost get sensory overload with all the stuff that they have. But you know, they have looms, they have thread, they have everything there.

10:00

EH: Wow. Would you say there's a particular style, West Virginia style or local style?

SF: I would say probably. They're traditional, as I said, our girls make a lot of rag rugs, rag mats, which are placemats with rag and thread, both. Thread rugs. We have, we use a variety of things with that. We recycle things. I have a lot of stuff that's left over from when my mother had her weaving school and we're still dipping into and so you know, it's a particular style. We don't really go to--I would call designer pieces because we have a shop and we do sell. We sell, as I said, things for the home. Gifts and some souvenirs. Some stuff that could be considered souvenirs, but I find that most of the time people's looking for maybe a special gift and it seems the last couple years the girls seem to be concentrating more on scarves and then placemats and rugs. But towels, I call them towels of all different kinds, are very, very popular. You're not just having a plain hand towel, you have a hand towel that's in color or you have a hand towel that's got a real fancy design on the borders or things like that. But at the same time, I tell them, a lot of 'em are very practical. You can use 'em everyday if you want to!

EH: Right. And you said you have 20 people who sell here?

SF: 22

EH: Oh wow. So some of them don't work here, but they bring...

SF: Yeah, they bring their stuff in. Some of the girls are knitters and crocheters and that's what they do. And I take it on consignment and the...I also try to sell sometimes some local products and we have...we have maple syrup this year that was very popular 'cause the man that made it lives over on the one of the pieces of property that used to be part of our farm, and he's a young man and he said he wanted to tap my sugar maple trees. I said "Sure!" And he made very good maple syrup so I sold some through the shop. Because it was kinda cool the people said, oh yeah, it was just made in those trees right down the road there if you go down there and look. I've sometimes I've taken stuff and I'll be very honest, it just doesn't sell! But you know, we try. We try. And so you know, ironically sometimes people will come in and buy things that have been in the shop I know since 2000 when I first started, really started big into merchandising everything and all of a sudden somebody walks in and says "That's exactly what I'm looking for!" So you just never know. And plus the latest which is basically towels. Right now one of the girls has done scarves and stoles. She seems to be concentrating on that, but she makes excellent rugs and so sometimes she does rugs and things. And then another girl, she does placemats, she does afghans or throws, she makes rugs and she makes scarves and she makes towels and all the stuff sells!

13:41

EH: Did your mother have a particular style or something she was known for?

SF: Well, I was saying like the bedspreads, she would weave a lot of the bedspreads in what they called a Whig Rose pattern. And the way she developed the pattern, a bedspread is in 3 pieces. A coverlet, if you think of a coverlet, it's 2 pieces with a seam down the middle. It's very characteristic of that. And depending on the weaver, whether you can detect the seam or not, because sometimes they make the pattern so it stretches across that separation, she wove a Whig Rose--it was very hard to find the joins where the joins are though. She made, oh I don't know, I have 4 Whig Rose coverlets in different colors that she made and I have a couple in another pattern--I think it's called Star of Bethlehem that she made. And people say, well did she quilt? I say, yes she did quilt. She did a Tree of Life Applique, took her about 5 years, I think. And she pieced one other piece but you know, and she also made baskets, at one time. She did a lot of baskets. She also was great about recycling scraps. She made ways to use up waste and scraps and things like that. She took--my father got into making tops--spinning, wooden tops, so she took the tops and got doll faces and heads and things and made little things with the tops and so you know, and I have a lot of that stuff that she used, notions and things--I still have it.

EH: Are most of the women older? Do you see young people getting into it?

SF: Well, yes and... yes. Probably my average age of my weavers right now is probably in the 50s. But, but there have been a couple younger ones and one, one of our weavers said that she's got her granddaughter and her niece that just took up weaving so it is younger generation. It seems like some people come here and they're very interested in it, but they don't realize they have to invest a lot of time and effort into it.

EH: And is--I don't know the right word, but setting up your warp, is that the most time consuming part?

SF: The prep work, it probably is. And when you're planning a project like a weaving, like say you want to make a--my biggest project right now are making tartans. And tartans, we have an official tartan map, a huge thing that I have up on the wall in the shop. And people come in there and look at their tartan and say, "Can you make that?" And what I offer them is for a price, either scarves or throws. And I've made as many as 5 throws of one tartan. And it's basically putting it together, figuring it out. We're very fortunate on this map that they have the set of the colors. And then adapting it to the space and the size of the material that you want to make is probably the biggest thing is figuring it out. But we use, and we also use acrylic thread. Now some people would say, "Oh why don't you make 'em out of wool." I said, "Well yeah, but you couldn't afford it!" Because wool is very expensive, especially dyed wool. And to be spun in the colors, which are basically green, black, red, and blue, and white, are the basic...most of the tartans are made of those basic colors and that would be very expensive, whereas we use a quality acrylic thread and you can wash them, which is kind of easier.

EH: What do you like to weave the most?

SF: Um, my rugs. To be creative with my mug rugs. The small pieces like I've got right now, I'm using thrums. Thrums are the ends of a warp that people couldn't use and they're usually anywhere from 12 to 24 inches long. They're a lot of times when you end the warp on the loom, you have a waste space and so what do you do with all that? Well my mother was very thrifty. You never threw anything out. She usually used thrums to stuff stuff. She would make pillows and then stuff 'em full of thrums and things like that. So I like to be creative with mug rugs.

EH: And that's like a coaster?

SF: Or a coaster, people call them coasters. And towels! Towels are fun to make too. Or afghans, I'm fine with--and I like weaving the tartans. It is a challenge. It is a challenge, but I enjoy it. I'm known as the orders lady. I will take on an order and sometimes that order is a challenge. A couple times I've had to

finally throw in the, say, I can do this but it'll cost you a thousand dollars and they kinda think about that. I say it will, by the time, all the work I have to do to put into this project will cost you a thousand dollars. I'm not afraid to ask for money now. I have learned to ask. And that was something, 'cause my mom, she didn't want to raise her prices because she felt that you know, things would sell. And I'll be very honest, when I go other places and see the same kind of work for 100 and 200 dollars and we're selling it for 79 dollars or 75 dollars, I kinda say, we're not degrading it by selling it, it's just that we know our market here and we find that things will sell much more easier at a lesser price.

20:09

EH: What do you think about the continuation of the weaving community in West Virginia, or in this place?

SF: Well I have some contact with some of the people and there's always somebody, somehow. The Weaver's Guild has always managed to have people weave. Here, I have some weavers here, now I don't have any grandchildren or relatives who are interested in weaving, but I feel that maybe someday, somebody interested...I'm looking at some way, right now is to maybe find a way to preserve my museum that I live in and to also offer some kind of creative arts center. I have a house, well, I'll leave that out, because that's what we're thinking, thinking about. This is off the record. We're thinking about trying to look at a 501c3, something through either a tech or community foundation. 'Cause I don't want to be here 10 years from now, being responsible.

EH: Yeah, it's a lot of work.

SF: It's a lot of work! And I feel that you know, there might be other people who would like to do it. There's a possibility, and we have all these looms. But our looms are old! Well the one that's 150 years old and it still works! But I am fussing at my cousin right now. I told him, I said, if we don't get that thing done this year, I'm gonna go find somebody else to make that--it's the rower mechanism he has to make. He promised me he would do it this year.

22:00

EH: Let's see...I'm trying to think if there's anything else. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

SF: Well I think...(tape cuts out) My mother had created a unique program. And there are weavings, plus I am encouraged--I just had a call today from a man from (tape cuts) over in the Eastern Panhandle, who would like us to come and do an exhibit of our weaving and everything. And so I thought, well that's encouraging. And it would be up to the weavers if they want, if they can do it. We can do it. We worked very closely with the people from the Mountain Arts District to show how our stuff, you know, available out there, especially, I'm not very, what is it--social media savvy. I can do a little bit! But you know, I just don't feel I want to depend on that. And so we find that right now, word of mouth is our best market.

23:14

And plus I have all this stuff. When I go upstairs, I think "What am I gonna do with this?" We'll never weave it up. One of my ideas was to offer it to a mission group.

EH: When you do an exhibit, what sort of things do you display? Do you make special pieces?

SF: Well I try to include each of the person, whatever they specialize in, like towels and throws and then mug rugs--that's my thing--the towels and especially different kinds of towels. Some of the girls the

placemats, especially rag versus thread mats and different designs with that. I right now am fighting a fight with linen and I don't know who's winning--me or the linen! That's this thing.

EH: Oh, that's what you're working on right now?

SF: Yeah. It's linen and it's very grumpy and it breaks and I have 16 yards on there to weave off. (laughs) That's what I have left out of a warp of 20 yards.

EH: Wow. What is that for?

SF: I make towels. In fact, I saw one today, a proofing towel. They're linen tea towels.

EH: Ah, for making bread?

SF: Huh?

EH: For proofing bread dough?

SF: For proofing bread dough. 'Cause supposedly bread dough will not stick to linen as it does to cotton. Supposedly.

EH: I've never heard that!

SF: Well, I still tell 'em you have to dust it with flour.

EH: Oh yeah.

SF: You should not just plop it on there. But I understand that linen doesn't, it doesn't stick. Cotton, if you look at cotton under the microscope, it has, it has tiny little barbs, just like wool does.

EH: Right, right.

SF: And whereas, and it's short fibers, whereas cotton, the linen as this long fibers, see from the flax plant? But the neat thing about it, if you look at some of the old antique linen tablecloths and stuff and you look real close, you can see bits of chaff in there from where the linen was processed and you can still find little tiny bits of scat, of chaff, you know, like I call stock and things like that. And seeds, things like that in 'em if you know what you're looking for.

EH: Yeah. What else (tape cuts)

SF: Well, a tartan. I have a tartan warp on and unfortunately I have a partially torn rotator cuff in my arm from a kind of bad accident I had about a year ago. Almost 2 years ago. But I'm working through a PT program right now and he's giving me hope that I can strengthen it enough. And I work--I use, it's my right arm--so I use it 'til I get tired and then I go do something else for a while and then I'll go back to it. Yeah, any repetitive thing is very hard on it. But yeah, I get it, I tripped on a cement and went down and landed on my elbow like this and it was all black and blue. But I finally got an MRI done and he said that the head of my humerus is normally like this? Well mine is like this. And he said that. I said yes, it's probably from where I fell. And jammed it on the cement. I mean I went down hard on my elbow and could have been worse!

EH: Well, is there anything else you'd like to add?

SF: Of course I'll think of this later. I want to give credit to my weavers though. They're the one that makes the shop. I mean I can weave but I'm not a production weaver, so some of these girls are production weavers. And that's what my mother originally started the classes out for, the Board of Education people wants to give people a second income, and they did! As she said, they all came with these looms and they'd only been taught one way how to do something and she was able to expand their abilities and take those old looms and show 'em what else they could weave with those old looms besides rugs!

EH: Right, so they only knew how to do something basic?

SF: They only knew how to do one thing, which was rugs and that's what most people do. You know, people come in here and say, "Oh my granny made rugs."

EH: Yeah.

SF: How many times do your grandmothers make rugs? (laughs) How many rugs has a grandmother make?

EH: Do you think they were mostly rag rugs?

SF: Mostly rag rugs and recycled. My mom said you know, they never threw away anything! And now, I know my mom is cringing in her grave sometimes when the girls have these long pieces of thread and they throw 'em in the trash.

28:57

EH: (laughs)

SF: Dorothy would not like that one bit! Well, in her day, in her day, thread was expensive!

EH: Right, yeah.

SF: And you know, I try to keep a supply of different threads. In fact I have found--I have this warp thread that's called A2 Cotton that's right up here and we use that for the towels.

EH: Okay.

SF: And everything. And like Patty has A2 cotton on that. She's making spa towels--that's where you make the thick chenille and you make spa towels. So I found a source for that because the company that I always bought from, he retired! See we have, well there are thread men, they're called. And what they do is they go around and buy up seconds and different things, you know, lots of stuff and he did it for years up in Massachusetts and his name is Passa (sp?) and I got to know him and he has, I got some really good bargains on thread. Whereas you have companies like Great Northern and Yarn Barn and there's one, I can't think of, WEBS. They're in for profit. So their prices are much more. Now the neat thing about Yarn Barn and things, they put out kits where you can get a kit and you can make a project whereas you don't have to wind a warp. Or no, you do, or like a knitting project and things like that. But they also supply you know,

something, directions and things like that where you buy the yarn and everything and then they give you the directions what to put on a warp and stuff like that. So it's kinda interesting. But see here? These are napkins!

EH: Yeah, right.

SF: Look at the things. I know, I'm very familiar with Monk's Belt (?) and see there was their tea study on page 34. I think you know, as I said you really get things like that and you go places, you come home and you say, "Well I could do that!" But see? See the structure, a Basketful of Flowers, and they're twill and half basket weave, Achaff (sp?) loom, easy. The pearled cotton, I got loads of that stuff. I don't have to order their colors, I can use my own colors, and then just put it on and weave it up! Here's suggestions on how to do the threading on, this is on a 8 Harness which I have 2 8 Harness looms and I also have a 6 Harness. But you know, do that and here's one for bands of color and see I laugh because what they say, warp length: 5 and a half yards. We would triple that. You're not gonna make just one. You're gonna make several. And you want to do that, see? Delightful dinner napkins? Which way? As I say, these are done by a lot of people who, that's what their job is, to come up with designs.

EH: Right.

SF: And unique things. And see this, this is kinda neat. But I think the thing is, as I said, when I go places and you see the price tag on 'em, you think, are they really gonna sell that? Well now with credit cards...I have found that that does do a lot of the impulse buy. You're more likely to buy impulsively when you have a credit card. And I do it myself! I mean I'm just not the other people, but I do it too sometimes. But these things are so neat, but man, they're expensive! If you're really into making things. And see, these are beautiful scarves. And you can just, see this is, Iceland and these are, the designs, things. But when you go there, I mean that takes time! (leafs through pages of catalog) Mountains of I... see Martha makes the Icelandic knit sweaters and all the patterns are in her head. She's been a knitter for a long time.

EH: Wow.

SF: Her socks patterns are in her head. We got her to do a sock class one time! I did get the socks done, I got myself a pair of socks out of that. I scribbled my notes and I went back to look at 'em, they didn't make any sense. Nothing makes any sense! I don't think I could do it again, but you know, with her, I mean she never wanted to write anything down. She would tell us what to write down, but she never wrote anything down. See this is, there's just all kinds of things. Are you familiar weaving, have you tried weaving?

EH: No, I've only...I'm a knitter, but I haven't really tried weaving. But I would like to sometime.

SF: But see, you can do a lot of things in knitting too.

EH: Yeah, that's true.

SF: And I, I've made, I'm not, well, yeah I think I did sell a triangle stole I made. They said how'd you do it? I said, well you just start 3, knit on three and then it's knit one yarn over, knit to the end and the last 2 you do yarn over, knit the other one together and then you just each time, you do a yarn over and that increases it out this way until you get whatever you want to go.

EH: Yeah, not too bad!

SF: You can do that in the car.

EH: Yeah! That's right.

SF: I used to do that a lot. I've got a new thing now where I make these, I was making these, I bought this, oh what's that gal that was on Vanna White. She had Vanna White thread. You got it at Michaels or AC Moore's and it was with bling! And I would make scarves and they would be just one thing of scarf and it would be a lace knit which is knit one, yarn over, knit 2 together, all the way across. And you could do anything divisible by 3.

EH: Right.

SF: If you did 18 stitches, then you would have something about like this. And you could almost do it in your sleep...well, it's hard to watch TV and knit.

EH: Yeah.

SF: I know people that do that.

EH: Yeah, I used to do that. If it's easy I can do it.

SF: Well, the thing is too, I prefer to listen to CDs and things like that. When I was coming up in weaving with my mother back in the 90s, I used to bring, I had books on tape, and I put the tape in and weave! And people said, "How can you do that?" I said, "I have learned to compartmentalize."

EH: Yeah, right.

SF: The things, and you do it. Now this is interesting...

EH: Yeah, I read that actually.

SF: I do have a contact person for that. I have it on my iPhone and the contact person for that group. They would be really neat to...

EH: Yeah, I would love to.

SF: Because Lucy Quarrier was THE weaver. I think my mother was acquainted with her pretty well. And see, my mother also went to Ripley I know one time, and then Beatrice Bannerman

used to come to Augusta and she taught her expertise was dyeing--vegetable dyeing, different dyeing with different things. And she was pretty, she was interesting. She would step, she smoked. She would sit there with a cigarette hanging off her lip and talking. Well, it would be out in the open, thank goodness. That's all I got to say.

EH: Well, I should probably get going, but could I take your picture?

SF: Sure, sure.

EH: Thanks so much for your time.

SF: Do you want me sitting at a loom?

EH: Yeah, that would be great.

37:55

END OF TAPE
END OF INTERVIEW