

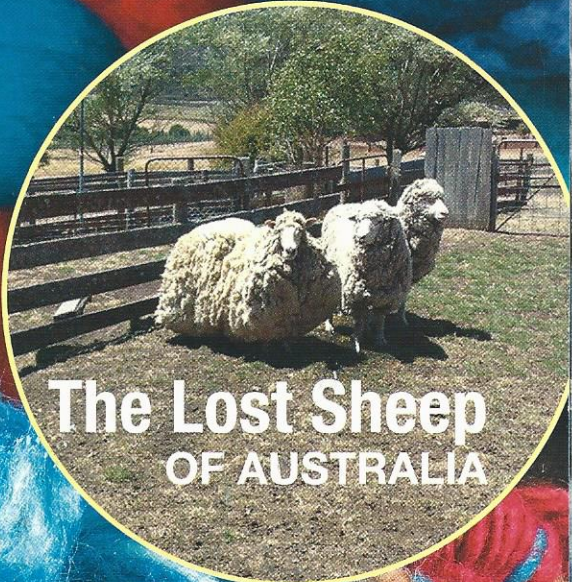
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Display until September 5, 2016

# I Am a Spinner:

## SUSAN LANGLEY

### Underwater Archaeologist

Susan Langley has been Maryland's State Underwater Archaeologist for twenty-two years and a scuba diver for more than forty. A scuba instructor, she provides Oxygen Provision and Emergency First Responder training. She is an adjunct professor at several colleges and universities. She has been a beekeeper for ten years and keeps the hive at the governor of Maryland's residence.

#### How did you get involved in fiber arts?

Although I managed the requisite knit/purl stitches in Girl Guides, I never quite earned the badge. I returned to fiber arts when working as an underwater archaeologist for Parks Canada in Red Bay, Labrador. The location was isolated, and the only other female diver and I decided we would learn from some of the local women to knit toques (stocking caps) and socks. They could not fathom why we preferred homespun from the general store rather than the polyester that they told us "wears like iron." I still use the handwritten notes from my local mentor whenever I face the terror of turning a heel.

#### When did you pick up spinning?

One can't really be an archaeologist without an abiding interest in history, and I found myself attending a lot of pioneer fairs. I had always found spinning



Susan communicating with a diver on an archaeology project.

wheels interesting, and at one fair, I decided I would like to try spinning. The demonstrator ran a shop and gave lessons, and the next thing I knew, I was enrolled at Olds College in a seven-year Master Spinner program. My doctorate took six years and I was determined not to spend longer on a hobby, so I completed it in five years.

#### How is spinning related to your professional life?

I give demonstrations at festivals but also lectures and workshops on fiber; spinning, dyeing, and their historical and archaeological contexts, sometimes in period dress but more often not. I inspect and analyze cordage, fibers, and fabrics from archaeological sites. During my vacations, I have traveled globally lecturing on fabrics, fibers, dyestuffs, and tools, as well as maritime archaeology, the history of piracy, and beekeeping through history. These travels have permitted me to teach how to spin camel down on a drop spindle in Turkey, where to see indigo dyeing in Senegal, how to find and wear a block-printed sari in India, and how to produce purple dye from logwood. I have been able to collect fiber and tools now fading from use as mechanization takes over or contact with cities increases. 🐝

Do you know someone whom we should feature in "I Am a Spinner?" We're especially interested in spinners with unusual careers, locations, and perspectives. Drop us a line at [spinoff@interweave.com](mailto:spinoff@interweave.com). If we use your suggestion, we'll send you a treat from our stash of fiber goodies!



Susan (left) with the former governor and first lady of Maryland, enjoying honey from her hives.