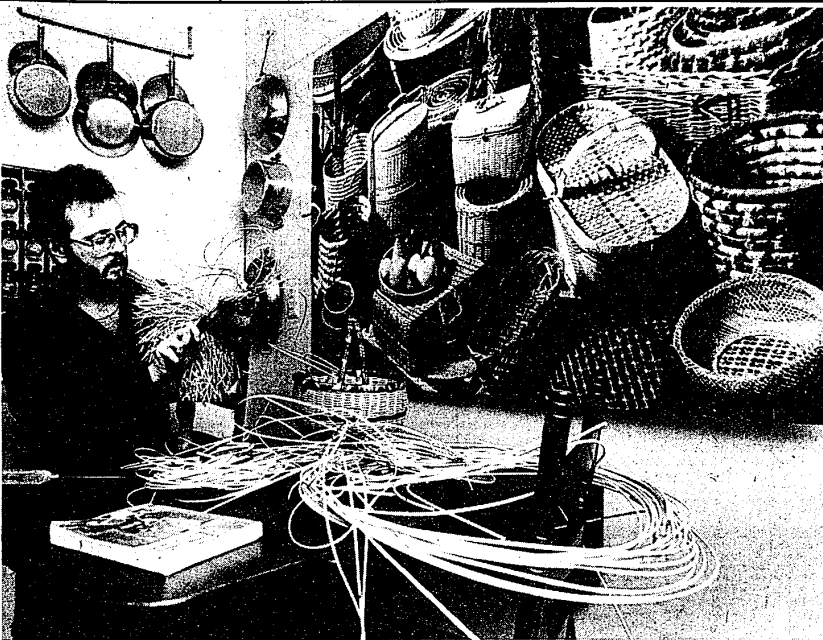




Surrounded by his tools, an awl, some fiber and wire cutters, Scott Smith works on a basket in his Southfield kitchen. (Staff photos by Randy Borst)



Scott Smith uses wire cutters to trim the leg of the ballet figure he is weaving.

Up from an easy college credit: Basketry comes of age

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

cent craft wove its magic when he was still in high school. After one course in which he fashioned a basket and a torso from fibers, he began searching for information on other techniques.

He passes on what he has learned about the craft in basketry classes on Thursdays at the Farmington Community Center. The afternoon session from 12:30-3 p.m. begins Jan. 24. The evening course from 7-9:30 p.m. starts Feb. 21.

In his classes and through his work, Scott illustrates that basketry is more complex than the public thought.

"IT'S MORE than functional," he explained. His first work proves his point. A spiraling shape with feathered ends

and tiered sides, its textured surfaces serve no other reason than to be looked at.

Different shapes and textures also are evident in the baskets he makes. Curlicues, heart shapes and ovals are incorporated into his baskets.

Even basic techniques can shape interesting basket forms, according to Smith.

His classes first learn basic methods of forming baskets. Weaving and twining techniques are covered.

"They're simple although the students in my classes wouldn't say that," he smiled.

A simple woven basket and another with a curlicued base are the class projects for novice basket weavers.

Outside of the classroom, Smith believes there is a need for quality and well constructed shapes in the craft.

"A good basket should be sturdy and strong. It has to fill a function," he said.

He makes his baskets using the time-honored tools of the craft, wire cutters, scissors and an awl. Once the basket or sculpture is fashioned, Smith may add a stain without a shellac. He frowns upon varnishing or putting a sealer on the basket fibers.

SEALING THE FIBER prevents it from breathing and eventually leads to deterioration of the basket. Treated baskets last about five years.

Putting shellac on a basket will cause the reeds to disintegrate. His un-

treated baskets should last about 50 years, he claims.

He prefers to work on large pieces rather than small delicate ones.

The small pieces can use fibers that are 2-3 feet long. Larger pieces are easier to handle and less tedious, according to Smith.

Each project serves as a learning and an artistic experience. He is weaving the form of a ballerina with a straw tutu.

The feet and head await completion until Smith can find a method to use in weaving them. So far, he's logged about 15 hours of work on the dancer compared to three hours it would take for a simple basket. More elaborate baskets require up to 240 hours of work.

In addition to basketry, Smith works

with soft sculpture in linen and jute. He worked for Greenfield Village as a broommaker and helped the village set up its 19th century basket making workshop.

He teaches classes in basketry at the village.

THE INTEREST the craft has drawn in recent years indicates to Smith that people are searching for a way to entertain themselves at home as a way to fight inflation.

There is a feeling that if you do it yourself, it's really a part of you," he added.

"Basketry is going to grow and grow. It won't become less popular like macramé. It will always be a popular craft."

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

IA ISN'T sure they'll ever replace those T-shirts that proclaim "Keep on Trucking" but the Gathering Place is selling shirts which advertise "Senior Power." (Heavens to Maggie Kuhn) Senior power advocates wearing the appropriate T-shirt will be at the Gathering Place March 12 for T-shirt day.

ARE YOU READY to swim into summer? If you're at least 17 years old and have a current senior or advanced lifesaving card, you are eligible to become a Red Cross certified water safety instructor. The Southeastern Michigan Chapter of the Red Cross will sponsor two free courses for the WSI rating. Students will learn how to organize swimming classes, teach various drill formations, analyze strokes and teach lifesaving skills. Beginning Jan. 29 a course will be conducted at the Berkley High School pool, 3325 Catalpa. The course will run until April 15 from 7-10 p.m. on Thursdays. To register call the Red Cross Bloomfield Hills Office, 334-3575.

UNCLE SAM'S out there again. He's making a list and checking it twice because it may be a month after Christmas for us but it's income tax time for Uncle S. Those seniors who need a little help with their taxes can receive two tickets to the program of their choice at the Fisher Theater. The winners will be announced the first week in March. Just jot down your unsung hero's name and deeds and send it to "Unsung Hero" Farmington Observer, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington, 48024.

HELP US sing the praises of an Unsung Hero (Heroine) by giving us the name of a Farmington or Farmington Hills resident or employee who deserves to be recognized. They could be one of those persons who sets an everyday heroic example or someone who has quietly helped others without fanfare. The staff of the Farmington Observer will choose the winner who will receive two tickets to the program of their choice at the Fisher Theater. The winners will be announced the first week in March. Just jot down your unsung hero's name and deeds and send it to "Unsung Hero" Farmington Observer, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington, 48024.

SO YOU SAY you would prefer to walk home rather than sit and breathe exhaust fumes during rush hour on Orchard Lake Road. You say you're tired of having bicyclists pass you while you wait for traffic to move on the road — and you're talking about 3-year-olds on Big Wheels. Well, cheer up. On-site construction work to widen Orchard Lake Road to five lanes could begin in the

spring. If it does, the road would be open to traffic by mid-November. The Oakland County Road Commission is trying to acquire nine more frontage parcels which are needed for the right-of-way. After the court decides on the nine condemnation suits to acquire the property, the way is opened to accept bids and get moving on the project. About 2.8 miles of Orchard Lake Road from north of Twelve Mile to Fifteen Mile (Maple) will be widened at an estimated cost of \$7 million. Federal funds will repay 75 per cent of the cost. This is the largest single project in road commission history. There will be temporary lanes outside the construction to carry traffic while work is being done.

HATS OFF to Farmington Hills juvenile division officer Linda Harris who decided to chuck (usually) snow-ridden Michigan for the sunnier weather in Dallas, Tex. Ms. Harris will wave bye-bye to the Hills next month and embark upon a job hunting spree. "I've always wanted to go there and I figured this is the time," she explained. (Will I dare say she'll be deep in the heart of Texas?) Here's a lone star salute for the new Lone Star stater: *

THE FARMINGTON JAYCEES will sponsor their annual prayer breakfast from 7:30-9 a.m. Jan. 22 at Mercy Center, gate four on Eleven Mile east of Middlebelt. Tickets are \$5 and can be obtained by calling Jim Mitchell at 642-090. Lloyd B. Livingston will speak.

TAX TIME AGAIN: There are a few tax credits you can accumulate for next year via home energy improvements. The Residential Energy Conservation Credit gives a maximum federal income tax credit of \$300 for insulation and other conserving devices installed in or on a taxpayer's principal residence.

For further information call 1-800-462-0930 if your area code is 313. If your area code is 517, 908 or 616 call 1-800-492-0670. Residential Renewable Energy Equipment Credit allows a maximum federal income tax credit of \$2,200 for installation of solar, wind, geothermal and other renewable energy equipment on a taxpayer's principal residence. Michigan Solar Exemptions: offer allow exemptions on solar wind or water conversion devices from property and sales tax. To obtain a tax exemption certificate publication contact Special Property Appraiser, Michigan State Tax Commission, Department of Treasury, Lansing, Michigan, 48922 or call 517-373-0500.

FEEL AN INSIDE ANGLE coming on? Don't think it's just another case of Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde, write IA at 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington, 48024.



Cotton...it's the natural choice for today's fashions. For what other natural fiber can offer you such softness, such breathability, such easy care. RON CHERESKIN has chosen cotton for his latest sweater creation, and one wearing will convince you cotton never had it better. Textured with a diagonal pattern, work-

ing its way under horizontal ribbing. Designed with a V-neck that makes it perfect for layering, (just think how beautifully it will work over a shirt, or under a blazer). And done up in fabulous shades like olive, putty, silver, and the ultimate neutral: natural. Sizes S-M-L, \$40. In The Woodward Shops for Men, at all our Hudson's stores.

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