



This interview with Carol Norton Ventura is an excerpt from the original March 1997 *Chain Link* newsletter article written by Lana Bennett.

A Passion for Tapestry Crochet by Lana Bennett

When Pam Oddi put "feature writer" on her wish list for help with CGOA's Chain Link newsletter, all humility left me and I jumped for the chance. I have wanted to help CGOA in some way since becoming a member and this was an opportunity I found feasible.

Ironically, one of the people Pam suggested I interview was someone with whom I have personally been wishing to talk for some time: Carol Norton Ventura. I was introduced to Carol through her article, "The Striking Tapestry Crochet of Guatemala," in *PIECEWORK* magazine (Sept./Oct. 1995). It was at the Chain Link '96 Conference in California that I purchased Carol's book, "Tapestry Crochet." Needless to say when Carol agreed to be interviewed, I was elated and the session was every bit as fascinating as I expected it could be. One of the overriding themes that came out of our conversation is how Carol's life experience is interwoven with her art in crochet.

THE HISTORY

It was through a four-year stint in the Peace Corps in Guatemala (1976-80) that Carol first came upon tapestry crochet. She had been assigned to the village Jacaltenango in Huehuetenango in the highlands of Guatemala where the government and the missionaries were attempting to set up a weaving cooperative.

[Upon her return to the United States] Carol became curious about how the Guatemalans crocheted their bags. She received many compliments on them and realized that most Americans thought they were woven. So she unraveled one to find out the secret. She found that it lies in the fact that they are almost entirely made of single crochet which allows many colors of yarn to be carried at the same time. Each stitch is simply crocheted over the colors not currently being incorporated into the fabric. When a color is desired the single crochet is made to the point where two loops remain on the hook at which time the new color is pulled through. The resulting fabric is very firm. A unique quality of tapestry, also known as Jacquard or Mosaic crochet, is that after completing the first row you turn the project upside down and crochet over the beginning chain row. In addition, the top of the single crochet stitch remains hidden. It is this quality that makes it difficult to identify the technique as crochet.

Another aspect of crochet that was an impetus for Carol's endeavors in tapestry was its portability. For a while Carol did not have a studio available to her in which she could pursue other art forms. Crochet required no chemicals or large equipment. She could take it wherever she went. It was while sitting in a doctor's waiting room during her mother's chemotherapy sessions that she worked on a large self-portrait wall hanging.

In her sincere wish that others become familiar with tapestry crochet, Carol made a video entitled "Tapestry Crochet" through Victorian Videos. The book, "Tapestry

Crochet" by Carol Norton, is available through Interweave Press, 201 East Fourth St., Loveland, CO 80537-5655 (ISBN: 0-932394-15-9). Be sure that a "corrections sheet" is included. Finally, think about taking a class from Carol this coming August in Chicago but be sure to leave room for me!