



By Toni Ford

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SO YOU WANT TO SELL YOUR WEAVING?

We'd guess that about ninety per cent of all hand weavers sooner or later decide they'd like to sell some of the products of their skill. Some folks want to make a living or supplement their living by sales; some just want by this means to pay for the cost of their hobby, buy a few materials, or pick up a little change to use for some special purpose. Whatever the reason, eventually a whole lot of these people write to the weaving consultant for advice on selling. Maybe we can help a lot of these people at once by giving some of that advice right here and now. The best we can do in the space available is to list some of the most important things to consider, give a little specific information and for the rest tell you where you can acquire the facts you need. In mulling this over, we rather believe that these are the sort of things one must consider:

1. What equipment is necessary for production weaving?
2. What training should one have — what degree of skill, before attempting to sell his products?
3. What should one make?
4. What should the weaver know about materials?
5. How does one determine selling price?
6. Where can one find a market?

We don't know all the answers, but we've been around a little and done some observing and discussing of these problems so here goes — we're just sort of thinking out loud and we hope it helps.

ABOUT EQUIPMENT

If one just wants to sell an occasional piece to help pay the cost of his hobby — he doesn't have to consider this problem much, he can just use what he has. Of course, to a considerable extent, the quality of his product and the time consumed in making it will depend on how efficient his equipment is. But he can use his little two harness table loom or a two harness floor loom, a four frame table or floor loom and simple warping and winding equipment and sell that part of his production he doesn't want to keep or use for presents to his friends. Any conscientious craftsman, however, will want to sell the *best* of his work and he can do better work with good equipment.

Now if one approaches production from the standpoint of making or supplementing his living, that's a different matter. It is well to consider carefully what equipment one is to use and to produce efficiently. If one uses the best of materials, if his work is skillful and most important of all, if it is original or unusual, he can even make a good thing from weaving articles on a two harness loom. With the emphasis on texture in hand weaving today, the importance of having a loom that can

produce a variety of pattern weaving is not so important. On the other hand, the market available to him, and other considerations may make it quite advisable to have at least a four frame loom. For the skillful designer-weaver, the multiple harness loom may be the answer. For the run - of - the - mill individual, though, who will want to produce somewhat of a variety of work for his own satisfaction and for the market too, we'd say the best bet is a well made four frame loom, at least 36" weaving capacity, made of hardwood, draw-bolt joints, counter - balanced shedding motion. A shuttle - race is desirable, batten pivoted at the bottom to be preferred. Sectional beaming desirable, if production is to be emphasized. If combining production and weaving for ones own use, that isn't so important.

With such a loom one should have good warping equipment, a creel if sectional beaming, warping reel preferably, though a frame is all right, for whole beam warping. The modern weaver, if interested at all in production, should consider only a power bobbin winder with spindle that can adapt to winding spools. He shouldn't compromise with a chair or other seating arrangement but get a loom bench that was made to use with the loom. He should have a variety of shuttles, different types and weights — not less than a half dozen boat type, we'd say. He should use plastic or wooden bobbins or the good pressed tubular paper ones.

Where to get this equipment? What will it cost? Cost varies considerably with the source but it is like most other situations, in general you get what you pay for. We do not have the space here to list all the manufacturers and agents of hand weaving equipment in the country so right here we want to refer you to two directories for the hand weaver which will answer many of your questions. The first of these, *A Hand Weaver's Directory*, can be obtained from *Woman's Day Magazine*, address 19 West 44th St., New York 18, N. Y. for 20c. This lists fifteen or twenty sources of equipment and supplies and also lists schools, publications, weavers guilds and other pertinent information, classified according to states — a very useful booklet. The other, *The National Directory of Craft and Art Suppliers* is called **WHERE TO GET WHAT** and it lists over three hundred sources of supply for equipment and materials for crafts. Send 25c for this one to the publishers, Penland School of Handicrafts, Penland, North Carolina. Write to the dealers in hand weaving equipment in these booklets and compare not just prices but quality—consider the floor space the loom will occupy, consider the materials used in constructing it, consider the equipment furnished with it.

Could you make your own loom? Yes, if you are a careful woodworker or can have the job done by a good shop man. There are plans available from different sources—the Lily Mills can supply working drawings and

written directions for making a loom and other weaving equipment, for 50c. Check the advertising in *Handweaver and Craftsman* magazine and similar craft magazines for other sources of loom blueprints.

ABOUT TRAINING OR SKILL

A conscientious craftsman would not want to sell a poor product and it is natural that one's first work will not come up to very high standards. We'd say one should be certain that he has reached a pretty high degree of skill before selling any of his products. What do we mean by that? Well, in hand weaving, we judge quality of workmanship in various ways, but among the more obvious points to consider would be evenness of texture, straight even selvages, good finishing (hemming, etc.), good use of color, proper choice of yarns for the job in hand. To acquire the necessary skill so that one would not be ashamed to sell his webs involves study and a great deal of weaving practice. One can learn weaving just from studying a book but it's the longest, slowest and least efficient way. Better than that is a good correspondence course and there are good ones. Mrs. Atwater proved many years ago that this is a practical method of giving weaving instructions and there are several such courses available—see the two directories we mentioned. For most people, the quickest and best way to learn good weaving techniques is to learn from a good, private teacher or at a

good school. See the directories again for listings of these.

Remember always, though, that it is much better to produce a simple article with superb workmanship than to attempt something tricky or intricate and do it poorly. Learn your fundamental skills of the loom well. Use short cuts to reduce production cost — the sectional beam is one of the time savers if properly used, the electric bobbin and spool winder is another. Plan long warps that can be used to produce a variety of articles — the September issue of Practical Weaving Suggestions will have a very excellent discussion of this idea by Harriet Douglas Tidball. Plan articles that can be woven on a one shuttle technique—plan to weave several smaller pieces across a warp with one throw of the shuttle. Use the proper materials for the textile to be produced and use only the very best yarns.

AND WHAT ABOUT MATERIALS?

If you use yarns that will shrink unduly, will fade in light or when washed, if they are low in tensile strength, the article you make will be inferior and unsatisfactory and will reflect discredit to you and your craft. Just don't do it. It pays to get only the best, to get a standard material that can be duplicated for re-orders, that is fast to light and to boiling, that is strongly made of the best and longest textile fibres. Get warps and wefts that were designed to be used together, that

are compatible. It is poor economy to buy a cheap quality warp and use on it high grade and expensive yarns. It is foolish to use the time required to do good hand weaving on anything but the very best quality of yarns. Although it is possible to buy interesting and often excellent yarns from odd-lot jobbers, be sure you know your yarns or you may end up with something entirely unsuited to the product you wish to make. The matter of a supply of types and colors that must be kept in stock for production weaving gives one to earnest thinking. The hobby weaver who sells an occasional piece is not so concerned, but one can tie up a lot of money if he has even a small range of colors in several types and sizes of yarns. Yet if one does not keep at least a small stock of materials on hand, he may be held up in his production while waiting for a shipment from the dealer. One obvious way to control this situation a little is to produce one type of article exclusively or keep within a narrow range of articles that will require similar materials. That leads us obviously to the next point to be considered.

WHAT SHOULD ONE MAKE?

That's probably the question most often fired at the head of the weaving consultant by the would-be production weaver. That's the one that can't be answered — not by any definite statements. All we can say is, "Well, that depends." Depends on these things. What kind of a

loom and other equipment do you have? What is your level of weaving skill? (For instance, are you an "original" designer or just a skillful craftsman?) Depends on where you are located — access to markets, kinds of markets available to you, how much you can invest in a stock of materials, how much experimentation you can afford to do — depends — on lots of things. But there are some general principles to be considered. Make something that has a fairly quick turnover — something everyone needs or can afford to buy for a present to give his friends — or else make something unusual in design of the finest materials and workmanship to sell to a special buying public or for use in special situations. Make something that can be worked out in a one-shuttle technique, if possible, with long warps, that can be set up quickly on the loom, that will depend on color and texture rather than design weaving that is slow and cumbersome. Make something that will "go" in the markets that are available to you, something that can be finished quickly and inexpensively, that can be packaged attractively — and do wash, press and package as carefully as possible. We are appalled sometimes by the great quantity of unattractive, poorly made hand-woven rugs pouring from nobody knows how many hand looms the country over — but then we are cheered by the fresh inspiration of some isolated weaver, who produces something unusual and charming in the way of a rug and specializes in producing that one

thing well. Sometimes it seems that the market is deluged with guest towels and luncheon sets as if the hand weavers of the country had gotten into a rut in production and could think of nothing else to make, but every now and then we see a wonderfully designed and executed lunch set that restores our faith. Really, it is not so much *what as how*, that will determine your success as a production weaver.

Still we all feel the need of inspiration, so to help us in the design side of our craft we should familiarize ourselves with good design in general, with present day trends in textiles, with processes and materials. In other words, we must keep in touch with everything pertaining to our craft. You'll never get up there among the best with production weavers unless your skill is grounded in a good knowledge of the fundamentals of design. There's Maitland Grave's book, *The Art and Color of Design*, there's *Design Fundamentals* by Scott. There's a good series of sheets on the use of color in weaving by Terrace Textures.

Make use of the many weaver's bulletins and similar advisory services available—we'll list as many as we know at the end of this article. Subscribe to as many of these as you can afford — they're all good — we write this one and subscribe to all the others. They are full of fresh ideas and inspiration as well as direct information. Subscribe to *Handweaver and Craftsman Magazine*, a real "must" for one

who aspires to produce weaving for the modern market.

HOW DOES ONE ARRIVE AT THE SELLING COST?

We've heard this advice given: Figure the cost of your materials, figure the cost of your time, add them together and double this figure for your selling cost. That doubling business, we suppose, is to cover all the other costs of production, overhead and the like. It might do as a rough way of figuring, but often to compete in the open market we need to do closer figuring than that. We need to know sometimes how to put our finger on the specific process or processes that are keeping our costs high — so we can remedy the situation. We need then to be certain that in figuring materials we figure everything, the warp waste, the bobbin waste, materials used in finishing, in washing, in packaging. In figuring labor costs, we want to be sure that we include all labor, warping the loom, beaming, drawing in, winding bobbins, weaving process, removing from loom, finishing, pressing, packaging. Adjusting and repairing the loom and other equipment is labor cost too, as is sweeping the floor and putting on labels. That overhead now, be sure it includes, not only light, heat, a fair rental (even if you work in your own home), but also such items as loss by moths or deterioration, if any, depreciation on equipment, mark-down on articles that have to be moved by special pricing — lots of other things — cost

of selling and such. Get them all on the cost sheet.

Figure the cost on every warp you put on the loom, including all the items we have mentioned and any others that may apply especially to your situation. Count the number of finished articles — ready to sell, that you get from each warp and thus you can arrive at the cost of each. Now you must add to this a small profit and allow for a mark-up for the selling agency and this latter will range from about 20% to 75% or more, depending upon the situation. Since you have supposedly been paid for your labor, you can be modest in your profit demands but you should have something as the entrepreneur.

We'd say it wouldn't be a bad idea to take a little course in bookkeeping and read a book or two on general business practice and maybe one on salesmanship. Ask your local high school business teacher for advice on your reading.

AND NOW, WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO SELL IT?

Of course, you probably can and will sell at least some part of your production directly from your shop. Again, if you are a hobby weaver, you'll probably sell most all of it that way. Then you can sell through local stores and shops or sometimes by mail. You can sell through Guild shops where there is a Weaver's Guild

to which you can belong, but, wherever you sell, sell for cash — consignment selling generally speaking is mighty poor business for the producer. Probably the best things we can do for you in this department is to refer you to a couple of publications along these lines, namely, and to wit:

Where to Sell your Handicrafts by Glazer

Home Business by Ebert

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH YOUR FIRST MILLION?

Don't count too much on getting in the big money. We've not mentioned here the use of the fly-shuttle hand loom, pick-wheels and other large plant production methods because this bulletin is addressed particularly to the individual weaver who wants to build up a small sales department. The big production plant is quite another thing and would take a whole discussion by itself while we've used up quite a few words and considerable space to cover the territory we have meandered over here. We'll just leave it at that and append here to the addresses of sources for some of the things we've mentioned. Profitable weaving!

Weavers Bulletins are published by:

The Lily Mills, Shelby, North Carolina

Winogene B. Redding, 67 Winthrop Avenue, Wollaston 70, Mass.

The Shuttle-Craft Guild, Virginia City, Montana

Creative Crafts, Guernsey, Penn.

Gladys Rogers Brophil, Baldwin, Michigan

Mary Sandin, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Z-Hand Crafts, Fulford, Quebec, Canada

Terrace Yarn Shop, 4037 S. W. Garden Home Road, Portland, Oregon

California Hand Weavers, 367 Euclid Ave., Oakland 10, California

Holmes Hand Weaving Studio, P.O. Box 18, San Anselmo, California

Some of these sources also offer correspondence courses in hand weaving.

In WHERE TO GET WHAT, the national Directory of Crafts Suppliers, you will find other weaving publications listed, this bulletin from Penland School of Handicrafts, Penland, North Carolina for 25c.

You will find various schools and teachers listed in Woman's Day, Weaving Directory.

You can get a complete list of Hand Weaving books and publications from Craft and Hobby Book Service, Box 1931, Carmel, California who can sup-

ply any weaving publications domestic or foreign.

The address of Handweaver and Craftsman Magazine is: 246 Fifth Ave., New York 1, N. Y.

You can get: How to Sell Your

Handicrafts from Craft and Hobby Book Service.

HOME BUSINESS is a bulletin of the U. S. Dept. of Commerce, Business Information Service, Washington 25, D. C. — cost 10c.

Handweavers - Order Your Yarns from Lily

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warps and wefts of your handwoven designs. Select your handweaving yarns from the wide range of colors, sizes and types.

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