A Basketmaker's Odyssey

by Donna Carlson

A ponderosa pine tree in my backyard started it all. Every fall it dropped tons of needles, smothering the grass and clogging the rain gutters. Then in 1979 my daughter Kim gave me a book about pine needle baskets. I was hooked.

I'd tried seamstress work, quilting, tatting, smocking, water colors, carpentry, rock masonry, and (yuk!) immaculate housekeeping. Gave them all up in an instant with the discovery of basketmaking and began teaching the craft in community education programs in 1981.

Soon, like a peripatetic minstrel (I did play the cello in Junior Symphony), I found myself crisscrossing North America, teaching and polishing my chosen craft. My horizons stretched through Western Europe, Asia, North Africa, South America, and Antarctica.

I've traveled by auto, plane, bicycle, tug boat, rowboat, sailboat, freighter, ferry, oomiak, kayak, Zodiac, dinghy, and (shudder!) Egyptian train.

Enroute, I've contended with martens in my attic, squirrels in my cupboards, black bears in my garbage cans, rattlesnakes under my floors, was bitten by a polar bear and sat on by an otter.

Basketmaking has opened untold numbers of doors and made me many, many friends. Have the tools, will travel.

Thistledown Treasures Presents

Handcrafted Charm Baskets

by Donna Carlson