

Some Memories
Carol McLean F.C.S.C.L.

Hi Lauch

Sorry I have been so long getting this to you.. So much to do getting an estate settled.. Still more to go too.

When I got Eugene's email, it reminded me that I should get this done. So, here it is.

I remember helping form the Woodstock Branch of CSCL. We were a small group of leather workers who had met in each others homes.

At the time Laureen Manuel was teaching at Continuing Education through the night school programme.. After a while Laureen asked if I would teach it.. I had been teaching different projects at our guild by then and also fibre arts at night school too. (Quilting, Embroidery and Japanese Bunka embroidery to mention a few).

I said I would try. I had to apply to the Teaching Standards Committee of CSCL. to teach leather. Bob (Robert) Muma was its chair. Also a Fellow member of CSCL..I was very intimidated presenting a lesson to him and be critiqued on it. I demonstrated making masks. He had not seen leather masks before and was intrigued by them. I was the first CSCL member to make and teach leather masks..Now many do them in so many ways. Bob was a world renowned Master Book Binder. He passed me and gave me his blessing. I cannot remember what year that was..but I was happy to have met CSCL Teaching Standards.

When I taught at Cont. Ed.. it gave me the opportunity to introduce the avid students to CSCL. We gained a nice amount of members that way and they , of course became CSCL members too. I taught the leather programme at Cont. Ed for approx 15 years. This fed a lot of new members into CSCL and Wdsk Br. We had to discontinue the Leather class because of dropping registration.. The main reason was cost. Leather and basic tools became too expensive for the hobbyist or parent with 2 children at home. etc. By then Wdsk guild was quite strong. We even competed in Weston Trophy competitions. You will read more of the branch's complete history in the Branch story in a separate article, by Nancy and Madeleine.

Some of us decided to try , at different times, for our Associate and eventually Fellow Standings. When I tried for my Fellow Standing , I made it on the first attempt, with a very respectable mark. I was cautioned not to expect that.. I was so thrilled, because I enjoyed making original projects. This was one aim of CSCL.. to encourage creativity and also to promote Canadian aspects in our work. (Isn't this very timely in today's Proud Canadian movement?) CSCL was ahead of the times.. and has been all along.

I remember being the youngest Fellow and now I think I am the eldest. Time passes. I enjoyed every moment of it. Especially the teaching and judging. Passing our standards and knowledge on to others.

I remember making yearly trips down to demonstrate leather at the CSCL booth in the Arts , Crafts and Hobbies Building at the C.N.E. We could also sell some of our work. Fred Brown, who was also a Fellow member of long standing then, was Head of that building. We were fortunate to be able to expose C.S.C.L. to thousands of people passing by. We had info forms for people to pick up and contact the branch nearest to them. I remember driving down for many years with 5 or 6 branch members in the car..Took our lunch or grabbed something at a nearby outside food booth. Those were exciting and fun times too. Wonderful experiences that furthered interest in CSCL.and created wonderful camaraderie too.

Other exciting times were the Annual Meetings where there were competitions in many categories.. even Branch competitions. These were hotly contested and were great fun. I remember coming home from one annual meeting with quite a few ribbons and was most proud of the Craftsmanship and Salon Ribbons. There was always the desire to create and excel in your work. Come up with something unique. A new dyeing technique or type of project.

My leather working days did come to an end when my fibromyalgia worsened to the point that my hands did not have strength to do a lot of the work. But I could still help with the judging, which was an important part of a Fellow's commitment. Eventually the trips were too difficult and I had to discontinue attending the judging sessions. Time passes on.

I have enjoyed the newsletters because it still kept me in touch with the "going's on" of the Society. Also email kept me in touch with some members.

I have had the good fortune of making so many dear friends. I feel that is one of the greatest gifts CSCL has given me.

It is sad to see that all of this will be coming to an end.. So many wonderful people... precious memories and dear friends. A true gift.

I am pleased that information about CSCL will still be available on the internet.

I give a proud salute to the founding members of CSCL and their foresight to create a unique and distinctly Canadian leather organization.

I am grateful to have been fortunate to have been a member for so many years.

Sincerely,

Carol McLean

F.C.S.C.L.