

Judy Arledge

Judy's home is in Missoula, Montana, the heart of Ponderosa Pine Country where she has been creating pine needle baskets since 1980. The state tree is the mighty Ponderosa and it is from the native forests that Judy has harvested her weaving materials. The wooden center used in the creation of some of her baskets is also made of pine. The designs on the boards are the original work of the artist, (and beloved Aunt) Donna Walsh of Washington State. The needles used in each coiled design are gathered from the forest floor where they have dried beneath the sun after falling naturally to Mother Earth. Judy's husband, Ken, adds the final attention to detail as he designs a distinctive pine crate for each completed basket.

Judy's works have been accepted for museum shows in a number of major American cities—one piece was selected for a journey to Latvia representing "Artists for Peace." Recently, her signature basket "Spirit Bear" was chosen to be part of a collection of special Montana art pieces to represent Missoula in their New Zealand sister city, Palmerston-North. Her works of art have also been featured in *Sundance Catalog*. As an educator, Judy has presented programs for schools to share the important history and tradition of basketry for all nations and people. Her studio also provides an intimate arena for the gathering of students who come to learn coiling, one of the ancient methods of basket making. It has been an honor for Judy to share her passion for basketry as a staff instructor for participants in Family Summit events with the National Wildlife Federation at various international locations.

Judy treasures the valued instruction of contemporary weaver and author, Jeannie McFarland, who introduced her to basketry. Further inspiration evolved as she explored the world of reed and antler weaving with the expert vessel designer and author, Bobi Harris. "My studies deepened as I entered the world of Nancy Basket in South Carolina. With her Cherokee background, she introduced me to the more traditional, ancient methods of weaving. Her gift of storytelling touches the soul as she blends today with long ago. In Alaska, my inspiration was Delores Churchill. What a privilege to enter the quiet forest with this teacher to learn the old ways of gathering root and bark for creating baskets. The further preparation of these materials involved many hours, sometimes over a smoky fire other times with rainwater. As we worked, Delores would share her memories of growing up with the Haida people, however she was never distracted from her mission of insisting that I put forth my best effort. 'Judy, take it 'undone' and do it again.' Her high standards were then tempered by this wisdom from the old ways: 'It is not for you to praise your own work—it is for others to do so or you will lose your gift.'"

So with a respect for the ancient craft of coiling, and a spirit of gratitude for the blessing of our beautiful forests, it is Judy's prayer that the language of her work will be understood as she allows it to speak for itself.