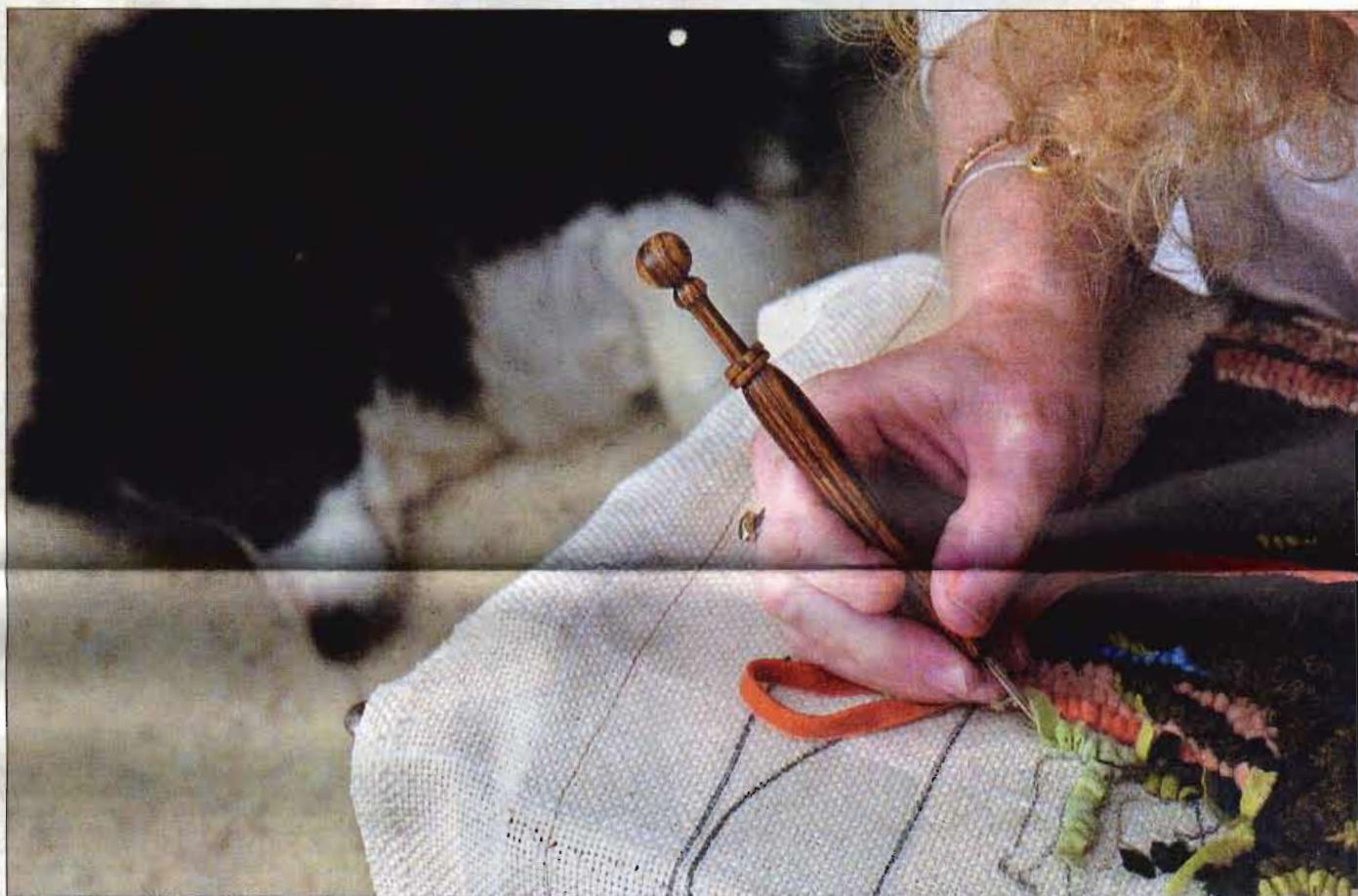


Corea woman's series of handmade rugs chronicle the life of her beloved canine companion, and her own, as well



Rosemary Levin works on one of her hooked rugs, a Schoodic scene, as her muse Lucky naps next to her on a recent rainy afternoon.

BANGOR DAILY NEWS PHOTOS BY JOHN CLARKE RUSS

A Lucky Streak

BY BETH PARKS
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

My hair was spun with Lucky's," Rosemary said, her face flushing with a touch of pride. "The blend got incorporated into each of the seven Lucky Rugs, so they all contain a little bit of our DNA. The rugs will probably be in use long after we're both gone."

Rosemary is Rosemary Levin, co-owner with her husband, Garry, of Chapter Two, a new and inviting gallery, bookstore and studio located in a renovated yellow schoolhouse in the Down East coastal village of Corea. Garry is the former manager of the Borders bookstore in Bangor, and Lucky is their 10-year-old female border collie.

Serendipity may be the best way to describe Rosemary's connection with Lucky. Her mom and dad divorced when she was 12, and she heard from her father only a couple of times after that. The Alabama-born Rosemary later married Garry, a career Army officer, and they often talked about getting a dog. One year, Garry gave her a black-and-white dog pinata with a purple heart-shaped tag engraved with the words, "I owe you." The thought of getting a black-and-white dog stuck in her mind, but she never found "just the right one."

Years passed and as fate would have it, Rosemary learned that her father was dying of lung cancer. A breeder of multicolored border collies, her dad had held back an 18-month-old dog called Lucky that he thought would make a good companion for his granddaughter, Jenny. Lucky made the 11-hour flight alone from Alabama. When the Levins picked her up at Bangor International Airport, they found their perfect black-and-white dog standing in a crate.

"My father had no idea what he'd done," Rose-



mary said, almost as if she still couldn't believe her good fortune. The rift created by the divorce had been wide and deep, but Lucky bridged the gap. Rosemary began talking to her dad on the phone every day and eventually flew to Alabama to meet him and his second family.

Later, while daydreaming during a project at Schoodic Point, Rosemary got the idea to create a series of "Lucky Rugs" honoring the dog. She hooked patterns that included Lucky standing in a kayak, gazing upward from a multishaded



Levin (left) holds up one of her Lucky Series rugs as others hang behind her at Chapter Two, her and her husband Garry's studio/gallery/bookstore in Corea. Levin's seventh rug (above) in her Lucky Series rugs depicts her border collie Lucky chasing a ball. In the upper right corner of the rug are seven dog tags on a silver chain.

field of green, wending her way through a stand of trees and trotting along a pastoral country road.

The seventh and final rug in the series took the longest to complete. Lucky's health was beginning to fail, and only-child Jenny was on her way to Elmira College in upstate New York. Somewhere deep within her, Rosemary feared that completing the rug would result in the loss of Lucky, Jenny or both.

Rosemary conquered her fears and finished the seventh rug exactly seven years after her father died. Lucky chases a yellow ball against the rug's purple backdrop, Elmira's traditional college colors. Seven dog tags on a silver chain hang in the rug's upper right-hand corner. To the casual observer, it seems that Lucky is forever chasing a full moon across the night sky, with seven lucky stars ensuring their good fortune.

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Lucky

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And fortune seems to smile on the Levins these days. Lucky's health is holding, despite her failing kidneys, and Jenny is taking her summer break from teaching fifth graders in Arizona to be with her parents. Even Jenny's luck is good. She sits at a small table at Chapter Two, poised to beat her father at Scrabble for what she gleefully declares is "the first time ever."

Scrabble is one of the things that attract visitors to Corea's only shop, which reflects the very soul of this Down East coastal village. Tea, coffee and goodies are always at the ready for those who want to browse the local artists' upscale arts, crafts, photos and antiques. Scattered tables invite visitors to sit, chat, or thumb through the large and eclectic collection of used books in Garry's Accumulated Book Gallery.

Rosemary's Corea Rug Hooking Company is also a big draw, where customers can purchase her original rugs or hand-dyed wool strips and hooking supplies.

"The big draw for hooking," Rosemary says, "is that it's simple and it doesn't cost a lot. All you need to start are some old wool clothes to take apart, a crochet hook and a piece of burlap."

Rosemary's own interest blossomed when she saw some hooked rugs in an antique shop and wondered how they were made. For Christmas 1999, Garry gave her all the books that Borders had on rug hooking. "I tried every single aspect and made every possible mistake along the way," she confides.

"Rosemary developed her own unique style in isolation, with no pressure from outside influences," says Linda Rae Coughlin, a New Jersey author and artist whom many believe to be the "Who's Who" of rug hooking. "Her colors are bold, and her designs are clean and

simple. Each piece of her art tells a story that is meaningful to her, and it comes across to those who see her works." Coughlin features a section on Rosemary in her new book, "Contemporary Hooked Rugs, Themes and Memories," released by Schiffer Books in August.

But it may be Rosemary herself who attracts the people, even more than her artwork or the items she sells. "She is such an open person, a really good person, a beautiful human being who's creating beautiful art," says Coughlin. "She just stands there and lets the universe come to her, pulling in all that creative energy."

One of Rosemary's greatest passions is teaching others how to hook rugs, and she plays host to enthusiasts at her shop on Thursday afternoons and the second Saturday of each month. Ask them to describe Rosemary and you'll hear such endearing terms as "wonderful teacher," "patient," "encouraging," "enthusiastic" and "supportive." Whenever someone calls out a positive descriptor, all heads bob in agreement.

"Lots of artists are really possessive about their work," Coughlin says, "but Rosemary can't wait to share her ideas. She doesn't get caught up about what's hers or somebody else's. She knows in her heart there are plenty of great ideas to go around."

She'll share everything, that is, but the seventh rug of the Lucky series. Of the more than 100 rugs she has created since she started hooking just a little more than six years ago, it's the only one Rosemary Levin plans to keep for herself and her family.

You can see the seventh Lucky Rug and lots of other works at Chapter Two, 611 Corea Road, just before the Baptist Church. The shop is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday through Monday, or whenever the "Open" sign is out.

For more information, call Chapter Two at 963-7269. Beth Parks lives in Corea. You can reach her at bparks@maine.edu