

Anne Mather: Editing Rugs

Anne Mather edits manuscripts and rugs. An accomplished editor for many years, Mather is also an accomplished rug hooker. She has published two books and five articles on rug hooking. “She hooks wonderful rugs, some on commission, some to exhibit, some to sell”, says Polyxeni Potter, managing editor of the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID)* and Mather’s colleague.

Mather, who has a master’s degree in journalism, has worked for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for 26 years—including 6 years as managing editor of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*—and is currently a production editor for *EID*. She says her job at CDC is “quite technical” but she loves it. “[My job] is important and serious, so it is important to have a nice, interesting hobby to balance that.”

As an editor, Mather was not using her writing skills, so she began to write on the side on whatever her interests were at the moment. “When my children were younger, I wrote a children’s book [*The Cat at the Door*, 1991]. Then, when they were older, I wrote a book for women [*Just for Today: Thoughts to Live By*, 1995].”

Later, she wrote two books on rug hooking: *The Art of Rug Hooking* and *Creative Rug Hooking*. She says the books she knew about rug hooking were technical and not well written, and she felt she could write a better book. “I am a writer, and I can write about this”, she said to herself. Her books have been very popular, published in hard cover and paperback. She has also written for *Rug Hooking* magazine.

Rug hooking is indigenous to North America. It uses a hand hook, similar in shape to a crochet hook, to form a looped pile from fabric strips or yarn on an even-weave base fabric. “I got hooked on it”, Mather says. “I like the monotony of [rug hooking], the methodic repetition, and its spiritual, meditative aspect.”

“Most people can hook three or four rugs in a year”, Mather says. “I have hooked as many as 10 a year, but I’ve slowed down to about three a year now—primarily because now I’m into knitting again, as well.” Mather has hooked over 100 rugs since she started in 1993. She has given many

to family members—“everybody has a couple”—and sold others, and some are on exhibit in permanent collections, such as the exhibit for the 100th anniversary of Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School (middle and upper school) in Rabun Gap, Georgia. Of course, she has some at home. “I have a large number in my house. All the walls and the floor are covered with rugs.”

Mather says one of the things she loves most about rugs is the color. “It’s like being a child again”, she says. “In other things, you choose colored wools, but in rug hooking, [I like] to dye. It is very creative; you have to get the colors you envision.”

Mather has been meeting once a week, for 10 years, with other local rug hookers. They attend camps once or twice a year in every state in the United States, Europe, and Canada. They are week-long camps with experts on rug hooking who travel from different places to teach their art. “It’s very intense; no TV, no radio, just rug hooking”, she says. “You see mostly women and an occasional man.”

Being an editor has helped Mather to hook rugs. “If I buy a pattern, I will look at it and simplify it, edit it”, she says. “Other people like to amplify, adding things to the pattern, but I simplify most of them; that’s the editor in me.” Mather notes that there are two different styles in rug hooking. “There are embellishers and editors”, she says. “Two different women get the same patterns, but they come out with something completely different.”

One interesting project was a rug that told the story of Mather’s life. She used her editing skills to select the most important parts of her life and leave out others. “I represented CDC with footprints, which represent epidemiology, and my writing career with a stack of books.”

Mather’s rugs represent more than her career; they represent her. In an article for *Rug Hooking* magazine (“The Great ‘Original vs. Pattern’ Debate”; June-July-August 2002), Mather wrote: “Each rug is an opportunity for a hooker to explore her own style, which—like art—is mysterious. It isn’t something we necessarily plan or intend; it just happens. Somehow, our personality gets infused into a rug.”

DIEGO PINEDA prepared this profile while a Science Editor intern. He is now a writer at the University of Texas Medical Branch.