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**Weavers of Tradition and Beauty: Basketmakers of the Great Basin.** By Mary Lee Fulkerson. Photographs by Kathleen Curtis. Foreword by Catherine S. Fowler. Reno, Las Vegas and London: University of Nevada Press, 1995. 128 pages. \$19.95 paper.

Basketry is one of the most notable artistic and technological productions of both ancient and postconquest Great Basin cultures. Excavations have yielded habitation remains with baskets that span nearly 11,000 years, providing the longest and arguably the best-controlled sequence in the world. Centered on the present-day state of Nevada, the Great Basin also encompasses portions of Utah, Arizona, California, Idaho, Oregon, Wyoming, and Colorado. Tribal groups include the Western and Northern Shoshone; Bannock; Northern, Southern and Owens Valley Paiute; and the Washoe.

Mary Lee Fulkerson and Kathleen Curtis have produced a how-to book about Native basketry of northern Nevada, combining detailed instruction in techniques and materials with photographs of weavers, baskets, and ceremonies. *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty: Basketmakers of the Great Basin* features interviews with nineteen Native basketmakers of this region of Nevada, giving important documentation and insight into contemporary Great Basin basketry. Weavers who were interviewed are Minnie Dick (Western Shoshone/Washoe); Avis Mauwee and Arthur Dunn (Paiute); Theresa Smokey Jackson and JoAnn Smokey Martinez (Washoe); Lilly Sanchez (Shoshone); Irene Cline (Paiute); Florine Conway (Washoe); Evelyn Pete (Shoshone); Theresa Temoke (Shoshone); Sandy Eagle (Paiute); Emma Bob (Shoshone); Robert Baker, Jr. (Paiute); Rebecca Eagle Lambert (Paiute/Shoshone); Bernie DeLorme (Western Shoshone); Sophie Allison (Shoshone); Laura Burns (Paiute/Washoe); Loretta Graham (Paiute); and Betty Rogers (Washoe). Well illustrated with over a hundred black-and-white and nineteen color photographs, the book also includes a bibliography, a glossary, several maps, and a sample documentation register for collectors. Most helpful is the relatively long foreword (complete with its own bibliography) by Catherine S. Fowler, professor of anthropology at the University of Nevada, Reno. She contributes needed historical background to this topic, thus supplementing the how-to aspect of the remainder of the book. Also included are requests for advocacy and entreaties for more documentation by collectors of baskets. The days of anonymity should long be over!

Primarily using willow, with dyed bracken fern root and red-bud for alternating color and pattern, a number of Native Nevadan weavers still follow and/or are reconstructing traditional methods. Some, however, prefer to be innovative in their technique and materials, using allover beading for striking results in fancy baskets. Descriptions of both twining and coiling are included in the book, as well as a delineation of the types of baskets made according to function, for example, seed beaters, burden baskets, winnowing trays, water baskets, and cradlebaskets. The latter are particularly important, in fact are growing in popularity every year, and seem to be vital carriers of cultural tradition.

It is intriguing that this traditional artform, primarily female (except for Joe Eugley, a transvestite of the Owens Valley Paiute who wove during the early part of this century), is now being practiced by a number of men who are proud of this aspect of their Native heritage and wish to participate in it. *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty* documents this loosening of the traditional gender categories through interviews and photographs of both younger and older male basketmakers.

Using a very respectful tone, Fulkerson honors Native weavers, especially elder artists, reporting in detail on their methods and the importance of basketry in their lives. Employing in-the-field research methods and oral history, she attempts to reconstruct the inspiration underpinning traditional Great Basin basketry as well as to provide technical information for present-day weavers. She includes relevant poetry and folklore, gathering stories which enhance the readers' understanding of this vital hand technology. Most interesting to this reader is the chapter entitled, "Dances, Ceremonies, and Legends." Although short, it contextualizes basketmaking into a tradition which includes puberty ceremonies and blessing dances. This section also contains legends and creation stories, and how the uses of baskets are integrated into Great Basin life, history, and culture. This larger framework is the most satisfying aspect of the book, incorporating technical information with myth, ceremony, games, dance, and poetry. The reader sees how baskets were completely assimilated into the fabric of precontact life.

The author's primary strength is her sympathy for Native weavers. As both a basketmaker and an arts activist, rather than an anthropologist or art historian, she captures the technical aspects of basketmaking as well as the stories of the weavers. The authors' focus on interviews and photographs makes the art

of contemporary Native basketmaking of northern Nevada come alive. The nineteen interviews are engaging and the photographs are a helpful accompaniment to the text.

The primary weakness is the lack of historical grounding outside of the foreword by Fowler. When historical information is presented by Fulkerson, a glance at the endnotes often reveals the source to be a lecture or museum interpretive panel, rather than a publication, even when published sources are available. Readers wanting more in-depth information about both prehistorical and ethnographic Great Basin basketry should consult the *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11 (Great Basin), 1986, "Prehistoric Basketry," by J.M. Adovasio and "Ethnographic Basketry," by Catherine S. Fowler and Lawrence E. Dawson. A technical weakness of *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty* is its poor editing. The book is a little too conversational in inappropriate places, such as the areas that are not interviews with artists. The editors seem to have confused an informal, conversational style that would enhance reader accessibility with poor word and syntactical usage (in places). This makes the content harder, not easier, to understand. Another technical irritation is that several of the color photographs are out of focus.

Despite these objections, *Weavers of Tradition and Beauty* does fulfill an important function in presenting oral history, gathering technical information and documenting this important tradition within its cultural context, thus helping to ensure the continuation of Great Basin basketmaking for future generations. The commitment and passion of the authors and photographer for the subject are commendable and their willingness to seek out Native weavers to interview and then submit the book to them for review prior to publication is a significant hallmark of respect.

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**Western Abenaki Dictionary.** By Dr. Gordon M. Day. Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization. Distributed in U.S. by University of Washington Press, 1994–1995. Volume 1, 612 pages; Volume 2, 460 pages. \$34.95 paper, per volume.

This dictionary represents the fruit of the late Gordon Day's long association with the Western Abenaki people and their language. Western Abenaki is an eastern Algonquian language spoken at