

Initially, during these early teaching days of Virginia's, Carol continued to go along as "chief needle threader" and "bead seller", something they still joke about today. However, Carol was learning while she was helping and proved to be a model student, mastering all the various techniques Virginia was teaching. She went on to design her own creations in a style very much her own, and eventually to teach her own classes.

So began not just their teaching careers, but also Virginia's career as an author when that 50-page class handout was later published as the first comprehensive treatise on modern beadwork with the title "Those Bad, Bad Beads". Later on Carol's career as a video guru took off with several beading titles – *Peyote Stitch*, *Herringbone Stitch*, *Beaded Crochet* and *Bead Embroidery*. Virginia also has a video on *Loom Beading Techniques* (these days modified for DVD).

Over the past decades they have taught together, travelled together, exhibited together and separately, and had their work featured in numerous magazines and books. The mail order bead business has grown from those early days of packaging and selling unwanted beads from their own stash into a huge enterprise with thousands of beads and other bead-related supplies filling what was once Virginia's and Gary's studio and tool shed space respectively. This office-cum-warehouse is situated on the same land as the cabin which still stands on the hill above the warehouse and the half-built concrete house that Gary designed.

Regarding that concrete house, all three Beadcats, together with the occasional help of a few other family members, have worked on it over several years through the famous Oregon rain, even hail, and sometimes sunshine; they vow it will be completed whenever life slows down enough for them to finish it.

The beads they sell are imported from France and Japan and, since 1992, the Czech Republic where their pressed-glass beads are made specifically to order. The Czech bead enterprise which started with some frequent flyer points and an urge to see some traditional European bead-making has grown way beyond expectations and now Beadcats imports several thousand kilos from the Czech Republic each year.



The delicate nature of their work belies the strength of these two amazing women and I am in awe of all they have accomplished over the years and of their inspiring work ethic. In September 2009 Sue Bennett and I spent a few days with Carol and Virginia in Wilsonville, Oregon and saw with our own eyes what they each accomplish in a 24-hour day. I'm still recovering....

Not only do they carry on the bead business, and believe me, just keeping track of the enormous inventory is a huge job, they have two houses to maintain in Wilsonville - since they live next door to each other. Carol currently looks after both homes (as in caring for the gardens etc) and the various furry inhabitants while Virginia and Gary rebuild an old inherited farmhouse (with their own hands) several hours drive away.

Virginia drives back every few weeks to take care of any paperwork back log and catch up on the day to day Beadcat-related business with Carol. They also continue to work at their individual beading projects, teach workshops, attend trade shows and prepare samples for the publications which frequently showcase their work.

By now you may have begun to get some idea of why I am so in awe of and inspired by, these truly remarkable Beadcats. Virginia & Carol have developed several new projects just for their 2010 classes in April, so if you have ever been tempted to learn how to bead the Beadcat way, in an atmosphere of gentle encouragement, generosity of spirit, not to mention FUN, then go for it. Orange 2010, and/or Fibres Ballarat offer you the chance to do just that, and I promise you won't be sorry. □

For information on BEADCAT workshops in Australia, see the Fibres Ballarat ad, page 59 this issue; for details on Orange 2010 contact Janet De Boer: tafta@iinet.net.au or phone (07) 3300.6491.



Opposite page top left: TRILOBYTE, an evening bag of Delicas, 3-cuts, triangles and shibori pleated silk; techniques include peyote stitch, brick stitch and herringbone. Top right, FIRST NIGHT, necklace of size 14-18 seed beads and pressed glass beads; peyote stitch, netting and fringes. Both pieces are original beadwork by Virginia Blackelock. **This page** right column top, SNAKE, original beadwork by Virginia Blackelock – a crocheted rope made with size 22 beads and embellished with beads sized 8-20 and bugle beads. At right, Virginia Blackelock, Jean Stone and Carol Perrenoud at The Geelong FORUM 2001. Above GEO PIN 2, original beadwork by Carol Perrenoud demonstrating what could be created in the **April 2010 Beadcat Workshops on Shape Shifting with Beads.**