

Ukulele

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The ukulele club meets every Thursday and is led by Darroll Whitney, whom Prud'hommeaux says is probably the best player of the bunch. For Prud'hommeaux, who was raised in a musical family, continuing her music education is important and brings her joy. "Ukulele is such a happy instrument," Prud'hommeaux said. "I listened to some YouTube ukulele players and really was very impressed by the musicality of the instrument. I really always thought of it as a toy."

The club hosts people from as far as Cherryfield and Ellsworth and doesn't cater to any specific age range; everyone is welcome. "It seems to cross all sorts of demographic lines," Prud'hommeaux said. "It's very multigenerational."

The club operates simply, and everyone learns from each other. They have developed a ukulele songbook and form a circle at meetings. Each person picks a song he or she wants to play, and the music commences.

For Laury, this club and the others Schoodic Arts for All hosts help to achieve its purpose. "The mission is to bring together artists and community and develop this place for people to come together to do creative things," Laury said.

For Prud'hommeaux, it's a chance to keep learning. "As you get older ... learning something knew is a stimulating experience, whether you're successful or not," Prud'hommeaux said.

Craft

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I'm going to have to make some snowshoes," Theriault said. "We wanted snowshoes, but we couldn't afford it."

His father, a U.S. Postal Service worker, had learned the basics of snowshoe making from an older man in town, and was fairly successful early on.

"Eventually, once we all had two or three pairs and my father gave a bunch away, some people wanted to buy them. That's why we continued," Theriault said.

People used them, as they still do, for trapping, fishing, hunting, maple syrup harvesting and exploring in the snow. Back then, even with snowmo-

biles, "you had to stay on the trail," Theriault said. "Not so with snowshoes. You could go wherever you wanted."

As the third-oldest child, Theriault stuck with the craft of snowshoe making while learning carpentry and forestry and working in the lumber industry.

"I was interested in the process," said Theriault. He and his father made snowshoes, used them, and then tried to improve the shoes and "designed everything for a purpose."

Unlike other snowshoe makers that steam their wood to make it bendable for the frames, Theriault and his father use fresh brown ash trees, cut into strips with a skill saw. They stretch the cow rawhide in the center of the shoe, which accommo-

dates today's heavy boots and adds a sort of levity in keeping the walker above the snow. And they rely on a three-way pattern for stringing the rawhide, forming a series of triangles that hold the rawhide in place while letting snow pass through during strides.

"It's easy walking," Theriault said of a good wooden snowshoe. The metal-frame snowshoes that predominate today leave the walker "working too hard and not staying afloat," he said.

In the Great Depression, Theriault's dad saw snowshoes for sale for \$2 — around \$35 in today's dollars. Today, L.L. Bean retails a pair of handmade white ash snowshoes for \$300. On Amazon, there are Canadian handmade bear paw snowshoes selling for \$205. Near the town

of Moscow, the Maine Guide Snowshoe hand-makes wooden snowshoes with rope and rawhide lacing, starting at \$215.

Back in 2007, Theriault was selling snowshoes for between \$200 and \$230, while also earning income managing rental properties and in the lumber industry.

Now, he'll sell them for as much as \$400. But, as he nears retirement age, he's more interested in helping people figure out how to make their own snowshoes — to preserve the craft. Although he has taught apprentices and interest in crafts has surged recently among young people, Theriault fears that the small number of people who do know how to make snowshoes is gradually shrinking. (In 2005, Presque

Isle farmer Frank Hemphill passed away, leaving behind his snowshoe and cedar canoe making work.)

"I've worked so hard and my father has too, and we don't want this to go away," Theriault said. "To help keep this alive is one of my goals."

Along with promoting the book and a DVD version, Theriault is planning to sell kits with the ash sticks or with them pre-bent into frames, with instructions for putting together the rest.

"A lot of people, they look at it and think it's too much and too complicated," Theriault said. "You do it process by process" — and reap a return on the investment. "Snowshoes will last two lifetimes and more, if you take care of them," Theriault and his father wrote in their book.

Bra

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volvement in the local chapter of the Society for Creative Anachronism. The society is an international organization dedicated to researching and re-creating the arts, skills and traditions of pre-17th century Europe, according to its website.

One of Case's skills is making costumes for her family and other members of the group for events and fairs. She is trying to be as authentic as possible in re-constructing the bras, sewing the pieces together by hand using the same kind of finger-loop braiding found on one of the artifacts.

During her visit to Austria, funded by the Janet Ar-

nold Award from the Society of Antiquaries of London, which supports research into the history of Western dress, Case was given some unbleached linen believed to be 40 to 60 years old. She used brass needles, linen thread that must be waxed with beeswax to strengthen it and a bone awl to poke holes for the eyelets the hold the laces.

Case also learned about sprang, a nonweft weaving or plaiting technique that creates an elastic, lace-like fabric. It was placed in between the fabric to which the bra cups were attached to hold it together, she said.

"These bras most likely were made by a resident seamstress for a woman who lived in the castle," Case said last month. "It's unlikely anyone but the ar-

istocracy wore them. Because of the holes along the bottom of the bra, we think a skirt might be have been attached to it."

Case said she has worn one of the bras she made with an attached skirt and has found it more comfortable than the

one without a skirt. "The skirt tends to hold the bra in place," she said. "Without it, the bra has a tendency to ride up."

The results of this investigation and the knowledge gained from the reconstructions will be published in a

book by Nutz and Case in about two years. The final reconstructions will be displayed at the university in Innsbruck in 2017.

To follow Case's progress on her website, visit craftyagatha.org.

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