

Media Contact: Rebecca Meekma
Direct Tel: 949-497-0517
Email: Rmeekma@SawdustArtFestival.org

For Immediate Release
September 25, 2006

CLOSE KNIT FAMILY'S CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS LOST **IN FIRES SPARKS PASSION**

New Winter Fantasy exhibitor has deep roots in Laguna Beach.

Laguna Beach, CA---When Penny Long's parents' house burned down in the 1993 Laguna Beach fires the family lost just about everything including the beloved set of seven Christmas stockings hand knitted with love by her grandmother Catharine.

It may not seem like much to others, but for Long, now 40, it was the sentimental attachment she and her six siblings had to their individual wool Christmas socks bearing their name and year of birth. To them Christmas would not be the same without them, even as adults.

"We are a very close family and the stockings were symbolic of that, so we were sad to see them go. Other things could be replaced but we didn't think our beloved stockings could be," Long said.

Call it divine intervention or simply a stroke of luck, but her grandmother's pattern, which Long and her family thought went up in smoke with the rest of their belongings, had not been incinerated. Long had borrowed it from her mother before the fire and never returned it.

So before Christmas came in 1994, Long, an avid knitter like her grandmother, made exact replicas of the stockings for her four sisters and two brothers. Even though they were all adults it meant a lot to them.

(Continued)

Page 2/Laguna Beach Knitter

“They loved them,” Long said while indicating that the new old stockings made the first Christmas after the fire very special. “Christmas was always a special deal. We all loved the stockings. It was something I could do to help.”

Though Long got the knitting bug when she was in third grade after watching her grandmother and mother knit, she became what she calls a “yarn-aholic” ever since she made the stockings.

“I can’t go into a fabric store without buying yarn. But earlier this year after accumulating so much yarn I needed to figure out what to do with all of it, “ she said. “I’ve been making scarves, hats, purses, sweaters, ornaments and stockings like crazy.”

Knitting is quite a stretch from her full time job in the Escrow Department at Chicago Title Company, but something she can’t quite get enough of, so she has decided to make a side business out of it.

She will be one of 24 new exhibitors at the Winter Fantasy at the Sawdust Art Festival, which opens for its four weekend run Novemer18.

Though her grandmother was the inspiration for her work she will not make stockings using her pattern as she claims that’s just for her family, she has designed her own and will also take custom orders.

“My grandmother was an amazing needle-woman. I think she would be proud of me, “Long added.

(Continued)

Page 3/Laguna Beach Knitter

The 16th annual Winter Fantasy runs four weekends: November 18 & 19; November 24, 25 & 26 (including the day after Thanksgiving), December 2 & 3, December 9 & 10. It features 170 artists and craftspeople from all around the country exhibiting and selling a variety of handmade, original items including art glass, ceramics, jewelry, clothing, ornaments, painting, sculpture and much more.

Also offered is a real snow playfield, holiday entertainment, three outdoor cafés, artist demonstrations including world-class glass blowing and daily visits with Santa.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is \$5.75 for adults, \$4.75 for seniors 65 years and above, \$3.00 for children six through 12 years and free for ages 5 and under. Season passes for unlimited entry to the nine-day festival are available for \$9.

For additional information, call 949-494-3030 or visit www.sawdustartfestival.org on the web.

Digital Images Available.

###