

Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

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From The Editor –

As I sit at home with my computer watching nearly 7in. of snow begin to melt, I can't believe I am already thinking of spring and Easter. A long way to go as Easter is not until April 24th in 2011!!! Now that gives you all plenty of time for several sessions of classes which will prepare your customers to make that really special dress this year. You even have time to indulge your ladies with something special for Valentine - a nightgown for themselves out of our yummy Swiss Flannel or a smocked bishop for their little cupid using our Swiss 'heart' embroidery. Whatever your winter class plans, Bear Threads has some new and exciting offerings this month. We returned from our buying trip to Switzerland with lots of goodies. Some are mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter and others we will be showing at the Birmingham Market January 9-10.

New Swiss Fabrics and Swiss embroideries, some fabulous sales on your favorites, and a collection of ribbons that will spark your creativity are in store for you. Heather Petryk, who is our guest contributor this month, is sharing some tips for making special uses of those precious few yards you just could not resist. This is a lesson you will be so grateful for!

For those coming to Birmingham, be sure to see us to stock up on 1/8 inch satin ribbon. We have every color in the rainbow, along with wonderful wooden spools to make displaying so... easy!

With most of us seeing snow already this winter, (and lots of it!), I leave you with the following:

*"Buttons and patches and the cold wind blowing,
The days pass quickly when I am sewing."*

Author Unknown

So keep sewing,

Sheila



Look for this
beautiful
dress when
you see us
at the
Birmingham
Market

A Teaching Moment....

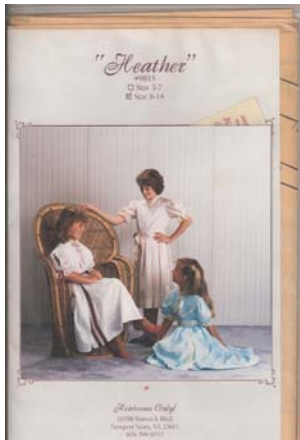
When Sheila first asked me to put together an article for Bear Thread's January 2011 Newsletter AND mentioned that she had some beautiful French Jacquard ribbons that would be noteworthy, my first thoughts went to the mid-1980's when I put together a prototype dress for a pattern designer, Lane Edwards of *Heirlooms Only* in Newport News, Virginia.

The "Heather"
(as she named the dress.

My daughter, Julie, is seated in the rattan chair, but Lane had a grand-daughter Julie and she wanted to save the name Julie for another pattern) featured ribbon and Swiss beading, sewn together into a 'fancy band' and then inserted into vertical inverted pleats on the skirt and sleeves – a little peek-a-boo effect. In thinking back, although I started out with exactly the same measurements of Swiss beading and ribbon which I joined using the same technique one would use in joining lace to lace or lace to entredeux, invariably I would get to the end of the panel and one side, whether the Swiss beading or the ribbon, would be longer than the other. That meant trimming off the uneven ends which if nothing else was a waste of some beautiful looms AND what started out as 25" EQUAL strips became only as long as 25" less whatever had been cut off. Meanwhile the other two strips were somewhere in between the original 25" and the new shorter length, resulting in a Fancy Band that had absolutely no chance of lying perfectly flat, no matter how much ironing was done to alter the now curved strip! And these were only 25" strips! Think what happens when you create a 90" Fancy Band using 3 or 4 or even 10 rows of lace and Swiss when making that special child's garment!

The solution? A little 'tidbit' that I learned while attending a Martha Pullen Husqvarna Viking Licensing School a few years back. Why I never thought of it before.....There truly is no day that goes by up in my sewing room that I do not use this technique.

Whether you are creating a simple 25" strip of Swiss and Ribbon as featured in the Yellow Cotton Faille dress (which, similar to "Heather", features an inverted pleat on the skirt as well as the sleeves) or rows and rows of lace for some exquisite Party Dress or Christening Gown

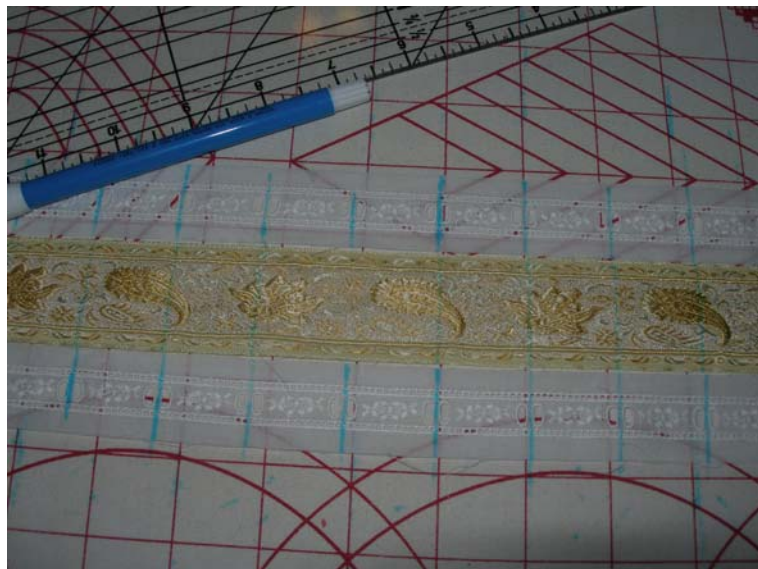


or a young man's shirt, use this technique and you will have no more unnecessary waste.

So, now let's create your Fancy Band. The supplies I always have near at hand:

- my June Tailor Board which is great for pinning several lengths of lace/ribbon/entredeux/Swiss – whatever I am working with –
- a ruler
- a blue wash-away fabric marker (one of my RULES when creating a child's garment is that it must be washable. Note: I believe no child should ever be placed in a garment that cannot be machine washed! In researching the ribbons 'out there' I have determined that they are for the most part Polyester and/or Silk and can handle water.)

Place every single length of lace/ribbon/entredeux/Swiss that you are using onto your June Tailor Board. Line up evenly at one end; secure with pins. Now start marking using the ruler and your blue wash-away fabric marker. The first marking I do is mark a star or an arrow or big 'blob' of blue on the ends – this will aide in determining the beginning of your strips as opposed to the end of your strip. Trust me, laces do get turned around! The intervals between your markings is not a set interval; however, I usually stick with a 2" interval unless there is a "match-up" pattern with my lace/entredeux/Swiss (Note "Marking Ribbon" where I used the beading intervals on the Swiss as my guide – it was important that my ribbon line up) and then I will use the pattern as my guide for marking but still right around the 2" interval. Less than 2" is just a lot of marking and more than 3" can mean over-correcting once the sewing process begins.



When you have marked all of your lengths (mark them all at the same time!), then you are ready to sew.

As for machine set-up, I use an edge-joining foot or an open-toe foot and pick a zigzag stitch that is appropriate with what I am joining together. As I sew, I make sure that my blue marks always line up. If I am off (and it will be slight because my marks are in the 2" interval range), I correct immediately, at that moment. I have had students who think they will be able to correct as they head down to the next mark – WRONG! Correct as soon as you detect that you are off.



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Continue in this way for all strips. You might be tempted to press your strips as you go – don't be tempted, even though your growing Fancy Band is resembling a slithering snake. Wait until all is finished. Rinse the blue marks off (remember – absolutely no liquid or soap or other chemical other than pure water should be used – you will have permanent brown marks

on your fancy band – ask me how I know!) and lay flat to dry. Now, you can press your Fancy Band. What started out as EQUAL strips should finish EQUAL – whether you are dealing with 25" strips or 90" strips, whether you are dealing with 2, 3 or 10 strips. And.....once pressed, you will have a perfectly straight Fancy Band. Okay!.....continue with your most wonderful creation!



Heather Petryk

Editor's Note
Thank you,
Heather,
for sharing this
technique.
Note the fabric
used was
Bear Threads, Ltd.
Swiss Faille
in Mais
and also
available
in Spring Green
and Pink.



Heather Petryk of Savannah, Georgia

Company: Heather's Treasures

Website: www.heatherstreasures.biz

What am I? I collect beautiful fabrics and trims and fabulous sewing machines! I sew, I smock, I teach (I am a licensed Martha Pullen Husqvarna Viking Teacher) and I sell beautiful children's smocked and embroidered clothes that I create by picking 'details' out of my vast collection of patterns, books, even pictures that I have saved from old publications. "Create" is a very appropriate word. There are just too many wonderful patterns - well-fitting patterns - designed by talented designers out in Sewing World for me to even think about designing my own patterns. However, I like to create a garment by using one detail from a certain pattern, the sleeves from another, the collar from another and so on. And if a Fancy Band makes its way into the bodice or the sleeves or the skirt of whatever I am making, then I know I am making an extra special garment for a very extra-special child! And this article tells you how to make that "Perfect Fancy Band"! Enjoy Sewing!!

Heather



SMOCKS, SMOCK FROCKS, & SMOCKING HISTORY - PART II

Last month we determined that there were historically 3 types of smock styles: the round smock, the shirt smock, and the coat smock. Whatever the style, the purpose was to protect the upper bodies' garments from becoming soiled.

The round smock was a pullover style with an open neckline and a flat, round collar. It was most often worn by young schoolgirls and is considered the most traditional. There was smocking at the center back, front, upper sleeves and wrist, and usually was adorned with a peter pan collar. They were

reversible and were not washed until both sides were dirty. They were mostly knee length or shorter.

The shirt smock (sometimes referred to as the Surrey smock) is styled like a nobleman's shirt, with a collar and a short placket opening in the front. It was not designed to be reversible, and was shorter than the round smock.

The coat smock was worn by the Welsh shepherds and was long and buttoned up the front in the manner of a coat. It additionally had a cape-like collar to protect the wearer from the wet and misty conditions in Wales. They were knee length or longer and usually made of wool. These coat smocks began to be embroidered, most probably to keep the fullness of the coarse material from blousing out from the neck line as it would have been uncomfortable. The smocking or embroidery held the gathers close to the chest.

By the end of the 1700s the gathers were embroidered by a strong linen thread the color of the smock, usually cream to dark brown. The embroidery varied from area to area, the design often indicating the wearer's occupation. For example, leaves and trees for a woodsman, crooks and sheep for a shepherd, crosses for a gravedigger and wheel shapes for carters and wagoners.

The fully embroidered smock with decorative stitching on either side of the gathering front and back, as well as on the shoulders, collar and cuffs, does not appear until about 1830. The smock reached its' peak of popularity in the middle years of the nineteenth century and the embroidery at this time became very complex and beautiful. By this time the smock was also considered a proper garment to be worn for weddings, funerals, jubilees and other special occasions.

In February I will conclude my series on Smocks, Smock-Frocks, and Smocking.

Sheila Nicol

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