

# Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

Volume 3 – Issue 2 February 2011

## From The Editor –

I just can't believe that an entire month of 2011 is already over!! The time goes by so fast these days and the list of things I wish to do only grows longer! Perhaps the Valentine Cupid could bring me an extra week in February to 'catch up'....or better yet a week just devoted to stitching!! Would that not be the *SWEETEST* of Valentine gifts??

Whatever you are wishing from your Cupid, Bear Threads has a great gift for you and your customers. We are introducing a new embroidery design in both insertion and 2.5" edging. It is available in Pink, Blue, Ecru or Aqualine Blue on White and is the most delicate bow design for which to ask. It is due to ship from Switzerland the last week of February, in plenty of time for your Easter sewing. See the photo elsewhere in the newsletter.

I am finishing the series on Smocking and its' history this month and I urge you to think of offering a series of smocking classes this winter. Sometimes as shop owners it is easily forgotten that every five or so years we are given a completely new customer base as young girls begin their families. With this long winter before Easter there is plenty of time for learning the art of smocking and making that adorable smocked Easter dress.

In our **Meet the Designer** column this month I am happy to have Nancy Faulkenberry of Greenville, Alabama candidly share her story of becoming a shop owner and lover of all things fine in the sewing world. I can personally vouch for the motto of her shop "*where you will always be welcome*".

Many of you missed the Birmingham Creative Sewing market due to the weather, therefore missing out on our new items and sales. It is too much information for the newsletter, but you will be receiving a mailing in the next week with all that is new and on sale. Please take a close

look at it. Within this newsletter, however, is a list of Rare and Out of Print books Bear Threads has acquired. There is likely to be something for your personal collection!

Happy Valentine to each of you and I close with the following:

It takes more than lace and ribbons  
And lovely verses too  
To make a Valentine  
That's nice enough for you  
It takes a world of special thoughts  
Tucked into every line  
And that's exactly what you'll find  
Inside this Valentine

So keep sewing,

*Sheila*



**E-193 & E-194**

Available in Blue, Pink, Ecru & Aqualine Blue on White

## **Old, Rare & Out-of-Print Books**

Accent on Pillows  
Art Nouveau Floral Designs  
Aryshire & Other Whitework  
Chikan Embroidery, The Floral Whitework of India  
Creative Stitches  
Crewel Embroidery  
Design Principles & Fiber Techniques  
Do You Love What You Sew  
Dressmaking with Liberty (1984)  
Filling Stitches  
Flowers are Forever, Shadow Quilting  
Here & Now Stitchery From Other Times & Places  
Japanese 1  
Japanese 2  
Japanese 3  
Japanese 4  
Lighter Shades of Pale, Shadow Quilting  
Linens & Lace  
Lingerie Sewing, The Feminine Art  
Mira Silverstein's Guide to Combination Stitches  
More Needleplay  
Needle Craft 9, Embroidery Design  
Needle Lace & Needleweaving  
Needlepainting, A Garden of Stitches  
Pulled Thread Workbook  
Pulled Work on Canvas & Linen (1978)  
Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Needlework  
Samplers & Stitches  
Shadow Quilting with Marjorie Puckett  
Shisha Embroidery: Traditional Indian Mirror Work  
    with Instructions & Transfer Patterns  
Shisha Mirror Embroidery (1978)  
Stitches for Effect  
The Best of Sewing with Nancy  
The Complete Stitch Encyclopedia  
The Needleworker's Dictionary (1976)  
The Pattern Library Embroidery  
The Personal Touch  
The Undercover Story  
Universal Stitches  
Wonderful Stitches

Cross Stitch Embroidery II

### **Bargello**

Bargello & Related Stitchery  
Bargello Florentine Canvas Work  
Bargello Magic, How to Design Your Own  
Bargello Plus  
Bargello Stars, Shells & Borders  
Beautiful Bargello  
Four Way Bargello

## **Embroidery**

A World of Embroidery  
Better Homes & Gardens Embroidery  
Designs to Embroider (1985)  
Embroider Your Clothes & Linens  
Embroidery  
Embroidery (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1909)  
Embroidery & Nature  
Embroidery Stitches  
Erica Wilson's Embroidery Book  
Favorite Stitches  
Guide to English Embroidery  
Mary Gostelow's Embroidery Book  
Practical Embroidery  
The Arco Encyclopedia of Embroidery Stitches  
The Complete International Book of Embroidery  
The Everyday Embroidery Book (1946)  
The Royal School of Needlework & Embroidery  
The Scribner Book of Embroidery Designs  
The Stitches of Creative Embroidery  
Royal School of Needlework Embroidery  
    Techniques

### **Needlepoint, Canvas Embroidery**

A New Look at Needlepoint (1972)  
Canvas Embroidery  
Canvas Work  
Carolyn Ambuter's Complete Book of Needlepoint  
Dictionary of Needlepoint Stitches  
    Glorious Needlepoint (1987)  
Lexington Lace for Needlepoint (1975)  
Mary Martin's Needlepoint  
Mary Rhodes Needlepoint, the Art of Canvas  
    Embroidery  
Needlepoint  
Needlepoint Designs (1975)  
Needlepoint Stitch by Stitch  
Needlepoint, A Basic Manual  
Patterned Backgrounds for Needlepoint  
The Complete Guide to Needlework Techniques  
    & Materials  
The Craft of Needlepoint  
The Encyclopedia of Canvas Embroidery  
    Stitch Patterns  
The Gloralilia Needlepoint Collection  
The New World of Needlepoint



Call today about our Rose Embroidered Dots Fabric. Perfect for a sweet treat any little girl will love.



### **Meet the Designer Nancy D. Faulkenberry**

I truly cannot say that I started with a love for sewing as so many others have, or that my mother taught me the art. To be honest with you, I did not even know what smocking or heirloom sewing was until my daughter was about 9 months old. I then saw my first smocked dress and I was hooked. I taught myself from the Children's Corner English Smocking Book. That was nearly 32 years ago and I haven't stopped since.

The person from the beginning who encouraged me the most was my father. Growing up in a large family, he watched his mother sew. A railroad man by profession, he would make matching outfits for

his four daughters....to perfection! It is instilled in me to do the same. I remember showing him the first dress I smocked for my daughter Erin and asked him to critique it. One of the first things he did was turn the dress inside out.

What he said was, *"Always, always make your garments as well on the inside as you do on the outside because someone is going to come along and turn that hemline up to see what kind of job you really did."*

What a pity it is to invest so much time, effort and expense in beautiful fabrics and laces only to have your garment not 'up to par' on the inside. Start from the beginning when you lay the fabric out. Cut the pattern out precisely, taking care to stay on the cutting lines. While sewing, take the time to trim the loose threads and press the seams as you go. Ironing is a major factor in heirloom sewing. You will find that your garment will lay flatter and neater and look better all around. This takes a little longer overall, but the end results are well worth the time. Let it be said that YOUR heirloom sewn garments stand out in the crowd!

I opened my store 'The Little House' in 1989, but my father never saw it as he was killed in a car accident in 1985. In the year 2000, "The Little House" was put on the back burner while my sisters and I cared for our mother in Birmingham, AL through her fight with cancer. After her passing I decided to close my store. My love for this beautiful art never left and here I am 10 years later with a new store in downtown Greenville, AL "Nancy's Heirloom Shoppe" which opened December 1, 2009 to offer fine fabrics, laces and gift items. It is through this shop that I share my love and knowledge to those who wish to come 'where you will always be welcome'!

Nancy's Heirloom Shoppe  
124 West Commerce St.  
Greenville, AL 36037  
Tuesday – Saturday 9:00-5:00

Contact me at:  
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Or visit our website at: [www.nancysheirlooms.com](http://www.nancysheirlooms.com)

## **SMOCKS, SMOCK FROCKS, AND SMOCKING HISTORY – PART III**

The utilitarian smocks of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were cut very economically. All of the pieces were either squares or rectangles, though sometimes the collar was rounded. The shape of the garment came from the smocking. Absolutely nothing was wasted.

It was customary for a man to have two smocks, one for work and one for special occasions. The working smocks were tan, brown or blue – at the time blue was considered a poor man's color. The earlier working smocks were made by women who harvested the flax and made the thread and fabric. They would then gather the pleats by sight and smock the pleats. Later there were 'factories' (sometimes one or two ladies in the village), who made working smocks for the men of the village. But the special occasion smocks were made by wives or family members of much finer fabrics, usually in white. It was not unusual for a village church to have a set of matching smocks for pallbearers. This way the men could come directly from the fields and change smocks for the occasion. Most often these special occasion smocks were willed through the family for several generations.

Farmers and rural workers were known to soak their smocks in boiled linseed oil to make them waterproof. This made for a stiff, waterproof smock that was also very warm. However, this process made the smock deteriorate more quickly!!

The advent of the industrial revolution saw the decline of the workman's smock. Loose flowing smocks were too dangerous to wear while working machinery. Also, the revolution saw the increased commercial manufacture of clothing. Thirdly, from a social standpoint, folk traveling to the larger cities discarded their smocks for the newer cheaply manufactured clothes so as not to appear to 'country' or rustic.

The revival of smocking began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the world of fashion decided to take up the art

to decorate women's and children's clothes. Much of the early credit was given to Mrs. Oscar Wilde, who was an active member of the Rational Dress Society. One of the aims of the society was that corsets should be abandoned and clothes be loose and non-constrictive. She thought it the perfect garment for playing lawn tennis, with its' stretch at the waist. In addition, in 1884, Liberty, the London shop opened a costume department where dresses were designed and made up in Liberty fabrics. The children's dresses were strongly influenced by the illustrations of Kate Greenaway where the children were wearing either smocks of traditional shape or smocked dresses. In 1889 the fashion spread to France when Liberty opened a branch in Paris with a children's salon specializing in smocking and Kate Greenaway dresses.

Indeed we have come a long way! From the original smockers who gathered the pleats by eye, to templates and transfer dots that were introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the art never completely died. In the 1940's a South African man, Mr. Read, invented a smocking pleater machine. By the 1980's several other manufacturers had introduced machines of various sizes and capacities that eliminated the need for the long, laborious method that was previously required of pleating the fabric.

Smocking is truly a unique embroidery form that was and is both practical and decorative. Other major embroidery styles of earlier days were purely decorative and represented status symbols. Smocking as an embroidery technique was used to gather fabric so that it could stretch. Before the invention of elastic, smocking was commonly used in cuffs, bodices, and necklines where buttons were undesirable. Today smocking is used in both children's and ladies clothing, as well in the decorative arts for home. Pillows, Christmas ornaments, and tissue box covers are just a few of the endless array of possibilities. Perhaps it is time to offer another series of smocking classes to your customers.

Sheila Nicol

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