

Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

Volume 4 – Issue 1 January 2012

From The Editor –

2012!

Seems only yesterday we were turning the calendar to the new millennium of 2000! Indeed this is a new year and an exciting one as well, for Bear Threads.

* We will soon be inaugurating a new website (things never go as fast as you would wish!) Don't worry – we will let you know when you can open that present!

*I will begin teaching again with several informative as well as fun lectures and projects. There are classes for beginner to advanced, as well as shop owners, too. Please call for more information.

*We have many new fabrics to entice your spring sewing. Honestly there are too many new fabrics to list here, but for teasers, we have brought back the beautiful Ecru in the Bearissima. AND we have brought back the *TRUE LAWN*, in white, pink and blue.

*We have a new price list that is easier to read and it lists all of our sale fabrics as well. Speaking of sale, this winter will see the biggest sale of our fabrics ever. We are forced to do this as our new fabric shipment is due in January and there simply is not room unless we say goodbye to some old favorites.

*I continue to part with some of my most prized antique laces and vintage ribbons. Don't think you have seen all of them – trust me they just keep leaping from my trunks! Jim is thrilled!!!! I am only happy to help them find a special new home!

I hope you will enjoy this newsletter. In it there is lots of information that I think you will find helpful for the coming months and beyond. And I am looking forward to showing you all that is new at the Creative Sewing Market in Birmingham. Remember the dates are January 15-16.

Till Birmingham, Happy Stitching –

Sheila

BIRMINGHAM CREATIVE SEWING MARKET

Sunday and Monday
January 15 and 16, 2012
Marriot Hotel – Hwy. 280 just south of I-459

Be sure to see Bear Threads, Ltd. first. We have many new fabrics for your Spring and Easter sewing. Among them is the Bearissima available again in Ecru. We have also brought back the true Swiss Lawn in White, Pink and Blue. In addition there are many new Swiss cotton fancy solids that are just so gorgeous! As always I will have many of my vintage pieces of lace and ribbons for your treasury. See you there!

A Study of Fabrics

LAWN

Lawn is but another fabric that is so often misunderstood and therefore erroneously advertised. Looking at the websites of many shops I find hundreds of fabrics that are called lawn, which in fact they are not.

First, let us dispel the myth that lawn is English. Yes, there may be some fabric woven in England that would more properly be called nainsook, but it is not 'lawn'. I will speak to that later in the article. I must speculate that 'English' was added to the word lawn because during Victorian times, the ladies of aristocracy in England had many of their tea dresses made of white lawn fabric.

Lawn cloth or simply 'lawn', is a plain weave textile, originally of linen but now mainly woven of cotton. Lawn is designed using fine, high count yarns, which results in a silky, untextured feel. The fabric is made using either combed or carded yarns. It was first made in Laon, France where linen 'lawn' was extensively produced. Hence the name "Lawn" comes from the French city by the name of Laon. The fabric has a crease resistant, crisp finish – a finish that is more firm than voile, but not as firm as organdy. Lesser quality 'lawn' fabrics are usually finished as cambric, longcloth and nainsook. As Americans, we know them as the muslin family. These are heavier and coarser than true lawn. In the textile industry the term 'lawn' is used to refer to a type of starched crisp finish given to a cloth.

As with our entire line of fine Heirloom sewing fabrics, the best Lawn is produced in Switzerland. Bear Threads, Ltd. is proud to once again offer the finest true 'LAWN' to you this season in White, Pale Pink and Pale Blue. It is the finest for sewing Baptismal dresses to ladies blouses, and adorable toddler dresses, too. It is just the *perfect* fabric for toddler dresses with pleats...the creases stays crisp

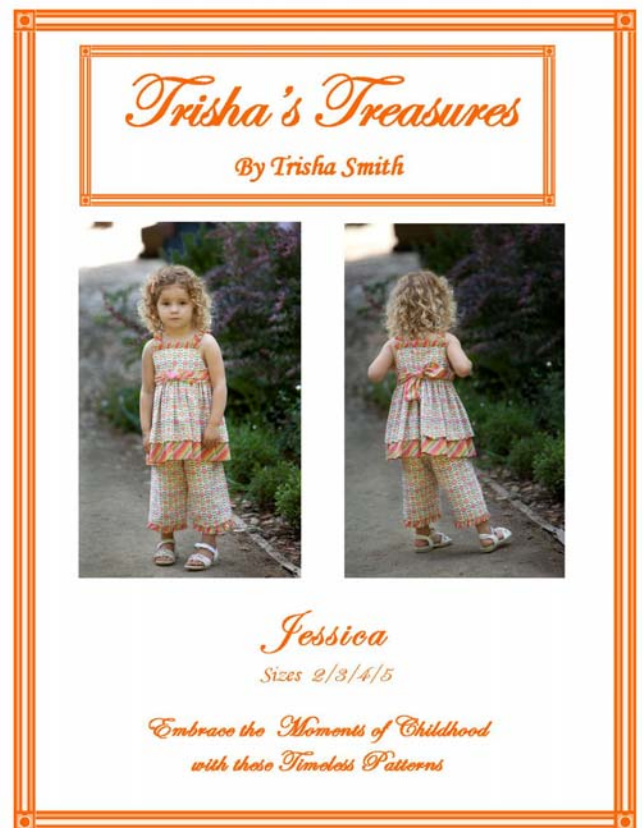
and fresh for that just ironed look! We are so happy to bring this delightful TRUE lawn back and to add the pastel pink and blue as well.

The fabric will be available the end of January.

Sheila Nicol

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New Pattern from Trisha's Treasures



Trisha's Treasures newest pattern is named Jessica. It is available in Sizes 2/3/4/5 or 6/7/8. This cute Capri Set has a three quarter length top and loose fitting pants with an elastic waist. The outfit is accented with sweet little ruffles for a totally "girlie look". To order this pattern, or any of her other patterns, contact Trisha at (615) 662-4823.

New Patterns from Children's Corner

#282 Ruthie is a button-down-the-front dress with several options. The slightly gathered skirt attached to a high yoke or a yoke a little below the armhole. It also has a short piped sleeve with just a few gathers and a long sleeve trimmed with little rickrack edging a ruffle made with elastic at the wrist. The narrow Peter Pan collar is edged with corded piping or rickrack. Ruthie will be available in Sizes 1-4 and 5-8 around the end of January 2012.



#283 Jane is pastoral-style blouse or dress that comes with pull on pants that fit so well. The blouse or dress pulls over the head with elastic at the slightly scooped neckline and sleeve bottoms. The pants have a waistband in front with elastic at the back. Jane will be available in Sizes 1-3 and 4-6 in the spring.



New Patterns from Old Fashioned Baby

"Baby's First Daygowns" will become your favorite pattern to use for quick and beautiful Daygowns to keep and give away. There are three very different views, each with special details you will love. This pattern included the OFB standard Infant Size along with the Take Me Home, Newborn size.



"Toddler's Summer Dresses" are two simply elegant summery dresses for your special Toddler to wear. Perfect for Easter or Beach Pictures. You will love this pattern.



PROFIT vs. EXCLUSIVITY

“One in the Same”

In the August 2009 issue of *“Bear in Mind”* I wrote an article entitled ‘Heirloom Sewing for Adults – More Profit for You’. It seems so appropriate still today, perhaps even more so in this economy, that I have reprinted it elsewhere in this newsletter. Here I would like to expand that thought, by addressing the above title.

‘Exclusive’ is the one word in retail that will allure savvy shoppers. It is to Moms what catnip is to kitties – the opportunity to have something unique for their little one. Mom’s love knowing their tykes are wearing one of kind clothing.

In our travels, I have seen so many shops with wall to wall prints that every other shop for miles around carried. Trust me, it is highly unlikely that Mom will make more than one outfit for little junior in green alligators, or that ‘lil Sally will be so in love with pink geese to have more than one dress of the little darlings. Sadly, many of those shops are now out of business. Why? Because there was no exclusivity in their offerings. Ideally you want goods on your shelves that the consumer cannot find anywhere else. It not only enhances your image, but it increases customer traffic. No shop can compete with merchandise that their customer can find not only down the street, but 5 miles away as well. Exclusive merchandise not only keeps your shop fresh to your customer, but high end unique goods convince customers that it is worth paying a boutique price tag.

Not to mention that just having the product in stock is the perfect bait for curious consumers who simply want to check it out – and they probably are not going to leave empty handed! ‘*Get em while they’re hot*’ is not just a cliché. Most women coming into a fabric store are interested right then. ‘*Be backs*’ might not come back. Another cliché that could not be truer is ‘*first impressions are lasting impressions*’. Again in my many years in this industry, I have seen shops opening with comments that they will carry the better goods later. Later may never come if the consumer comes in and all you have is what they have already seen **and** you have none of the better, more exclusive goods. Likely, they are already comfortable shopping

at their ‘home’ store and feel no loyalty to come back to you on the promise of something you will order in later.

It is also important to shop your market. Are there private schools nearby? If so, try offering uniforms for school. Monogramming uniform sweaters and blouses will also bring in extra \$\$\$\$. Likely, if they can afford private schools they can afford 1, 2 or even 3 really special dresses throughout the year. Little girls wearing uniforms everyday are delighted to have an exceptionally frilly, pretty dress. Have samples available for special occasion, birthdays and holidays. They are already wearing drab clothing five days a week, so make these special dresses *really special* with pretty trims and laces. Birthdays are a great time to promote those cute novelty Swiss trimmings! Rocky horses, bunnies, flowers, hearts, bears, trains, planes and automobiles...go for it!

Another tip for cashing in on your inimitability is promotion. You are selling fine fabrics and trimmings. Host fashion shows – better yet tea parties! and contests for best designs with a nice gift certificate to your shop, or even another exclusive shop. Many high end jewelry stores carry items for \$25 or so that come in that wonderful ‘blue box’. THAT creates interest and excitement.

Today’s retail environment is different and more challenging than ten years ago. The internet may be convenient, but will never be able to offer the personal touch. And touching beautiful Swiss fabrics such as batiste, dimity, lawn and piques cannot be accomplished sitting at the computer. Profit? The math is simple: if one yard of fabric cost \$5 and you sell it for \$10, your profit is \$5. If one yard of fabric cost \$20 and you sell it for \$40, your profit is \$20. You are making more profit and you have an exclusive clientele and product. Exclusivity vs. Profit? Yes, they are the same.

Sheila T. Nicol

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SAMPLE GARMENT SALE

You all know that when you come to market, how very much you enjoy looking through the samples. Sometimes the same fabric you have in your shop, shown in a different dress design, with different trims and laces, brings a totally new personality and aura to that fabric. I cannot stress to you enough that samples sell. Many of you say that you cannot sell the 'Heirloom Look' in your shop. But I look around your store, and there is not one heirloom sample on display!

So! To help you out this Spring I am selling quite a number of our samples. We have several new ones to share with you, and though you may have seen these at market they will be fresh and new to your customers. Perhaps one might spark an idea for a class! Below is a list, and be aware that they will sell FAST as the prices are incredible! Now is your opportunity to get the Spring sewing sales off the ground with a leap. Call soon so as not to be disappointed.

- 1) Red Swiss Flannel "Kari Mecca" Dress with Swiss Pique Print trim
- 2) Black Swiss Birdseye Pique Boy Toddler Romper with Swiss Airplanes
- 3) Black Bearlin Children's Corner Jumper with Blouse

4) Black Swiss Waffle Pique Children's Corner Dress with E-82 Beading

5) Swiss Ivory Dimity over Swiss Twill Heirloom dress with E-79 fancy bodice

6) Toddler coat of Swiss Houndstooth check in Black/White with matching Red wool dress both trimmed with Black/White antique laces.

7) Black/White Swiss Houndstooth check in "Kathy" by Children's Corner

8) Pink Swiss Waffle Pique with Vintage Ribbon and Swiss collar

9) Swiss Silky Broadcloth Bishop with E-40U and Ecru laces

10) Swiss Blue Waffle Pique with 'heirloom' bib of Swiss and French trims

Remember making Snow Ice Cream? Growing up in the South, this was a rare and magical treat. I remember my mom making this and we thought it was the best ice cream ever.



What magical memory do you have? Share it with someone you care about.

HEIRLOOM SEWING FOR ADULTS – MORE PROFIT FOR YOU

Obviously the bottom line in any business is to make a profit. Let's now talk about why certain items are profitable and others not. Specifically, how can stocking better fabrics, trims and laces be more profitable for you, not just in the children's arena, but for adult wear and home use as well?

“What factors prevent a product from being profitable for you?”

- 1) Fads – There will always be fads, but this can be catastrophic for the shop owner. If you don't buy enough, you miss sales. If you buy too much, next month you must clear out the merchandise because the fad is deader than a pet rock. And a new one has replaced it! Heirloom Sewing presents a classic look which avoids the ups and downs of fads, therefore a steady profit maker. **TRADITIONS DON'T CHANGE.** The basics are yesterdays' favorites, today's' traditions and tomorrows' heirlooms.
- 2) Limited use and appeal – Fabrics used in Heirloom Sewing can be used in BOTH adult and children's wear as well as decorative applications for the home on a year round basis. Not surprisingly, many ladies will sew with better fabrics for themselves repeatedly, but only on special occasions for their child for the simple fact that in a year or so the garment is outgrown.
- 3) Competition on the Low End- Competition on the low end of price sensitive items will always limit profit potential. If price is THE major factor, your competition will always be willing to take less and cut profits. **QUALITY SELLS.** Many customers who seem to have an 'outlet' mentality may never have seen quality goods. Many of the fine Swiss goods – fabrics in particular – have not been widely available to consumers so that they might learn the quality difference. The educational process begins with you letting your customers know these fabrics and better trimmings do exist. They may be surprised at how a small difference in dollars spent will make a big difference in the finished product. The joy derived from sewing on fine fabrics is immeasurable. You can quickly become known for carrying the 'real thing', not cheap imitations. This will increase your profitability. **KNOWLEDGABLE BUYERS SPEND MORE DOLLARS ON QUALITY MERCHANDISE!!!**

- 4) Readymade clothing - Many shops already carry better linen, silk, and cotton fabrics, but have never delved into quality trimmings. How many times have you found name brand fine linen blouses in better department stores or specialty shops at a very dear price, but the trim was polyester???? What a difference a few extra dollars would have made in the overall impression, if the trim had been a fine cotton or linen quality!
- 5) Product availability – If you make a sample for your shop (**WE ALL KNOW SAMPLES SELL!**) can you get immediate shipment to satisfy the demand? How many times have you had the hottest sample in your shop die because you called your distributor/supplier and that item was sold out for the season? How frustrating” **REMEMBER**, you should not be buying or selling trend, but rather tradition. And the basic textiles, the basic trimmings, the best you can find, are yesterday's favorites, today's traditions, and tomorrow's heirlooms. And you will not have to discount to sell. You will not be limited to one season or one age group. You will not have as much competition and no price wars. Finally your customers will quickly see that a few additional dollars spent will make all the difference in the work in the final product.
- 6) **GIVE BEAR THREADS, LTD. A CALL TODAY OR VISIT OUR *NEW* WEBSITE AT:**
www.bearthreadsltd.com

Sheila T. Nicol

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