

## IN DEFENSE OF THE HUMBLE BACKSTITCH: WHAT'S THE RUSH? - by Jen Funk Weber

Raise your hand if you were not in a hurry at any time today. I see a total of one hand, but not for long. It belongs to someone who's pulling a long thread through fabric; she's not actually raising her hand.

Hurry, hurry, rushrushrush. It seems that a lot of people are in a hurry for everything: to get through that red light, to get food on the table, to get this needlework project finished. Rush needlework? What's up with that? Needlework is by nature slow work. If it's quick you're after, you're better off cutting paper snowflakes or stringing large beads (both things I enjoy doing). So why do some people choose needlework, then demand it be quick?

In an effort to explain why needlepoint is superior to cross stitch, one web site claims that needlepoint is "half the work." The tent/continental/basketweave stitch is half a cross stitch, and thus requires half the effort, and takes half as long to do. Furthermore, the site says, backstitch is rarely employed in needlepoint, hence, less work still. You know what's even less work and faster? Not stitching!

I'm not sure speed and less work are good goals for needleworkers. Yet, I can't tell you how many times I've heard cross stitchers say they hate backstitching. My sister feels that way. When I ask why, the answer is, "It takes too long." Huh?

My experience is that backstitching goes faster than cross stitching. It's generally worked with one strand of floss, so there are no threads to align, and each stitch has just one leg, while a cross stitch has two. So backstitching isn't slow, per se.

And it's the same motion as a cross stitch:

the needle comes up, the needle goes down.

What backstitch-haters mean, I think, is that the needlework seems as though it should be finished when all the crosses (or whatever stitches) are complete.

Backstitching often requires going over stitches that have already been worked. More precisely, what backstitch-haters mean (I think--I'm not one of them) is, "I'm in a hurry to move on to the next project." So, in reality, it's not the backstitch's fault. They get a bad rap because some stitchers are in a hurry.

But backstitches can serve a useful purpose. They add detail which can make a project more intricate and interesting. As an outline, they make shapes stand out and can add depth. Stitch for stitch, I believe the humble backstitch can have more strength and impact than the more popular cross stitches. Consider a white beard on Santa. A slew of white crosses will convey the idea of a beard, but add a backstitched outline and some curls inside and suddenly the beard seems more lifelike, dimensional, sophisticated, and elegant. That's a huge gain from a few small stitches.

Hooray for backstitches! Instead of choosing projects or techniques because of the time they will take to complete, I hope you will choose them because you enjoy the process of stitching, and like the way a particular piece looks. If backstitch is part of that look, I hope you will embrace those stitches the same way you embrace the others.

Really, what's the rush? Summer's a time to kick back, take a breather, relax. Value the time that it takes to stitch all kinds of stitches; it's time well spent.

## MAY COMPETITION WINNER!

Congratulations go to

**Linda Umbrecht**

who correctly solved the mystery sentence ... I LOVE STITCHING

**Linda wins complete set of Dinky-Dyes silks valued at well over \$600!**

Well done Linda!

and thank you to everyone who entered.

## OCTOBER 2009 GT IN TEXAS

Members of The Stitchers Village who are going to be in or near Texas in October are in for a special treat!

Jo Mason and the Texas members are organizing a GT (get-together) for the weekend of October 10 and 11, and would welcome anyone who can be or will be in Houston on that weekend to join in the fun.

Their plans are starting to take shape and it promises to be a great weekend.

You can find more information about this weekend in the GT Forum in Tea Shoppe.

And for those of you in other parts of the world - don't forget to check the GT forum to see if there's a group of members near you who might like to get together for a special event.

## RETAIL THERAPY IN THE VILLAGE

If you are looking for something special for a stitching friend or you need a little bit of retail therapy to help brighten your day, don't forget to pop into the Village shops to see what tempting and wonderful treats they have waiting for you!

Our Village shops are open 24 hours a day, and you don't have to dress up to visit - come as you are. Our shop owners will be thrilled to see you and happy to help you find just the right gift for your friend or yourself.

If you are interested in purchasing advertising space in

**The Village Voice newsletter**

please email us on

**advertTSV@stitchersvillage.com**

## JUNE COMPETITION

Here's a competition to test your super-sluething powers. Gary from Bushmountain Framing has devised a cunning quiz!

There are twenty questions, and the answers can all be found on his website somewhere. Enter his site through his shopfront in The Stitchers' Village, and have fun finding the answers.

Email your answers by Friday June 26, 2009 to [editorTSV@stitchersvillage.com](mailto:editorTSV@stitchersvillage.com) for a chance to **win a custom framing certificate from Bushmountain Framing to the value of \$125.**

1. What kind of cookie is stitched on "Winter Sampler"?
2. What does CMC stand for?
3. How many baby animals are stitched on "Babies in the Wild"?
4. Who said, "Life is short, frame hard"?
5. How many creatures on "Pumpkin Patch"?
6. What are three frame lines that I carry?
7. Who married Joe in 2006?
8. How many designs are in the current issue of "At Home with Needlework"?
9. What instrument did my father-in-law play on Iwo Jima for the re-enactment of the flag raising?
10. What is the name of the artist featured in my prints page under Artwork?
11. What two things can you upload to me from my homepage?
12. How many windows in "Two Red Houses"?
13. How many square feet was my first shop?
14. What store in the Stitcher's Village is home to my sweetie?
15. What is given off from non-archiva foam-board that reacts and discolors your artwork - there are three.
16. What is my son's double major at Bucknell University?
17. What magazine features my recent framing?
18. What species of fox is featured in the prints area under Artwork?
19. Which two "Kay's Frames" feature working pull toys?
20. How many 1" - 1 1/2" frames from Larson Juhl do I feature on my website?