

Newsletter #22, Fall 2013

“October...The sun is once more welcome to shine in at the south windows, and as the sunshiny patch moves across the floor the cats move with it, basking and stretching.”

Elizabeth Zimmermann, *Knitter's Almanac*



Dear Knitter,

I have just bid farewell to the knitters who attended our October mini-camp. This year the subject was *lace* and we were inspired by the vivid new *Unspun Icelandic* colors (on the left side of the photo below, obviously!) to knit the



handout (a small Faroese shawl) in this wool. We now have in stock a total of 30 shades of this intoxicating stuff. Besides the obvious 2-ply sweaters, mittens, hats and jackets, this wool knits up beautifully for lace, in a single strand, on huge needles (about #9 - 10.5).

I spent the morning of my birthday having a delightful discussion with Benjamin Levisay, the *Fiber Hooligan*. If you would like to listen in, you may find our conversation at <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/fiberhooligan/2013/09/16/meg-swansen>

In this document, bold italicized words and most photos are links and, if clicked upon, will take you directly to the product pages on our website.

Note: *If you have questions about the products, patterns, or information in this newsletter, please contact us at info@schoolhousepress.com (replying to the newsletter email serves only to unsubscribe you from the list).*

If you would like to peruse any back issues of this NL, please go to <http://www.schoolhousepress.com/newsletterarchive.htm>

Our next big event is a *Barbara G. Walker* auction! Imagine. You can own a piece of actual Knitting History. Several months ago Barbara called and asked if Schoolhouse Press would please auction a number of her knitted garments. We said sure, and within a week, three large boxes arrived containing about 80 knitted items (each signed by Barbara, on a string tag); every stitch knitted by BGW herself. She subsequently wrote, “*I am glad to let so many of my old knitting projects go to new owners, because in Florida I hardly ever wear any of them; shorts and tee shirts are my uniform. I think it may please some knitters to possess something that I personally knitted with my own hands. I never used a knitting machine or employed anyone else to do any part of my work.*”



- There are 3 three auctions:
- #1. Oct 24th – Nov 2nd
 - #2. Nov 3rd – Nov 12th
 - #3. Nov 13th – Nov 23rd

You may view all the available items in the Look Books that Tami has assembled; one book for each auction. All three are on our website now (refresh your page), so you can peruse them and decide which items you'd like to bid upon; sweaters, skirts, tablecloths, shawls, tabards, etc.

For up-to-the-minute auction details, please keep an eye on this page of our website

<http://www.schoolhousepress.com/bgwauktion.htm>

or join our Schoolhouse Press Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/SchoolhousePress>





Wool Gathering #89 is now in our hands and concentrates upon EZ's Shirt Yoke Pullover or Cardigan. This is the penultimate copy of a physical WG; we are researching new formats for future issues of Wool Gathering.



Good News: Lace designer/author, Hazel Carter has recently moved to Florida. A full case of her lovely book *Shetland Lace Knitting From Charts* - which has been unavailable for quite some time - was discovered during the move. Although the book is modestly produced, the information contained therein is a gold mine of lace information, including how to enlarge or reduce a given lace pattern. Limited supply...

Cully Swansen is teaching two classes at the *Vogue Knitting Live* convention in Chicago on Nov 1st and 2nd.

One class concentrates upon his grandmother's classic *Baby Surprise Jacket* (the BSJ).

The second class will study Cully's adaptation of the BSJ, his *Circular Stranded Surprise Jacket*, which converts the garment (both baby and adult) to stocking stitch with a diagonally square color pattern.

SPP stands for *Schoolhouse Press Pattern*. These are new pat-

Schoolhouse Press Patterns #45
Elizabeth Zimmermann's *Pools in the River*, Cardigan & Cap

SPP#45

terns by a group of talented designers (*Joyce Williams, Bridget Rorem, Marilyn van Keppel, Ron Schweitzer, Janine Bajus, Lizbeth Upitis, Amy Detjen, Dale Long, Ann Swanson, Eleanor Haase, Ann Feitelson, Beverly Royce, Sunday Holm, Sven Gyllenman*), or reprints of our *Wool Gatherings* that have sold out; keeping EZ's, Cully's and Meg's designs available.

New SPPs since the last issue of this Newsletter include one of EZ's original Aran designs, SPP#45 *Elizabeth Zimmermann's Pools in the River* cardigan, plus a matching swatch-cap from Meg.

Schoolhouse Press Patterns #47
Brioche Vest by Meg Swansen

SPP#47

SPP#47, Meg Swansen's *Brioche Vest* knitted in 3-ply Unspun Icelandic wool, with or without waist-shaping.

And, at the printers right this minute, Bridget Rorem's SPP#48, *Dragonflies & Thistles*; a most beautiful gossamer lace stole. Bridget is a true Lace Designer, in that she literally invents her own lace motifs -- and frequently must invent new lace knitting techniques in order to realize her ideas.

This is our 4th lace SPP from Bridget.



Schoolhouse Press Pattern #48
Dragonflies & Thistles
Bridget Rorem

SPP#48

Q and A

subjects: *Unspun Icelandic Wool & Lace*

Q1: I am knitting a shawl in *Unspun Icelandic* and it has been a fun new thing to try. I am nearing the end of the project and am thinking about the blocking process. Do I block this fiber as usual - i.e. soak it and spin it in the washer and then block it out or is there something special I need to do to it. I am worried about it felting so I want to be careful to do it right.

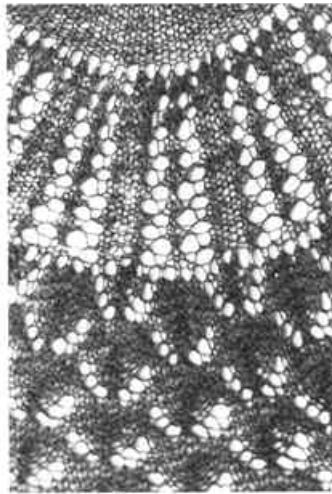
A: Good question, dear Kathleen. I usually do as you describe: soak or wash the item in the bathroom sink, squeeze out the rinse water and spin it in the machine. It comes out damp and ready to block. Although I wash other woollen items in the machine (on gentle cycle), agitating Unspun Icelandic items may cause the wool to felt.

For sweaters I block as I would any other knitted woollen item; no pins; pat it flat and coax it into the size and shape you want.

For a lace shawl, I flop it onto the rug and pin out the quarter-points, stretching it quite severely in the process. If you knit lace loosely on large needles, you will be amazed how much the shawl will grow! Then I pin the eighths, sixteenths, etc. Eventually, pin out every scallop of the lace edging for greatest definition. By time you have worked in the last pin, it is nearly dry...

Q2: A while back I purchased enough unspun Icelandic to knit the Pi are Square Shawl from *Knitting Around*. I really want to make the pretty lacy version Meg is modeling on p114, also shown close-up on p117, but I did not know which of Barbara Walker's lace

patterns were used for it? I made the round shawl with Unspun Icelandic and it turned out beautifully. I use it all the time in winter and my children use it as a blanket while resting on the couch even in summer. It is nice and light but also warm. Thanks for all your great products and teaching. Elizabeth was a genius and it is so wonderful to see her family continuing her work with such brilliance.



A: Thank you for your kind words, dear Karen. Yes, the single-strand Unspun Icelandic is SO warm and lightweight; my favorite wool.

The lace patterns I used on my version of the Pie R Square shawl are Little Leaf Stripe on p196 of Barbara Walker's

Treasury -- the first one (blue). And Little Parachute on p157 of *Charted Knitting Designs, A Third Treasury* (yellow).

Alert - both motifs are shown on a Stocking stitch background and I have altered them to Garter stitch (by knitting back instead of purling) to make the shawl reversible. The Garter stitch texture somewhat obscures the motif, so knit a swatch first to see if you like it.

Q3: I have my two pieces for EZ's Rib Warmer in the eggplant Unspun Icelandic. Now I wonder what I should use to sew them together since the unspun yarn doesn't work.

A: Dear Martha, The Unspun Icelandic can be made to be as strong as a commercially spun wool if you work as follows:

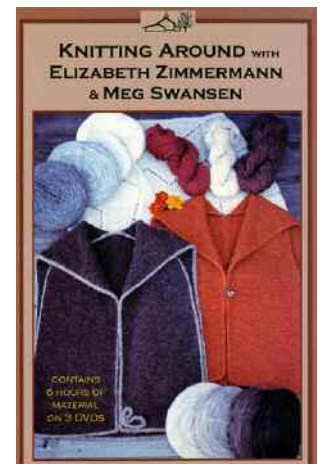
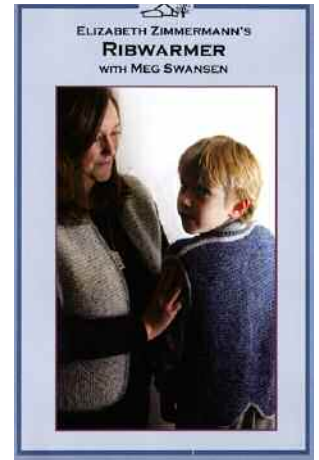
Thread the sewing-up needle with a length of wool. Gently pull it through the knitting where you want to begin to sew. Now, with it anchored in the fabric, twist the sewing needle between your thumb and fingers in one direction. The more twist you add, the stronger the strand becomes (however, if you twist too much, the wool will double back upon itself and tangle). Begin to sew the seam. After sewing for a few inches, the wool might gradually unspin; if that happens, give it a few more twists and continue. Once the strand is locked into the fabric by sewing, it will remain twisted and strong through the life of the garment.

Q4: I am thinking of doing a shawl, using either the Icelandic Lace or the 1-ply un-spun Icelandic yarn. Can you tell me the difference in these two yarns, the knitting-up of each, and the general ease of knitting with either. Also, I see that the Unspun is in wheels. Does the yarn still come from the center, or do I have to re-wind?

I will be adding lace patterns as Meg did in hers (*Knitting Around*, pp110-117). Do you have any lace pattern books that would give me some ideas?

Thanks so much for your help. I have so enjoyed the Video that I bought for this book. So much inspiration

A: Thank you for your kind words, dear Suzanne. The unspun wool comes in 'wheels' and the strand you knit with



may be taken from the center, or from the outside of the wheel; or used together for a 2-ply garment (*see drawing in Q6*). This wool produces a halo of the untwisted fibers on the surface and is very warm. Gauge for single-strand can be anywhere from 3 to 7 sts to 1"; and in 2-ply around 3.5 to 4.5 sts to 1". **Note:** Do not be intimidated by the unspun - thinking it will constantly separate; once you become accustomed to it, it knits up quite normally.

The Laceweight is a single strand of the above wool, but firmly spun and is put up in balls. It feels a bit coarse as you knit, but washes beautifully and "blooms" upon first washing. Perhaps the Laceweight is easier to knit with, as it is a standard, commercial wool and does not pull apart. Gauge for stockings or items of that type can be about 7 sts to 1"; for lace up to 2.5 sts to 1".

When seeking a lace motif, I invariably turn to Barbara Walker's *Treasury* series, or *Barbara Abbey's Knitting Lace* for borders. Remember that you can convert a Stocking stitch design into a reversible Garter stitch one by knitting back on e.o.r instead of purling (*also see my answer to Q2*).

Q5: A few years ago at *Knitting Camp* I remember there was much discussion of whether or not it was OK to knit off a cone. Alas - I don't remember what the consensus was. I've got a cone of a nice laceweight and am unsure if I should cast on and get knitting, or wind it into a ball and let it rest for a bit so it won't torque upon being made into a fabric. Do you have any advice?

A: Dear Mike, Yes - knitting directly from a cone is perfectly alright, as long as the cone itself spins to release the strand of wool. If you pull wool up and off from a stationary cone, it will add twist as the strand circles the cone.

So, put the cone onto a Lazy Susan (or put a dowel through the cone and suspend it between two chairs) so that when you pull out more wool, the cone turns; no additional twist.

Q6: I was wondering if you would take a minute to share some advice on using your unspun wool. I bought some from a LYS and am not quite sure how to proceed. Do you recommend winding the yarn into a ball or working off of the plates? I could use some guidance about deciding between using a single ply or a double ply... I want to do either the Pi shawl or the Stonington shawl with my wool. I've found project pages on Ravelry that use unspun but the ply used is never mentioned. What about matching needle size to ply? I have read that ripping this yarn back is difficult and I'm hesitant to waste any.... :)

Thank you for any other words of advice you might have. I'm so excited to see how this yarn works up!



A: Thank you for your enquiry, dear Leslie. The Unspun Icelandic remains my fave wool. For single-strand, I knit the wool directly from the center of the wheel (I pull it out gently at first, until the doughnut-hole opens up a bit; then the wool will flow freely). For 2-ply, I knit the inside plus the outside strands together right from the wheel. However, if on a road trip, I will wind a 2-ply ball to knit from.

I believe all the shawls you see knitted with Unspun Icelandic are single-strand. Very lightweight yet incredibly warm (the loose hairs trap body heat very efficiently). If knitted in 2-ply, a shawl will be more like a blanket or poncho.

For the Pi Shawl, I use a #10 or 10.5 needle; probably a smaller size for the Stonington (all that garter-stitch; it might be TOO loose on a #10-1/2; I'd use a #8 or #9).

Yes, Unspun Icelandic is tricky to rip - but not impossible, just be patient as you have to un-do each stitch gently.

Q7: I want to knit EZ's *Pelerine (Spun Out #40)*. How do I plan for a lace pattern? and how can I work the increases into the lace?



A: Dear Phyllis, Follow the directions to mark the quarter-points; then you may insert any lace motif you like.

Center the pattern you choose in the middle of each quadrant; there will be the same number of left-over sts on each side of each of the 4 increase points. Keep the left over sts in Stocking stitch until ... EZ writes: *"When the increased sts are sufficient to accommodate a repeat of the pattern at each side, start two more repeats. The importance of NOT allowing the patterns to approach the 4 increase-*

points cannot be too strongly stressed; better to have them too far than too near. The photograph shows that the sts waiting to become patterns form a pretty pattern in themselves."

Sometimes I do not wait until a full repeat of the motif is increased, but will begin to incorporate the increased sts into half a motif. See how you feel when you get there.

The motif EZ used is Arrow Pattern on p273 of Barbara Walker's *Second Treasury*. Since the directions are verbal, I find it useful to chart the instructions so I can find the middle of the motif more easily. If you have Barbara Walker's 3rd Treasury (*Charted Knitting*), you will get plenty of help for how to chart the lace motif.

Q8: I am in Texas but am really prone to feel cold when others don't. If I were to make the Rib Warmer, would it be best using only one ply so I can wear the sweater longer? or 2 ply for the warmth when coldest?

A: Dear Sandy, Because the Unspun Icelandic IS unspun, all the guard hairs stick out to make a halo over the finished fabric. That halo efficiently traps your body heat. In Texas, you may find that a single-strand will be warm enough for you and you'll be able to wear it for (maybe) 3/4 of the year, in the evenings. I have a number of single-strand Unspun shawls - and, within minutes of draping one around my shoulders, I can feel the warmth, and they weigh practically nothing.

Q9: I am making EZ's *Pie R Square* shawl (from *Knitting Around*) using the lace patterns you used. The first lace pattern was multiple of 8 stitches...Little leaf stripe. That worked out fine. (see photo in Q2)

I am at the 3rd increase... from 64 to 128 stitches. You said that you used the little parachute pattern for the 24 ridge section, a repeat of 14. Problem is that 128 is not evenly divisible by 14. There must have been some fudging along the way. Do you remember what you did?

A: Dear Sue, Whenever confronted by a lace motif that does not fit your stitch count, the important thing is to center the pattern in the middle so that you have the same number of leftover stitches at each end. Keep them in plain Stocking stitch until you have increased enough stitches along the sides to fit in a whole new repeat.

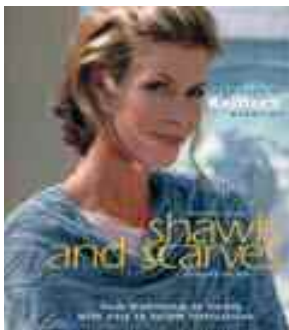
Your other option is to knit a partial repeat of the motif as the increased stitches become available. That is what I usually do if the motif is relatively small and simple.



Q10: I am knitting the blue Faorese shawl from the *Best of Knitters Shawls & Scarves* - a lovely pattern. I am confused over the directions. The book states that I should decrease every row at the selvages.

All the other shawls I have studied say decrease every other row. Should I decrease every row, or every right side row for the selvages and the gusset?

A: Dear Kate, If you work the selvedge dec at the beginning of every row, it is actually occurring every-other row: Dec, knit to end



of row, turn. Dec, knit to end of row, turn. So, actually the book directions are doing the same thing that you have seen elsewhere, it is just termed differently.

The center gusset also has a pair of single-dec each side, worked every-other-row. I usually have the "right" side marked and remember to work the shaping each time I am on the marked side.

Alert; the blue version does not have shoulder-shaping (I knitted it from the Faroese book before we had the English translation); I recommend that you add it in, via the instructions for Marilyn van Keppel's Faroese shawl in the same book.

Q11: I have tirelessly worked on the *EZ Pi Shawl* for July (from *Knitter's Almanac*), and I'm a little stumped when it comes to the edging. I would like to work the lace border, but it appears to be a sewn-on edging. Is there a way to make this a knit-on edging? I am casting on 11 stitches as it calls for, and then repeating the

rows back and forth, but the edge comes out to be next to the shawl, instead of the edge. It is also not connected to the shawl, but worked as a separate piece all together.

A: Thank you for your enquiry, dear Laura. We never never sew when we can knit - and you are correct that the lace edging is knitted directly onto the raw sts around the periphery of the shawl.

Cast On (Provisional is best) 11 sts and knit one row plain, working the last stitch *together* with a raw stitch on the shawl.

Turn and knit Row 1.

Turn and work Row 2, knitting the last stitch together with a raw-shawl-stitch.



EZ's Pi Shawl

Turn and work Row 3.

Turn and work Row 4, knitting the last stitch together with the next row-shawl-stitch. (you can k2tog, or ssk, or k2tog tbl; just be consistent).

Repeat Rows 1-4.

As you work your way around the edge (this border often takes longer than knitting the whole body of the shawl) and get close to the beginning - fudge a bit so that you end with a full repeat of the motif (occasionally knit 2 row sts together with the last border stitch, if necessary). You may decide to remove the first knitted row and weave the end to the beginning.

Q12: I'm interested in making one of the Faroese shawls you showed on your *Lace DVD*; a soft grey one with blue flowers. How did she do the lining?

A: Dear Katy, That lovely shawl was knitted by Marilyn van Keppel and is from the Faroese Shawl book shown here; Marlyn translated the book into English for us.

She knitted the shawl in Shetland Jumperweight wool. After it was done, using Laceweight Shetland (but same size needle as shawl), she knit up sts just above the color pattern (on the "wrong" side), not veering out of a single horizontal row.



Work back and forth in Stocking stitch for the depth of the color pattern, but keep the 7 to 9 sts along each selvedge in Garter-stitch, as well as the last inch or so of the lining. That will keep the edges from curling.

Half-weave the raw sts to the row below the pattern. Tack down the outer edges.

Confession from Meg:

Last Saturday I went to a local retreat, and a shop owner was knitting EZ's Hand-To-Hand Aran in 2-ply Unspun Icelandic wool. I was amazed at how beautifully clear the Aran motif was!

For years I had been warning knitters not to use the Unspun Icelandic for Arans or texture patterns -- as the wool is so hairy I feared it might diffuse or even obliterate the motif - - but not so!

I must eat my words