

"Were you ever snowed in? For years it has been my Heart's Desire, and this year it has come to pass." - Elizabeth Zimmermann, *Knitter's Almanac*



### Schoolhousepress.com Newsletter #20, Winter 2012

Dear Knitter,

The photo above was taken at sunrise a few days ago - after a proper snowfall of about 10"; all powdery and light (easy to shovel) and now the landscape looks more like real Wisconsin. In spite of the lovely snow, it still feels too soon to be planning last-minute-hurry-up gifts. Wasn't Christmas 2011 just a few weeks ago? I think the fact that I just turned seventy has something to do with it; the years flick past at ever-increasing speed. A line my ma loved to quote: "They ain't makin' years the way they used to".

In the last Newsletter, we recommended Sheepdown Garter stitch blankets in various sizes, with time to have one finished by the end of December. Now, with holidays breathing down our necks, we turn to hats, tams, berets, headbands and scarves: Single items which can be knitted relatively quickly. If you are a speedy knitter, add to the list things that come in pairs: Socks, mittens, legwarmers, and fingerless gloves.

*A word about Tams/Berets. A general assumption is that this shape requires increasing out from the lower edge, then decreasing back to nothing. Actually, it is easier than that: Cast on head-circumference (about 20-22" for an average adult) and work a narrow band. Now increase dramatically just above that band - all in one round. Depending upon wanted diameter of your tam, you can double the number of sts (k1, m1 around), or for a smaller size, (k2, m1) around. Now work the color, lace or texture pattern straight - uninterrupted by shaping - until the depth is approximately 5 - 5-1/2" from cast on (again, depending up wanted size). Establish 5, 6 or 7 equi-distant decrease points make the decrease lines fit into the color or texture pattern) and work a single-dec at each point every-other-round until you have half the number of sts. Speed up the decrease to every round down to 5, 6, or 7 sts. Finish off. Block over a dinner-plate for a tam; over a cannister for a cap.*

Liven up any of the above with color or texture patterns. Luckily there is no shortage of excellent books with charts and ideas:

[http://www.schoolhousepress.com/scand\\_books.htm](http://www.schoolhousepress.com/scand_books.htm)  
or [http://www.schoolhousepress.com/aran\\_books.htm](http://www.schoolhousepress.com/aran_books.htm)  
or <http://www.schoolhousepress.com/socks.htm>  
And sharpen your color knitting skills with our new book, *Knitting with Two Colors*.

**NEW** Knitter's-Presents items include a DVD directly from Sweden: *Two End Knitting* with Carin Appelqvist; a charming and informative new DVD, in English. Carin is a master knitter who specializes in Two End Knitting (also called Tvåändsstickat, or

Twined Knitting) and it is a pleasure to watch her skillful hands demonstrate the techniques so clearly. Because the DVD is such a good companion to Anne-Maj Ling's book, *Two-End Knitting*,



we offer a discount if you buy them together. <http://www.schoolhousepress.com/videos.htm>

A splendid review copy arrived today: *Knitting With Icelandic Wool* by Védís Jónsdóttir. Sixty-five (yes, 65) designs; mostly sweaters for men women and children, but also coats, hats, slippers, lace and even a dog coat called "Voff". Most of the lovely sweaters are either the original traditional yoke styles, or updated versions and some are brand-new. Available in January '13.



The Unspun Icelandic wool we import directly from Reykjavik remains one of my favorite mediums.



[http://www.schoolhousepress.com/UnSpun\\_ice.htm](http://www.schoolhousepress.com/UnSpun_ice.htm)



hat instructions on last page of this issue



Because it is put up in such unique “wheels” of roving, knitters have a choice to knit with 1-, 2-, 3- or 4-ply (or more). A single strand can produce lace at 3 sts to the inch or a patterned cap at 7 sts to 1". 2-ply will knit most of the sweaters in the above new book; 3-ply makes a beautiful jacket or coat (amazingly warm yet lightweight) and 4-ply is excellent for blankets or Cowichan-type jackets. To the 7 natural sheep-shades of cream, browns, greys, and black, we have added the 11 dyed colors shown above.

I offer my dear subscribers a free pattern for the hat shown on the right-side of this page (instructions are printed on the last page of this issue). It has the option of a fringed lower edge, plus Latvian Braid. The color pattern is taken from Lizbeth Uptis’ *Vidzeme* mitten in her book, *Latvian Mittens* (we also offer a kit for these splendid *Vidzeme* mittens, to save you from having to buy full skeins of each color). If you are unfamiliar with Lizbeth’s book, I encourage you to indulge in a good read of the fascinating and moving marriage rites described in the introductory section - then be enthralled and inspired by the magnificent photos and charts of 92 of these small works of art.

At present, your local guild or knit shop may have a unique opportunity to arrange a workshop with Lizbeth herself. She is on a multi-year pilgrimage through the National Parks system and is available to teach Latvian mitten techniques and Alligator Socks as she travels across the country. If you are able to take advantage of this opportunity, please write to [lizabethup@gmail.com](mailto:lizabethup@gmail.com). Be prepared for a slightly delayed response, as she is frequently out of signal range.





**SPP News (photos above):** Recently Cully discovered a few sketches and charts of his grandmother's. We knitted them up from EZ's sparse notes and put instructions for both of the seamless pullovers into:

**SPP#40 EZ's Wave & Arrow Yokes;** one is a fine gauge concentric-ring decrease yoke; the other a heavier Raglan.

**SPP#35 Norwegian Rose Cardigan;** as promised, my Norwegian Rose Cardigan is available now.

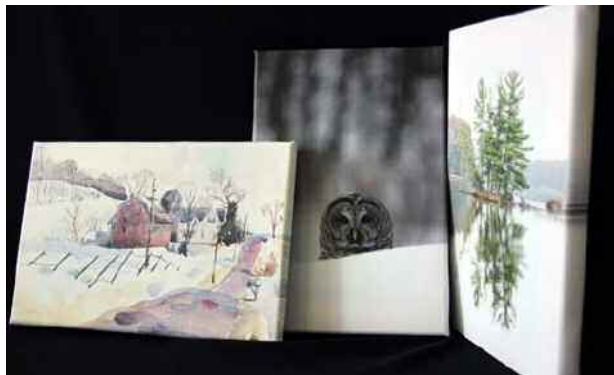
**SPP#30 Shirt Tail Fair Isle;** a stately design by Ann Feitelson, originally published in *Sweaters From Camp*.

At present we are at work on Joyce Williams' lovely *Acorns & Tumbling Boxes*; it will be ready in the new year.

Our Big Excitement right at the moment are the copies of 5 of EZ's watercolors and 5 of my photographs, printed onto canvas and stretched over wooden frames, ready to hang.

You can see all 10 of them here:

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



## Questions & Answers

**Q:** I need to be clear on something and you are one of the few people who holds both yarns in her left hand when doing stranded knitting. I find it easy to do but am never

quite sure which finger to carry the background color on so that the pattern color pops the most. Should the background color be on my middle finger and the pattern color on my index finger so that when I knit the stitch I pull the pattern color through the stitch always with the background color held above the pattern color? I know whatever I do it has to be consistent, but I'm not clear about the relative position of the background color to the pattern color.

**A:** Good question, dear Tim, and one that has raised heated discussions and disagreements. The topic of "over" and "under" is raised. Since one color will always travel over the other, and since two knitters may get opposite results with the same moves, you are required to do some empirical testing to determine which method yields which result for your particular knitting style.

Knit a swatch using a small two-color-repeat motif (one of the Faroese patterns, for instance).

Work a few inches with the colors held one way - then switch the colors and knit another few inches. Likely the difference will be marked and your query will be answered.

**Q:** I am very excited about starting a cardigan from Maria Erlbacher's book, *Twisted-Stitch Knitting*. I realize the instructions say to knit a swatch to see how the size might turn out. I was just wondering what yarn you would generally recommend to use in knitting one of these wonderful sweaters.



**A:** Thank you for your enquiry, dear Susan. To achieve the sharpest carved-in-wool effect of the lovely motifs, use a very firmly spun and tightly plied wool. From our Schoolhouse Press wools, choose Guernsey (for the finest gauge), or Québécoise Wool for a slightly heavier gauge. A more softly spun wool will still be lovely - but the patterns will not be as crisp.

**Q:** I have some questions about the cardigan in WG#68. The two-color ribbing, worked down from Provisional Casting On - there are a few rows of knit and purl (knit with contrasting color and purl with main color). But I cannot really tell what you did on the last row before the sewn casting off. What did you do?

**A:** Dear Pearl, I just examined the original garment and this is what I did:

k1 dark blue, p1 background for 1 round  
 k1 pale blue, p1 background for 2 rounds  
 k1, p1 background for 1 round

p1, k1 background for 1 round  
 p1 background, k1 pale blue for 1 round  
 k 1 round solid background color  
 p 1 round solid background color.

Use EZ's Sewn Cast Off in background color.

WG#68 Straight-Drop Cardigan or Pullover



It IS rather nice, isn't it? Thank you for reminding me of this design.

**Q:** I am an experienced knitter who started learning Fair Isle knitting for the first time 3 months ago. I'm having a problem with the puckering of my stitches. I used various methods of knitting. I knitted with both hands, then all on one hand. Then I went up a needle size and length of the circular needle. I still get puckering and still can't see the design. I knit tightly and tried holding my yarn a different way to create looser stitches but that doesn't work either. Can you help me? what am I doing wrong? I don't know what else to do. I'm ready to give up.

**A:** Dear Giovonnia. Puckering is a fairly common difficulty for new color knitters; you are still developing your own particular style of working. The usual cause is not carrying the second (pattern) color loosely enough across the back of the work. My mother taught me to pull the knitting to the right along the needle before bringing up the contrasting color. The goal is to have a loop of the carried color. There is a photo of her hands doing just that -- on page 24 of Knitting Workshop.

This is applicable if you are carrying one color in each hand and knit the most (background) color with your left hand. If you end up carrying the second color TOO loosely, it can be snugged up across the back; but if it is too tight there is no remedy.

*I posted news of the Two-End Knitting DVD (page 1 of this issue) on FB and many knitters asked what this technique was. You work from each end of the same ball of wool; knit stitches alternately with the 2 strands and twist them between each stitch. For motifs, one strand is brought to the front of the work and purled - alternated with knitting the back strand. All described in Two-End Knitting by Anna-Maj Ling. Here is a photo of my Nalgar sweater with Two-End Knitting motifs; an overview of the Nalgar construction is in SPP#39, The Four Tops. (click photo)*

Also, you might try to wet (really soak it in water), spin, and block the piece you have knitted. If you are knitting with 100% wool, often a slight puckering will flatten out when properly blocked, or steamed. Keep practicing your technique on little hats (great for charity knitting) and you will soon come up with your own method to manage two colors at once.

**Q:** I received the BSJ pattern yesterday (SPP#5), figured out the gauge/size etc. and was well on my way, when six rows in, I realized that there were no instructions in the pattern as to where to add a new color yarn. I want to knit the same pattern as the red sweater with white stripes, shown in the picture, and I thought that the stripes were added in the pattern. Am I missing something?

I am really excited to knit this for my first child coming in March and have my heart set on it looking just like the picture.

**A:** Dear Molly, Over the years, thousands of versions of this little jacket have been knitted and, as far as stripes are concerned, I feel sure that there are hardly any 2 alike. I do not have the red and white version here, but I can see in the photographs that the first white stripe (over and back) was worked after 11 ridges (22 rows) of red. Let me write it down:

K 11R(idges) red  
 K 1R white  
 K 1R red  
 K 3R white  
 K 10R red  
 K 10R white - the rest of the jacket is solid red.



I hope this may be of help to you. Remember that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to insert stripes; work as inner-directed.

Good Knitting to all. Love, Meg



## Latvian Mitten Hat by Meg Swansen

Based upon Fringed Sun Mitten, *Vidzeme*, from *Latvian Mittens* by Lizbeth Uptis

**Size:** 21-1/2" around

**Gauge:** 6.75 sts to 1"

**Materials:** 1 ball each of 3 Shetland Spindrift colors [I used the new Shetland Spindrift #684 Cobalt (C), #135 Surf (S), 617 Lavender (L)].

2, 24" circular needles of a size to yield wanted gauge (#3, for me).

**Cast On** 144, join (do not twist) and purl 1 round.

*(Optional Fringe: Turn and work in the opposite direction; you are facing the inside of the hat. Insert R needle into next stitch, wind working wool loosely around L index finger 3x. Insert R needle into the 3 loops and hook them through as a single stitch. I worked the Fringe every second stitch, but if you may want more density, fringe every stitch. Still in the opposite direction, k the next round, treating each trio of fringe-loops as a single stitch. Note: work this round rather gingerly as it is easy to pull out a loop at this stage. Once knitted, pull down on the 3 loops to secure them for the rest of time. Turn your knitting again so you are facing the "right" side and work:)*

**Latvian Braid:** With 2 contrasting colors (C and L), work a set-up round as follows: **k1C, k1L** around.

Now, bring both wools to the front and purl as follows:

1. P1C, p1L, always bring 'new' color **over** old. After 72 sts (36 pairs), switch and take 'new' color **under** the old. Complete the round.

2. P1C, p1L for 72 sts and always take 'new' color **under** the old. After 72 sts (36 pairs), switch and take 'new' color **over** the old. Complete the round.

To remember in which direction the chevron leans: Left-Over and Right-Under. Switching directions at the halfway point is my idea to eliminate excessive tangling.

Now follow the chart, which begins on round 5. After working the "repeat" section (rows 32 to 43) 1-1/4 times,

**Shape Top:** There are 18 flowers around. Work a cdd (centered double-decrease) every-other round, 6x with 21 stitches between (which will reduce to 19, 17, 15, etc), as follows:

Beginning on center 3-stitches between first and last flower, cdd: \*(slip 2 tog k'wise, k1, p2sso, k21) x 6.

K 1 round plain. Repeat from \* (with k21 becoming k19), maintaining color pattern, until half the stitches remain (72).

Now double-decrease EVERY round, down to minimum number of stitches (6, for me).

Draw the 6 sts together firmly and finish off. OR:

For my **twiddles** on final 6 sts: \*k2tog. Cast On 12.

Turn. K into f&b of each stitch (24). Turn.

K into F&B of each stitch (48). Turn.

Cast off.

Repeat from \* a total of 3 times.

Darn in all ends and block.

P.S. The original Latvian Mitten (chart below) calls for 6 different colors, but to keep this handout simple, I have reduced the colors to 3. I had only 2 yards of Cobalt left at the end. If you run short, make the top twiddle-less, or use one of the other colors - or use a different color for each of the three twiddles.

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