



"A #6 aluminum needle has been known to furnish an excellent emergency shearpin for an outboard motor."

— Elizabeth Zimmermann, in [Knitting Without Tears](#)



a newsletter from *Meg Swansen*

Dear knitters,

"When things simmer down" ... famous last words. Things show no sign of simmering down in the foreseeable future— for which I remain eternally grateful.

Four intense weeks of Knitting Camp were followed immediately by getting [Wool Gathering #77](#) to the printer; followed by final-final edit (with Lizbeth Uptis) of Joyce Williams' and my book, [Armenian Knitting](#).



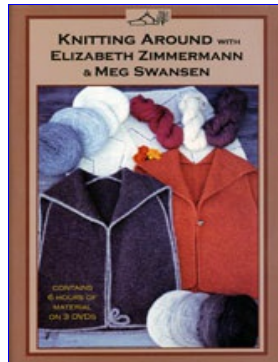
The latter was preceded by a fascinating contact with knitters in Fresno, California; one of whom, Rose, told us her mother had knitted for Elsa Schiaparelli in Paris in the 1930s. We squeezed in a Stop Press on the final page of the book—and off it went. Our search for the origins of this intriguing technique which Elsa called Armenian Knitting, continues.

Even though we do not say so on our website, we are offering free shipping to all the trusting knitters who pre-ordered Armenian Knitting without even knowing the price. We offer postage-paid to the rest of you, also, but only until October 31, 2007.

Cully has been working hard to convert his grandmother's [Knitting Around tv/video series to DVD](#). As an optional bonus, he added the audio tape of Elizabeth reading her '[Digressions](#)'—and, rather than a black screen during the reading, he scanned in several hundred photographs of EZ in all stages of her life.



Here is one of my favorites—in the Alps, wearing a beautiful Dirndl (I wonder what color it was), c. 1932.



On the Website

[Knitting Lace with Meg Swansen](#)



Kits for all DVD knits are available; [write to us](#) for information.

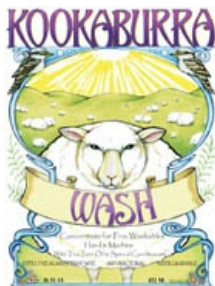
[Armenian Knitting](#)

Armenian Knitting
designs by
Joyce Williams & Meg Swansen



Knitting Camper ALERT: This year we will not send out 'dates' postcards; please [keep checking the Camp page](#) on our site for any updates.

AND -the producers of WoolWash discontinued their product, so we searched for another pure, gentle soap with which to wash our woollen sweaters. We liked the name, Kookaburra (I have cousins in Tasmania) and the sheep on the label - then we liked the soap itself. Give it a try and see what you think.



[The Kookaburra company](#) has formulated an innovative wash that is excellent for washing knitted items of all weights and fibers. Delicate Wash uses Tea Tree Oil, known to be effective against dust mites and as a natural fungicide and bacteriostat. Lanolin improves the luster and the pliability of wool. Lavender's properties as a natural disinfectant were discovered by ancient herbalists. Kookaburra Delicate with Tea Tree Oil and Lavender, 16 oz. bottle, \$10.95 + SH

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I'll begin the Q and A section with a FAQ about EZ's Rib Warmer design:

Q: I'm a larger woman [48-inch bust] and want to make the rib warmer. Should I just use a larger needle?

A: Dear Jennifer, Once you know your gauge, this design may easily be sized up:

Multiply your gauge times 1/4 of your wanted circumference. Invisibly cast on and knit the neck piece according to the original instructions. Then cast on for your wanted shoulder width. As you work the 1st- front, increase at the armhole edge every 2nd or 3rd ridge (not exceeding the number of stitches determined by the above math; 12-inches worth for a 48-inch circumference). When you reach the bottom of the armhole, turn the first corner down to 5 sts and up again to the full number. If the width of the piece is still shy of your wanted 12 inches, you may increase the girth here—by adding a side panel between the first and second corners. Then mirror-image the number of vertical garter-stitch ridges in the panel and turn the second corner down to 2 stitches — but not all the way up again. Stop. (You decide how deep you want the back opening — or you may choose to have no opening at center back, in which case, Stop when you short-row to 2 stitches.) Pick up from Inv Cast On at the neck and knit the second half to the same point (mirror-imaging the armhole shaping and possible side panel). Unite the 2 pieces and complete both second-corners at the same time as you knit the back in one piece, eliminating EZ's original seamed back. Work corresponding decreases at armhole edges; shape shoulders and unite back to fronts. I like to work EZ's Applied I- Cord across the back, then continue Cording around the armhole opening; then repeat at the other armhole. If you want a longer Ribwarmer: at wanted armhole depth, knit back and forth plain for as many inches as you wish to add before turning the first corner. Does that make sense?

Q: I'm half Armenian and very interested in your new book. Is it really Armenian knitting? Is there such a thing? Or is it a type of knitting that an Armenian did and that's why it's called Armenian knitting?

A: Dear Holly— That is the very question we are posing in the book—and, even though we are in touch with a number of Armenians, the question cannot yet be answered with any certainty.

We picked up the technique (and the name) from Elsa Schiaparelli's 1920s and 30s designs in Paris. So far, the technique seems to remain unique to Elsa and her garments —which were actually knitted for her by Armenian women who had fled or escaped the 1915 genocide.

The Armenian museum outside Boston has some knitting in their archives —but nothing utilizing the technique we employ in the book. A textile expert we contacted in Paris has theories and suppositions; but they are only that.

We hope, one day, to be able to find the source of this fascinating knitting method.

Q: I read with interest your article in *Vogue Knitting Fall 2007*. One tip which really caught my eye was the one about EZ's Applied I-Cord and Joyce Williams' variation. Yes — that blip has always been a problem. My question concerns what one does with the added YO before the last slipped I-cord stitch.

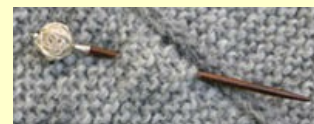
A: Thank you for your query, dear Bobbie. Suppose a 2-stitch Applied I-Cord: k1, slip1, yo, knit a picked-up stitch, p2sso (both the slipped stitch AND the yo). The yo acts as a cover-up stitch embroidered in after the fact... Clever Joyce Williams.

Q: I am intrigued by the 3-point or 4-5-6 or 7 point decreases on the top of a hat; going in any direction or straight or Zig Zag. I don't quite understand this part. I love the thought of unusual crown shapings so if you have the time to answer I would appreciate it very much.

A: Dear Jan, When you establish the decreases for the crown, you can set up as many (or few) decrease points as you like—within reason. The decreases can zig to the right (k2tog), or zag to the left (ssk), or go straight (double decrease; turn 3 stitches into one; or alternate ssk with k2tog and the line will go nearly straight). If you have 126 sts and want two diametrically-opposed dbl decreases, you will have 60 stitches between them on the first round. If you want 3 single decreases (either k2tog or ssk; toss a coin, or allow your political leanings decide), you will have 40 stitches between them on the first round. For 4 single decreases, I would make the base number of stitches 128 instead of 126 and have 30 stitches between the 4 decreases on the first round. To zig and zag, you can change the

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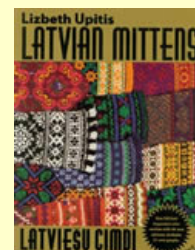


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direction of single decreases half way up the crown. To produce a rounded top: work the decreases every other round until half the stitches remain, then speed up and dec EVERY round to the bitter end. For a flat-topped Pillbox cap, work a round of purl stitches before starting the above (rounded-top) shaping. Start knitting and see what emerges from your needles. Pay attention to the stitch movement; keep the decreases in line and make notes in case you wish to reproduce one of your new, deathless designs.

Q: At least 50 years ago, I watched a TV show in Milwaukee and saw your mother decide that she wanted to change a pullover she had knit in the round into a cardigan. I watched in amazement as she cut the sweater up the front. Unfortunately, I was so shocked that I do not remember what she did before she cut or what she did afterward to keep the sweater from raveling. I am desiring to do just that—to turn a pullover into a cardigan for one of our secretaries whose daughter bought her a sweater in Ireland. Is there a book or video that would explain what to do?

A: Dear Sandra, You will need to scoop out the front-neck a bit and about 5 of the vertical center-front stitches will be sacrificed to become the facing after cutting, so may need to be replaced by a wide border to maintain circumference. Or, if the sweater is too big around to begin with, it can be slimmed by adding only a narrow I-Cord border (use EZ's Hidden I-Cord Buttonholes, or pewter clasps) instead of a 2-inch+ button band. With that in mind, I trust you have some matching wool available; or same-weight wool in a good harmonizing shade. At present, the best visual aid may be the [Cardigan Details DVD](#). That garment was planned as a cardigan from the outset—but all the information is included for securing stitches, cutting and knitting the border directly onto the cut edge in one piece: up one front, around the neck and down the other front.

The only difference for you will be to choose a neck shape and baste accordingly; then baste down the center front. Your machine stitching will follow the basting and from there on, you can refer to the DVD. Try to machine stitch on the left and right side of the single center-stitch. That way, after you cut, there will be no tufts or ends to deal with and you can turn under and tack down only that half-stitch—which has been flattened by the machine stitching — to make a very tidy inside facing.

Q: I have some wool for a ribwarmer. I do not particularly want to put on an I-cord edging because I don't want a look that is that formal. I have swatched, and the thick and thin nature of the yarn makes the garter edge look somewhat irregular. Should I try to do something about this, and if so, what?

A: Dear Terri, When I know I will not add an I-Cord border, I make a braided selvedge by slipping the first stitch p'wise with wool in front.

Q: I've seen a couple of SSK tips recently that twist the second stitch, which is *not* symmetrical with the k2tog construction, unless I'm missing something. Am I missing something?

A: When I ssk the Barbara Walker way (slip each stitch, one at a time, as if to knit), I get a very slight stair-stepping appearance. However, if I slip the 2nd stitch as if to purl, the twist tucks the second stitch more invisibly behind the lead stitch which results in a smoother left-leaning line ... for me, at any rate.

Q: Why not ask Meg and Company? Why not, indeed? (Who does that sound like?) Ainsley, 16, my beloved daughter keeps breaking my wooden knitting needles. She cannot stand metal needles, 'they slip too much.' And...she is a Continental knitter so her tension is loose. When she tries to get the right gauge, she needs a size 0 for the ribbing and a 1 for the body. When I told her to knit more tightly, she got cramps in her hands.

A: Dear Linda, I have also had wooden needles break on me—which is why we stopped carrying them. However, I have yet to break a bamboo needle. Bamboo has a bit less surface friction than wood, but is not as slippery as metal. Also, the grey enamel-covered-steel needles might please her.

I can also empathize with the gauge thing. I remember knitting on #0 needles, trying to get 7 sts to 1 inch with Guernsey wool, and was knitting so tightly I actually bent the needle. I think this may change for Ainsley as she gains experience, so perhaps she can knit a few larger-gauge items to hone her technique—then plunge into 6 or 7 sts to 1 inch. Also, when trying to achieve a very small gauge, recommend that she keep her stitches-about-to-be-knitted right near the needle tip where the diameter is smaller.

Do you have a question you would like Meg to answer in another newsletter? [Write to us](#).

Outward,
Meg



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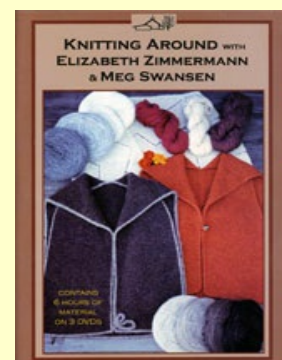
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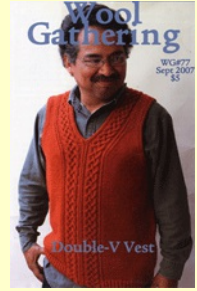


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