

“Still Stitching With Susan” Greening Davis

Susan has the most fabulous retreats -- some “up north” in or near her summer home in Michigan, and some “down south” in or near her winter home in Florida. Personally, I attend mainly the northern retreats because I live in Toronto, Ontario, Canada -- and YES, I am willing to drive up to 10 - 12 hours for one of Susan’s classes. I’ve been to Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island - way at the tip top of Michigan, and to Middlebury, IA, south of Kalamazoo, MI, just the other side of the Michigan/Indiana border. Susan throws the BEST party!

I first met Susan in Columbus, Ohio (I must admit I traveled there to take a course from another more famous designer, but when comparing the 2 classes - both sponsored by the same store - Susan’s won hands down!). Although I had never met her before, or stitched any of her designs, I was made to feel instantly welcomed in her classroom. I went home with a FINISHED project in hand, feeling good about myself and my stitching. I couldn’t rave enough about the class. This was June 2004.



Here is my very 1st “Susan” project – from the Columbus, Ohio class – I finished it and was “hooked” – the basket came with the project, and it “finished” itself – no frames or extra expense required!! I had SO much fun. I couldn’t stop telling my stitching friends all about the GREAT class. I ended up going to one more shop sponsored class, and two retreats with Susan that year.

Here is my Plymouth 2004 project. This was my 2nd class with Susan. I had seen this published in Piecework magazine, but when I saw it I thought I’d never be able to stitch such a complicated piece. I initially didn’t buy the magazine, but it was really easy when Susan taught it. Not only did I learn to do laid-work filling stitch, I learned about some of the history associated with this type of work.

This was a new experience for me. In the past, teachers of classes I attended had taught/demonstrated stitches, but never discussed the history behind the stitches or why a particular stitch was done a particular way. This project is stitched using Kreinik Silk Serica™, and Kreinik Milk-paint Silk Mori™ and decorated with silk ribbons. This was my 1st real introduction to stitching with silks, and I really enjoyed it! I loved this project so much that I bought the scissors to match. I was ever so excited that my project looked as good as, if not better, than the one in the magazine!





This is a view of our classroom at the Gull Lake retreat in March 2004 – a bunch of happy stitchers working diligently on their projects. Note that we all seem to be wearing the same shirts. Coincidence? NOPE!! This was an extra “treat” that Susan included in our package. I LOVE my “Susan” shirt, and am still wearing it four years later.



A Class Picture – Susan is the one without a blue shirt.



Mackinac Island 2004



Gull Lake 2006



Arizona 2005

Another fun part of classes and retreats is showing off our stitching and getting to see what others have stitched. At the Arizona 2005 retreat, we filled the tables with “show and tell” projects that had been taught in Susan’s classes over the years. It was fun to see things from classes I had not attended, and to see how various students had adapted and enhanced the same projects to make them each individual.



Did I mention that Susan's classes/retreats are really like adult birthday parties? There is always a treat or two waiting for us when we attend. And, her "presentation" of the project is always different. Sometimes the materials come in a special bag, or purse, or even a cup.

Here is the table setup at one of the "picnic" events with, what else but, red checker tablecloths and name tags with cute little ant stitchers on them (in keeping with the theme). The brown straw "purses" that are on the 1st table actually are the materials for our project. Shannon McAulay (seated at the 1st table) could not wait to unpack her goodies. This was her very 1st "Susan class" & she is now "hooked" on Susan as well, and travels with me every July to the Picnic. At the 2nd table is MaryLou, CEO of "Susan's groupies" (with the baseball cap on), and Ida (in pink top), her travel mate, are starting to settle in.



Above, are two stitching pictures from the class – in the first, Jan and Shannon work on their project while Susan (as the Story Lady) helps us with gadgets needed to "successfully pass a leisurely afternoon of stitching". Later, back in "teacher mode", she is helping me with one of the stitches, while another of the "Canadian contingent", Pat Dalrymple, looks on.

A lot of stitchers are also readers, and I was really thrilled when I was able to combine both of these passions. Below is a picture of me stitching with Monica Ferris (the author). She also wrote a special mystery (edited by Susan) especially for our retreat. What was really nice was that she actually is a stitcher, and she sat down and stitched with us as part of the class.



Susan, Monica Ferris, and Jamie Bebee (a budding young stitcher)

Classrooms come in all shapes and sizes – some have long tables.



Some have round tables (hotel ballroom, Mackinaw City).



Others even have couches and arm chairs (Simple Blessings, Michigan).



But wherever I've stitched with Susan, I've always learned something new, had lots of fun, spent time with new and old friends, and stitched a wonderful project (or sometime two!)



I would be remiss if I forgot to mention another side benefit of attending retreats. Not only do you get to see parts of the country you many never have visited before, you ALSO get to

visit Needlework Stores you have never visited before. And since "SHOP" is every stitcher's middle name --- on all of my trips, we stitch, we shop, and we shop some more, 'till the trunk is full, then we drop!

You will notice that I am STILL wearing my blue t-shirt, almost 4 years later, and using the nametag I made at Gull Lake in 2005 (the teal blue one). The yellow pouch I made in one of Susan's mail "Chapter classes". This one was four chapters, and the pouch is useful for carrying hotel keys, spending money and credit cards.

As far as plans for 2008, well I'll be "Still Stitching with Susan". I'm planning to attend the Welcome Home party in June, the Picnic in July, Trick or Retreat in late September, and Middlebury/Shipshewana in November. These are all of the "up north" classes. Plus, I am waiting on the 1st chapter of the 1st 2008 Chapter class – a 'Lil Cutie Stitching Pouch.

Anyone else who is interested in a fun retreat can find out when and were Susan will be at her website: www.susangreeningdavis.com. As an added bonus, there are a couple of complementary charts on her site as well!

Happy Stitching!

MaryPat Rushton