



California Living Lace Treasure: Masterpiece Lace Knitter Marguerite Shimmons

Marguerite Shimmons was born Dec 27th, 1923 in Leningrad, Russia. Her childhood was one of constant repression due to her father's German background. When World War II broke out, Marguerite and her family survived the siege of Leningrad and made a harrowing escape to the West, eventually arriving in the American zone and immigrating to the United States.

Marguerite says Nov. 11, 1954 was the proudest day of her life: the day she became a naturalized United States citizen.

Marguerite raised four children: Edward, Henry, Monica and Anita. She worked many professional jobs in civil engineering, forms design, etc. Retiring in 1978, she and her husband Ric moved to San Diego where Marguerite concentrated her considerable talents to decorating their new home, doing scenic pen and ink drawings and perfecting art lace knitting.



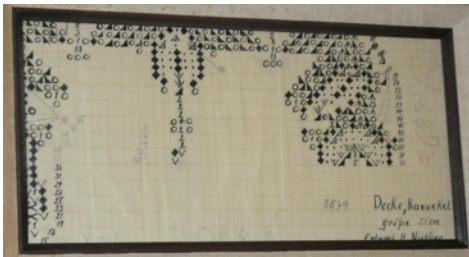
Marguerite had learned basic knitting in the refugee camps from German friends in order to make baby clothes for her first child. In the 1950's she asked her German friends to send her a pattern to do fine lace tablecloths like those she remembered from Germany. Her friend found lace knitting leaflets featuring the designs of Christine Duchrow and sent these.

Marguerite “learned her way into lace knitting” with the remarkable tablecloth shown here. With family and work she didn’t do much more lace knitting until retirement, but since 1976, this human dynamo has produced hundred upon hundreds of lace masterpieces, including table centers, tablecloths, curtains, shawls and more.



Friends sent her many German knitting patterns, often from Anna Burda magazine. Later Marguerite subscribed to Burda and made the lacy knitted designs. Occasionally she found errors in the Burda patterns and she started sending the corrections to the editor,

Maria Blumrich, beginning a friendly correspondence. This led to Marguerite’s lace knitting designs for a centerpiece and a handkerchief edging being published in 1995. Blumrich called Marguerite “Niebling’s follower” and sent her an



original lace knitting pattern from the revered designer. Since then an article about lace knitting in the United States has been published in the Burda magazine, highlighting the art knitting of both Marguerite and lace designer Gene Beugler in Oregon.

In over 30 years since retiring Marguerite accumulated designs in a number of languages, including English, Danish, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Czech and French.



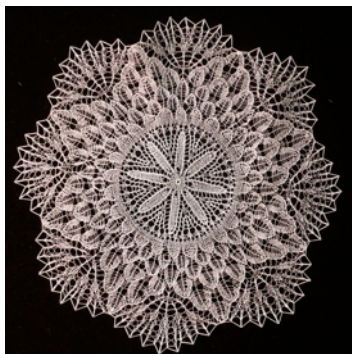


Marguerite knits most on tiny 1.5 mm diameter knitting needles using rare size 100 thread. She's completed over 1400 items, doing favorite designs over and over to give as gifts. Her laces knitted number some 770 different art knitting designs for tablecloths and centerpieces in a variety of shapes and sizes. As she accumulated experience, Marguerite often combined centers from one design with laces and edging patterns from others to create new and unique treasures.

Marguerite professionally framed some of her knitted laces and she put on numerous exhibits at libraries, hospitals, banks, city halls, etc. Also she's been interviewed for newspapers, magazine articles and for television features as well. She sent one of the articles mentioning her book to her friend Erna in Germany, who shared it with her niece. The niece asked to read the book and loved it. It turned out that Erna's niece was married to an American and spoke excellent English; she asked for



Marguerite's permission to translate the manuscript into German and suggested trying to get it published by German publishers. The very first publisher approached, Quell Verlag, offered her a contract, and her autobiography was published in Germany in 1995.



Marguerite's fine art knitting resembles intricate kaleidoscope images worked in thread. One need not be a knitter to appreciate the different variations of centers, designs, and edgings that combine to finish each lace piece.

The laces on display show a variety in structure and design, with floral patterns, spirals, and textured stitches. The interplay of light and dark of thread and background form complex shapes and arrangements. The astute observer may even discern the difference between lace knitting and knitted lace; the latter is knitted with continuous pattern rows while



the former has a pattern row usually followed by a plain knitting row.

Marguerite's boundless energy is amazing. She's accomplished so much art knitting because for the last 25 years she has knitted evenings from 6 until 11 p.m., and at other times in between. "I love the finished product," Marguerite said, "it's like a surprise when you see it finished." She said she knits to keep her mind occupied and "I also thought it would help with my arthritis to keep my hands active. I just couldn't sit

and do nothing. I like to see a result, not just waste my time." Marguerite Shimmons continues to knit and combine intricate knitted lace patterns from her home in Solana Beach. Her love of art knitting inspires all who see her works.



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