

by Joan Morhard Smith

photos by Jared Flood

*During World War II, my parents gathered in New York with many other European expatriates and their families. Two of their closest friends were Arnold and Elizabeth Zimmermann, who became my godparents.*

As such, each holiday they would present me with yet another unexciting sterling fork or spoon, never a toy; but when I married, they completed the service with the admonishment that each piece be used at every meal. Can't say I obeyed, consequently I suffer pangs of guilt whenever I set a holiday table. Each weekend Arnold would insist that we travel to their puddingstone farmhouse in New York State because of his conviction the City would be bombed or invaded—of course these horrors would befall us on weekends

only. My earliest images of Betty were watching her and Mom put down their knitting needles or paint brushes to milk some fearsome brown and white cows, bake delectable bread, bathe and swim in the creek, or pick leeches off our limbs.

Many of my itchy woolen sweaters, hats, and mittens were made by Betty. Whenever the Zimmermanns visited from Wisconsin, she left a few knitted goodies behind with us. Each summer the Zimmermanns would arrive to ship a child off to relatives in Europe. Sadly we would all wave goodbye from the Weehawken pier, but happily return to Milwaukee by car (before highways were built) with classical music permeating our rock-and-roll-starved souls. Once there, I'd awaken each morning with cats on my bed, the aroma of bread in my nose and kids waiting to teach me about my New York "beea, cah, and coufee." On a camping trip to Northern Wisconsin when I was fifteen, we swam across a narrow river. Panting after my round trip Arnold announced that I had mastered the Mississippi River. I can still recall my disbelief. Another time, late for my flight home, the Zimmermanns called the airport and requested a delay. When I boarded, all the passengers were staring at what had to be a movie star to justify delaying their flight. What they saw was me, hair and clothes askew, with an extraordinarily long string of sausages trailing and bumping along behind me from out of the carry-on—a loving p.s. from Betty, but for me total embarrassment. Some other of her many beautiful gifts still survive almost sixty-five years later, and are probably in better shape than am I.



One of our family's all time favorites was a square-necked sweater which Betty made for me to wear in high school. When IT wasn't on my back, my Mom was grabbing IT behind it. IT was green shetland wool, bat-sleeved, and long enough for me as a tall stringbean girl who loved unique clothes. My three daughters also wore IT throughout their schooling, always bickering over who should take IT back to school. Sadly over time the elbows disappeared, unexplained holes appeared, and it took on a slight aura of rattiness and, like its owner, was showing its age. Lovingly IT joined many special companions which were stored in our cedar chest never to be worn again, saved simply to evoke wonderful family memories when we lift the soft-scented lid.



One sunny day I thought "aha!" why not try my hand at copying this beloved family heirloom for all my daughters? But two obstacles became apparent: the green shetland was no longer available, and Meg was unable to locate this long lost pattern. Her Ma often designed as she knitted. But EZ was with me when I found Sunday Holm at *Stix and Stitches* in Montclair, New Jersey. Voila, I'd hit the jackpot! Sunday is an extraordinary knitter and is also in awe of EZ's work. After hearing of my dismay, she timidly asked if she might try her hand at it, which thrilled me since I am fully aware of

my own basement level talent. Every night, Sunday would tuck IT lovingly and safely by her front door, wrapped securely in a basket for a speedy escape should a disaster occur. She worried, toiled, and often asked Betty for guidance. Sunday is undeniably a knitting genius detective who gleaned clues which led her onward to one of the most difficult achievements of her knitting career.



A few months later I dropped into that magnetic and charming shop that brims with delicious temptations and sage advice. Like the gifts of The Magi and Ponce de Leon's fountain of youth,

there IT was, perfect, beautiful and whole again. Sunday's resourceful mind and magic fingers had duplicated my wonderful sweater flawlessly. How, I will never understand; but I do know that she did it with patience, curiosity, inventiveness, and a heart filled with love. As I prepared to leave the shop, I had tucked the original in my bag when Sunday asked whether I had left something behind. Quizzically I turned and she handed me the new one for my family to bicker over and wear often. I reached into my bag and presented her with the original, as we both wept with gleeful gratitude and Betty's approval.