

Stitchers Hideaway!

2005 Mystic One & Two Fun Report

with
Thea Dueck of Victoria Sampler

MYSTIC ONE. What an exciting time for those of us who gathered for the Mystic 2005 Retreats! Thea Dueck of [The Victoria Sampler](#) traveled all the way from Victoria, British Columbia, to be our instructor. Thea's designs have been long admired by so many stitchers and so we were all especially excited to have her come to Connecticut to teach for the very first time. Two retreats had to be held to accommodate everyone -- called Mystic One and Mystic Two.



Thea and I had a free day before the retreat to go out and play. I was so pleased to be able to show Thea some of what I love about my home and New England in general. Although it was early November, we had a very late fall and so she was able to enjoy some of our famous foliage. First on my list of places to go was my little cottage at a seasonal campground in Haddam, CT. The cottages there have a bit of a Victorian look to them with lots of porches and gingerbreading. It is located on a high bank overlooking a very scenic spot on the Connecticut River. We walked about the grounds and I was able to share with her some of the history behind the campground. We drove to the little Town of Chester and had a delicious lunch in a funky little restaurant, then drove to the shore to look at the ocean and little beach houses. Thea loved the little houses!

The next morning the Mystic One stitchers began congregating in the hotel lobby chatting excitedly as they waited for us to open the door. Chris and Pam from Chris's Collection had set up shop for us --including a Victoria Sampler Trunk Show! Snacks and Fun Packs filled with goodies awaited each stitcher. Suddenly it was time, the door opened, and in they all poured! What an excited group! And boy, they were in the mood to shop! Everyone was thrilled to see Thea's Trunk Show. There's nothing quite like seeing stitched models.



The Fun Packs were great! Besides items from *Stitcher's Hideaway*, there were freebies from *A Whimsical Element*, *Chris's Collection*, [Elizabeth's Designs](#), *Finger Work*, *Interweave Press*, [It's Fine-ally Finished](#), *Just Cross Stitch*, [Just Nan](#), [Kreinik](#), *Lavender Wings*, [Olde Colonial Designs](#), [Praiseworthy Stitches](#), [Rosewood](#)

Manor, Sue Hillis Designs, The Prairie Schooler, Weeks Dye Works, With My Needle, and Zweigart! During the retreat we also received a great freebie from The Victoria Sampler!



After a bit we settled into our classroom, with our Gingerbread Garden Sampler kit before us. I LOVE opening up a brand-new kit!! The linen was so perfect for this gingerbread design and the beautiful silk flosses were so soft. Oh, there's nothing quite like starting a brand-new project!!



The stitchers at this first Mystic retreat were from CA, CT, MA, MI, NH, NY and NB Canada. Sabrina from California was the stitcher that traveled the farthest and she received special goodies. Sabrina arranged an extended visit so that she could take in some of the sights in Mystic. She was such a fun addition to the group!

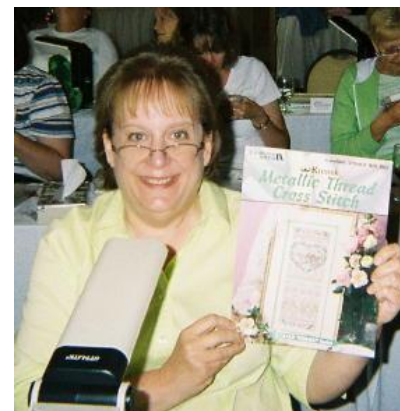
One "lucky" stitcher was sitting in a seat with a coin taped to the underside of her spot on the table. She received a crazy frog statue in Christmas decor! LOL!! Several door prizes were given out and then we settled down for our first class.

After telling us a bit about the design in general, Thea soon had us started on a portion of the ornament. We worked on kloster blocks in preparation of doing hardanger. It seemed that class had barely begun when it was time for lunch! Mystic Market Caterers arrived with incredible sandwiches and butternut bisque. Oh, man, it was heavenly! I tried begging for the bisque recipe, without success. Funny. The chef just laughed at me!

After some more drooling over the trunk show, we headed back for class and periodic door prize drawings. Donors really outdid themselves. There were squeals of delight as the prizes were revealed. A Whimsical Element, Brittercup Designs, Calico Crossroads, Cherished Stitches, Chris's Collection, Earth Threads, Finger Work, Glory Bee, Interweave Press, Jeannette Douglas Designs, Knotted Tree NeedleArt, Kreinik, Lavender Wings, M Designs, monsterbubbles, Nordic Needle, Praiseworthy Stitches, Rosewood Manor, Stitchy Kitty, The Victoria Sampler, With My Needle, and Stitches' Hideaway. The donors were so very generous!



Door Prize from Knotted Tree



Door Prize from Kreinik

Thea had a wonderful way of making each of us all feel like stars in her class!! She was so encouraging! No matter what our experience level, she was right there for us, patiently guiding us through each different stitch and technique, and answering all our questions. We learned helpful hints to making kloster blocks and Algerian Eyelets, among other things that afternoon. Our assignment that night was to finish all our kloster blocks so that we could learn some hardanger and hemstitching the next day.



In response to our *many* questions, Thea told us a lot about her company, The Victoria Sampler, and her wonderful staff. We wanted to know how she came up with her design ideas, how she actually did her designing and stitching, about her family and.... oh, my, we just wanted to know everything!!

Peppered throughout our afternoon class and break time were more and more door prizes. We also spent some time drooling over Thea's Trunk Show and all the other great stash from Chris's Collection.

Next was dinner time, once again catered by the awesome Mystic Market Caterers. YUMMMMMMMMM!!! It was so nice to just go across the hall for our meals and to sit, relax and chat and get to know each other.



I must give out hundreds of door prizes every year. I really have no idea how many. At this retreat *I* was given a door prize!!! Omigosh, I was so thrilled! There is a group of stitchers from New York that meet just about weekly to stitch. They call themselves The Stitches' Witches. Some of them have attended every Mystic retreat (and others, too) since 2002. They made me a door prize! I wish I had a better shot of it to show you. It says "Doorprize Award to Sue -- Mystic 2005, SH (as in Stitches' Hideaway), From The Stitches' Witches! It has a key above the door on it and it is finished so beautifully! I was so choked up at their thoughtfulness that I actually couldn't speak for a couple minutes -- and you all know that's like a miracle!!! Thank you again, Stitches' Witches!!

That evening I had a surprise for everyone. They had been teased about it for some time before the retreat and finally they could find out what it was! Those of you who have been to a few retreats know that you never know what you're going to get! It's pretty much whatever happens to spill out of me at that moment in time. This time it was two designs. The first one, Christmas Joy, was stitched in beautiful threads donated by [Weeks Dye Works](#) and filament thread by [Kreinik](#). I finished mine as a balsam-filled pillow, which caused me some concern! You see, I didn't do the final finishing until the night before the retreat when I packed it with balsam and then whip-stitched it – in my hotel room. The next morning when I was getting ready to go to the retreat I realized I had some leftover balsam laying on top of some paper. I swear to you it looked like pot (*don't EVEN* ask me how I know what pot looks like -- ha-ha!) and I thought I'd better not leave that out for the cleaning staff to discover or I'd end up having a police visit in the middle of the retreat!



When I designed that little number, I got a double inspiration and made another surprise for everyone! I named this one Tidings. The metallic thread for these kits were donated once again by [Kreink](#), and the Christmasey red and green threads were donated by [JAR Designs](#) -- a new line of hand-dyed floss. I happen to know the two ladies who do this hand-dyeing. They are Jan and Pam from The Someday Shop, who have set up stash enhancement at all the Kissimmee retreats. At Kissimmee 2005 I could see the results of all their efforts -- a full line of gorgeous threads, and dye that is probably stuck on their hands until forever!!



The gold Kreinik #4 Braid #002 that was donated for these kits was also the same thread used by Thea in the Gingerbread Garden. I heard several stitchers remark about how easy it was to use this metallic braid, and I agreed. I think several of us have had experiences in the past with uncooperative metallic thread, but this was really a dream to use and so pretty, too!

This is Thea and I, by the way. Don't ask me what on earth we were doing because neither of us knows. It might have been the effects of the, um, balsam. We definitely inhaled. Or maybe this is just evidence of a serious lack of sleep!!



The next morning, we gathered for breakfast, some later than others. SOME of us had stayed up *very* late to complete our homework assignment of finishing the kloster blocks!! SOME of us were a little extra punchy all day! Some of us might be named Sue!!



We entered our classroom to find *more* stash and a Good Morning message from Thea, who is definitely an early riser. I pondered this fact as class began and I drank my third cup of coffee. Or was it my fourth? I looked over and saw a few other stitchers with their noses in their coffee cups. Ahhh. Fellow night people.

See this blurry picture of Thea and her whiteboard greeting? That's kind of how things look to me in the morning.

After a good jolt of caffeine, I pulled names for more and more and more door prizes! Then partway through the morning more donations arrived by special delivery from [Kreinik](#) and Lavender Wings! You would have

thought by the enthusiastic response that there had been some kind of stash famine going on! But it really was exciting. Lavender Wings had sent wonderful charts for the Mystic One and Two retreaters and Kreinik had sent little ornament kits and packs of metallic threads and metallic thread kits! It was really great!!

As the caffeine continued to course through my veins I felt much more like myself and so naturally I picked on Thea!



Oooo...look everyone....Sue is shorter than Thea!



Smile nice for the camera, Thea!

Eventually that caffeine rush calmed down and we all bravely went forth where few have dared to go before -- to learn hardanger! Funny thing is, Thea made it so simple that it was a breeze! We did hemstitching, too. We covered partial rhodes and upright crosses, plait stitch, and more. We were AWESOME!!





Just a little bit into our afternoon class we discovered that a couple of the stitchers had completely finished their ornament and were almost done with their samplers!! Did those stitchers sleep at all?!? Do they have magic needles?!? Helper Elves? Roberta, Liz, and Donna! 'Fess up!!

Time just flew by. We were silly, we stitched like wild women, we had great meals, we had door prizes and door prizes and door prizes.



That night we had a fantastic Show 'n Tell time and saw all kinds of amazing needlework. I would love to show you photos of it all, but I was so enthralled that I forgot to take pictures!!! Ooops.

We concluded our time together after Show 'n Tell, with some of us lingering longer than others -- the night people!!! There were hugs and thanks you's and see-you-next-year's all around.

But for Thea and I, this was only round one!!

"Mystic I was my first experience with Stitcher's Hideaway. I was not disappointed! Thank you for all your hard work. I especially liked the generous amount of stitch time. I FINISHED MY ORNAMENT! (smiley face)...and the food...and the cookies...and the desserts...and Chris's Collection....you'll see me again! Best wishes for a peaceful New Year (and prosperous). Regards - ~ Mary"



"Hi Sue! Well, I finished the piece on the ferry ride home and now I just have to attach the beads. I hope you can finish yours by the end of the retreat. Here are some pictures!! We all had A GREAT time as usual and can't wait till next year!! Talk to you soon!!" ~ Donna (with door prize from Cherished Stitches)

"Thank you so much for yet another wonderful Stitcher's Hideaway! You really go all out, and it shows. I thought Thea was a real nice person and a great instructor, too. And both Gingerbread Garden and the ornament have been a lot of fun to stitch! I also want to say thank you for the Sudberry pin cushion I won as a door prize from Stitcher's Hideaway – how cool was that? Also, my frog!! I couldn't believe it

when I turned my bag over and saw the word "WINNER" written on the bottom – TOO WILD! Anyway, my thank yous have all been written and are ready to go – both of mine are going to Canada! One to Jeannette Douglas for my "A New England Autumn" door prize, and the other to Thea for teaching a great class! Take care, and I hope to see you soon! Love, Karin"

"Mystic I was fabulous. It was my first experience with a Stitcher's Hideaway but it will not be the last. I'm looking forward to the next one here in New England already. What a pleasure to stay in one place and have everything taken care of, from food to stash. The door prizes were fun, too. Thea is a wonderful teacher and a delightful lady. Thanks to you for putting it all together." ~ Merrill

"We got home just a short while ago after our 7-hour drive. I thanked Garry for driving me to Mystic for a wonderful retreat. I so enjoyed meeting and working with Thea although I seemed to be at least one band behind everyone else. I may be hooked on linen, but oh, all those Aida kits I have! It was good to see you again. Hope Mystic II is as successful as Mystic I. Loved that Italian cheesecake!" ~ Marianne

"Had a great weekend ... even the drive home was wonderfully enjoyable as I didn't rush and enjoyed the pockets of color along the road. Thea is a wonderful instructor and I hope to finish the project sometime before the holidays. All the thank you notes are written too.... including one to Chris's Collection, from whom I won the Saturday evening door prize of that lovely pillow and chart. As I rarely win anything ... that was really a surprise. It was wonderful to see Chris as we used to both attend CRVC-EGA meetings. And really neat ... Friends of Counted Embroidery is a non-profit little guild with only four chapters nationwide. THREE chapters were represented at Mystic I. What a nice surprise THAT was! Thanks for all your work organizing it. Warmest wishes." ~ Melissa

“Just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed this past weekend. I had a great time. Your retreat was well-organized, fun and educational. I really like the teaching piece Thea did and am thrilled to have finished the ornament before I left. Thank you very much for all the hard work you do to make these events so enjoyable. Please make sure that I get information to sign up for Sturbridge next year. I am looking forward to attending. Thanks again.” ~ Mikki



“Thank you so much for such a wonderful stitching holiday. I enjoyed it thoroughly. It was great meeting you, and I surely enjoyed meeting up with Thea once again. I'm afraid I am a real follower of Thea and Victoria Sampler designs, as that is where I got my beginnings in this lovely counted work. As always, she was a fantastic teacher once again at this retreat. I want to thank you for all that you did from the organization to the stash enhancement to the food to the camaraderie and everything else in-between. I do want to get back to Mystic again one day as I found it a fascinating place, and I certainly didn't get to see enough of it. Hugs.”
~ June in New Brunswick, Canada

“Every time I attend a Stitcher's Hideaway I think the experience cannot be topped and then I go to another one and it is even better than I remembered. It is fun to see people from past retreats and to make new friends from all over North America. The opportunity to meet teachers I had only read about and bought patterns from is just too cool. I might never have gotten to Victoria to meet Thea so to have her here in New England was just too wonderful. What a fabulous lady and talented teacher and designer. How many days till next year???? LOL! Happy stitching.” ~ Peggy

Hi Sue. I think that this was the best Stitcher's Hideaway that I have attended. I have a good knowledge of the stitches now and pretty much can hold my own. I had a great time; food was great and so was the company. Thea was wonderful. She is a great designer and teacher. I didn't really know of her before the retreat. And I would take a class with her anytime! Especially a ribbon class...hint hint! I think the project was great too! Something to finish in a weekend and to show off to everyone. Kuddos to you for a well done job!”
Stitchin' Witch - Liz , NY

“Thank you so much for starting Stitcher's Hideaway! It was such a treat to have a weekend to stitch. It was also a pleasure to meet you, the other stitchers and Thea (what a joy to have her as a teacher). I also would like to thank Stitcher's Hideaway for my door prize Sudberry box. I'll be search for the “right” chart to stitch for it. Thank you again. I look forward to other Stitcher's Hideaways! “ ~ Susan

“Thanks for your wonderful retreats and treats! I am so thrilled to attend them. Classes with designers to die for, new friends who share my obsession, good food, marvelous stash enhancement opportunities, door prizes galore. And the perfect co-ordinator! “ ~ Bev

READ ON FOR MYSTIC TWO!

MYSTIC TWO!

Thea and I had Sunday off to rest and recover between the two Mystic retreats. Mystic TWO was to begin on Monday. Ever the early riser, Thea got up in the morning and decided she'd take a walk to downtown Mystic and explore the area. Ever the night person, I slept the sleep of the dead until a more reasonable 11 a.m. And even then, I felt like the walking dead until I had a shower and coffee. Once I woke up, I went to the retreat rooms to make sure things were cleaned up and then I set up for the second retreat. After a while I realized I needed to eat and so was headed out the door to find some food when I ran into one of the Mystic Two stitchers -- Deb from Maine. Gee, it was good to see her again! She had just been at the Kissimmee retreat a couple weeks earlier where we enjoyed Jeannette Douglas as instructor. The two of us went together to Friendly's Restaurant and had a great meal -- including Swiss Chocolate Almond Sundaes, a favorite for both of us. It was a great opportunity to relax and chat, just the two of us. How I appreciated that time with her!

A few hours later Thea gave me a call and was ready to eat, so we went to Friendly's! It was another relaxing time and Thea and I enjoyed chatting away. She had a great walkabout exploring Mystic on her own during the day and told me about her adventures. We headed back to the hotel at a reasonable hour to make sure we were rested for the next day.

Right on schedule a new group of stitchers gathered in the lobby waiting for their fun to begin! Chris from Chris's Collection and her friend Pam were there and ready for them with a wide assortment of stash and the wonderful Victoria Sampler Trunk Show. Fun Packs were waiting for each one of them along with cider, Vermont cheddar cheese and crackers. Yum!



Now this group of stitchers was different from the first in that initially they were more intent on getting to their stitching as quickly as possible. They tended to do their shopping more during breaks. I walked into the classroom probably a half hour before class was to start and they were almost all in there ready and waiting, with all their stitching toys ready at their command! They were quieter, too, but that was only at the beginning and was very deceptive! They ended up being one rowdy bunch! LOL!!

The Mystic II stitchers were from CA, CT, DE, MA, ME, NJ, NY and PA. Lori from Torrance, CA was the stitcher who traveled the farthest and so she received special surprises. Here she is later on, having just received a door prize!

Linda from Maine was the “lucky” stitcher to receive a strange frog statue decked out in Christmas wear! Later on, we heard Linda blame this poor innocent frog for her stitching mistakes as she had to rippit--rippit to correct the boo-boos.



Thea got us started on our wonderful Gingerbread ornaments. We did a lot of laughing in this class! What a group! Thirteen of them had never attended a Stitcher's Hideaway retreat before and many of them came by themselves, but they quickly became stitching buddies and had a great time!

Kathy from MA was actually in Mystic with her husband Bruce who is also a stitcher. While Kathy was busy in the retreat classes, Bruce was busy in his hotel room stitching away on a large cross stitch project. Bruce joined us at meals, for stash enhancement, and for our Show 'n Tell. How cool to have a stitching spouse!!



Oh! Here's Bruce's back at the Victoria Sampler Trunk Show! Hi, Bruce!!



The rowdy stitchers. Hey...wake up, Laurel!! Wake up!!

As with the Mystic One retreat, our time together was peppered with door prizes, door prizes, door prizes! Woo-hoo!! Everyone enjoyed seeing what the other received.



Door Prize from Cherished Stitches



Deb from Maine with Knotted Tree Door Prize



Doorprize from Stitchy Kitty



Door Prize from A Whimsical Element



Door Prize from With My Needle

I even received a surprise at this retreat! Chris and Pam from Chris's Collection presented me with a beautifully quilted carrier that is perfect for bringing small stitching projects to work! I was very surprised and I guess everyone there knew it! LOLLOLOL!!! It's very pretty and is in one of my favorite colors -- turquoise.

I always enjoy seeing who comes to each retreat, their level of stitching experience upon arrival, and all that they learn during the retreats. At this retreat there was Kathy, who had never attempted to stitch on linen before and hadn't cross stitched in years. She just amazed us. She quickly picked everything up under Thea's expert instruction. We had some good laughs watching her stock up on Thea's designs! A new addict is born! Kathy bought some of Thea's [Beyond Cross Stitch](#) kits and some others, too. It really was amazing to see how quickly she picked it up. Kathy enjoys a number of crafts, including stamping and scrapbooking.



Here's Kathy with a great door prize from Kreinik



Gee, it just seems like time really flies at these retreats! We had such fun getting to know one another, enjoyed our meals, learned so much from Thea, and stitched and shopped to our heart's content...oh, it was just great!!

It's so sad to see each retreat come to an end -- and it was so sad to have to say goodbye to Thea!! But many of the stitchers from the two Mystic retreats wrote to both of us afterwards. Your thoughtfulness touched us tremendously and has encouraged us both.

Your thank you notes to the door prize and fun pack donors have meant a lot to the designers, too. Linda from Lavender Wings wrote, *"I just wanted to send you a note to let you know how pleased I was to be a part of your Mystic retreat this year. As a designer, we get lots of requests to supply charts for things like this ... and occasionally we get a response from an attendee. But NEVER have I gotten the kind of response that I received from the Mystic stitchers. What a wonderful group!!! Not only was the card sent by you and signed by everyone a real treat, but I also received lots of email notes thanking me for charts won ... and even a few hand written snail mail notes. I *think* I've responded to everyone who wrote to me, but I wanted to send a general "thank*

you" to everyone thru you, too. You obviously do a GREAT job putting together this retreat; it sounds like everyone had a wonderful time and most said they'd be back again next year. Some days when sales are slow, I wonder where all the stitchers have gone ... now I know ... they're all with you at Mystic!! Again, thanks to all, and for letting me be a part of this. - Linda"

Thank you, Mystic Stitchers! You were a JOY!!!

Sue



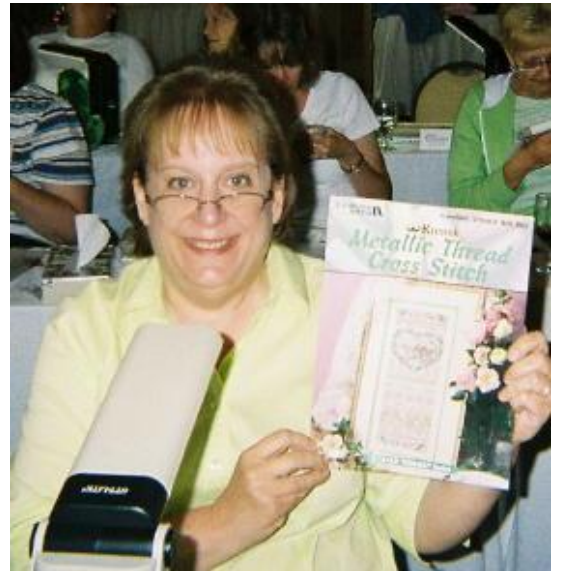
"Thank you for such a marvelous time! I loved every minute of the retreat. After I finished two days of cleaning up at home (after our daughter's wedding guests had all gone home), I finally had time to sit down and stitch again on my sampler and it is almost finished! Then I will finish my ornament too, hopefully soon! We would love to come to another of your retreats next year. My husband says that you all made him feel so welcome too, and he enjoyed the times to socialize at mealtimes and in between too at our little mini-breaks. We thank you for the wonderful job you did of arranging our wonderful stitching retreat at Mystic II and for all the fun we had with your many surprises and great social times with everyone. It was such a treat to be with you and Thea and so many special stitchers. Thank you for all of your dedication to the love of our treasured stitching!" ~ Kathy & Bruce"

"I just wanted to say again how wonderful your retreat is. I felt so relaxed and comfortable with the ladies and the teacher (who was wonderful!!) You have done an excellent job in designing this retreat. Thank You! I guess I am glad that you had a bad boss for a while - if not this would never have happened! ~ Gloria"

"I enjoyed your thanksgiving email and also I really enjoyed the Mystic II retreat very very much! Thank-you, I am already excited about coming next year. You are a wonderful person and it was the best time I ever had as far as learning to stitch, but also making new friends and memories. God Bless you!!!!" ~ Gail



“Just a note to let you know I received a delightful "thank you" note for the thank you note that I sent to Stitchy Kitty. Michelle was so thrilled to get a thank you note, saying it made her day and she hopes to attend one of the Stitchers Hideaway retreats one of these days. And she sent me a cute winter Freebie chart called Winter



Blues. As it is a complimentary one, with permission to copy, I plan to share it with my FCE chapter. She'll get more fans of her designs for certain! Just really nice to receive a note back. Tells me that stitchers are really great people (as if I didn't know!).” Melissa, CT



Door Prize from Kreinik



Door Prize from Glory Bee



“I am writing a quick note to let you know what a great retreat this really was. It seemed so far away when I first heard that Thea was doing this retreat. I am a big fan. She didn't disappoint. What a great instructor and person. She made us all feel right at home. I was impressed how she made sure that everyone - even the beginner - felt at ease during her instructions. She took the time to check on everyone's progress. It's amazing that I still learn something new at each retreat. I don't know how you keep out doing yourself - the retreats just seem to get better each time. Keep up the fantastic work.” ~ Deb, CT



I wanted to tell you again how much fun I had coming to the Mystic retreat, it was well worth the distance travelled.” ~ Lori, CA



Door Prize from A Whimsical Element -- Perfect for Deb who loves lighthouses!



Door Prize from Praiseworthy Stitches



“Gosh these retreats are a blast! I had a great time! Thank you for all your hard work – looking forward to the next one!” ~ Laurel (with a door prize from Victoria Sampler)



“My first public stitching experience was all you promised – and more! The teaching was superb, the food was tasty, the fellowship was genuine, and the fun was non-stop. All of that came from your efforts. I admire what you have accomplished with Stitcher’s Hideaway. I am inspired by the joyful attitude you exude. I hope our paths will cross again, if not in 2006, then in another year. Please share my best wishes with your family, friends, and associates who help you create the magical experience of a Stitcher’s Hideaway Retreat. You have set a high standard for other events I might attend!” Janie, DE



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