

Stitchers Hidzaway!

2008 Mystic Retreat Fun Report

with Sandie Vanosdall of The Sweetheart Tree



This was a FANTASTIC RETREAT!!! I keep thinking that there is no way to top the previous ones, but each one seems even better than the last!

Our instructor was the one and only Sandie Vanosdall of The Sweetheart Tree, who traveled all the way from her home in Arizona to be with us at the Mystic, CT retreat. Sandie arrived early so that we could spend a day putzing around Connecticut. Sandie is a shopper! She had a ball! Most of our shopping was done at Old Mystic Village, where there are about 50 different little shops. Sandie and I kept running into frog statues just about everywhere we went, and we wondered more than once if it was an indication of serious frogging that would occur at the retreat! LOL! One frog statue must have been a good 4' tall. It was creepy!! They were everywhere!!

Sandie with a gift from some stitchers

The night before the retreat a group of us went to Friendly's Restaurant -- mainly because we wanted Swiss Chocolate Almond Sundaes. We were in total bliss with our sundaes.

The next morning our retreat finally began and 30 stitchers excitedly arrived! They were from CT, KS, MA, ME, MN, NC, NH, NJ, NY, and PA. We had about an hour before our first class started to pick a seat in the classroom and to begin a shopping frenzy. Chris & Pam from Chris's Collection in Southwick, MA set up shop for us, and lucky us -- we had The Sweetheart Tree Trunk Shop to drool over. Everything was so gorgeous -- there is nothing quite like seeing the stitched models.



Such a serious group!



Eventually we settled into the classroom to begin our class time together. But, of course, first we had to find out who traveled the farthest -- and that was Mary from Minnesota. She received some special gifts from Stitcher's Hideaway. Here's Mary below on the left, with stitching buddy Deb from Maine. Mary & Deb met at a Stitcher's Hideaway retreat in Kissimmee, FL and have attended several retreats together since.





Next, we all met Sandie and she got us started on our *Holly & Hearts Ornament*. What a sweet little piece! Everything we would need to learn to complete the **Holly & Hearts Sampler** was included in the ornament design. First, we learned the Amadeus stitch, which you can see in the center of the design. She had a great way to teach us the stitch. Sandie figured we might as well get the most complicated stitch done first so that we could just breeze our way through the rest of the retreat. Her instructions were really great all around and she is a wonderful and fun instructor. She tells great stories, too!

We hadn't been in class long when it was time for our "first feeding." Omigosh. The food from Mystic Market is fantastic. Then we had time for more shopping -- and boy did we shop! Then we returned to the classroom to continue our stitching.



Each attendee received a Fun Pack with goodies and samples and charts, and door prizes were given out throughout the retreat. The donors were [Blue Ribbon Designs](#), [Brightneedle](#), [Calico Crossroads](#), [Karen Capella](#), [Chris's Collection](#), [Earth Threads](#), [The Gift of Stitching](#), [Glory Bee](#), [Elizabeth's Designs](#), [Jeannette Douglas Designs](#), [Kreinek](#), [Legacy Designs](#), [Morning Glory Needleworks](#), [Nordic Needle](#), [Olde Colonial Designs](#), [The Prairie Schooler](#), [Rosewood Manor](#), [Stitchy Kitty](#), [Victoria Sampler](#), and [Weeks Dye Works](#). Once again, many of the attendees won items donated by Karen Capella from her mother's stash. It was just incredible! Thank you, thank you, donors!

You can see that Sarah totally flipped over her door prize of silk threads from Kreinek!



Liz with Stitchy Kitty door prize



Laura with Blue Ribbon Designs door prize

This retreat had a Christmas theme and so a group of us participated in a Christmas cookie exchange. That was great! I was in awe of some of the specially decorated bags people made for our exchange -- while I was lucky to have enough time to put mine in baggies! Ha! Everything was delicious. We each made an extra dozen cookies to share with all the attendees, and each cookie exchange participant was told to bring additional cookies for our instructor and for a “mysterious purpose” to be revealed later. They were all wondering what that was all about!!



We had a wonderful day of stitching together, our second feeding from Mystic Market (an entree choice of crab cakes, filet mignon, stuffed chicken breast, or grilled portobello tower), and then everyone gathered in the classroom for a surprise from me. Now past attendees were probably expecting a Stitcher’s Hideaway original design from me that night, but hey -- I said it was a surprise and I wasn’t kidding! Everyone was sitting patiently while I stalled for time until...suddenly...look who walked in!!!



Yes, Santa had heard all about what good little stitchers we were and so he stopped in to pay us a visit and gave each of us a present! I never saw an entire room of grown women turn into children so quickly!



It was amazing all the little things Santa knew about us -- he definitely knew if we had been naughty or nice! He knew Lauren was a turbo stitcher, that Joanne was disheveled, that Mary was from Minnesota, that Deb was an ADD stitcher (jumping from one stitching project to another), that Mary had shrunk so much the elves almost didn't recognize her, and he even had a special message for Dawn from his reindeer -- a thank you for being a vegetarian! It was so much fun!



Santa & Liz



He knew all about us!



Santa & Sandie



Santa & Sue





Remember how I told the Christmas Cookie Exchange participants to bring in some additional ones for a mysterious purpose?!? Well, it was for Santa, and he was delighted!

After our visit with Santa many of us stayed on to stitch some more and chat and laugh. It was a very nice end to a very wonderful day. Later that night in our room, I caught Deb chilling out with a Christmas Popcorn Ball from her Fun Pack and a glass of wine!! LOL!!

The next morning after breakfast we headed back to class to work on our ornament. Sandie covered the Modified Star Stitch, Elongated Rhodes Hearts, Diamond Eye Stitches, a Four-Trip Stitch forming a half-diamond shape,

2 variations of "Whitework," Oblique Herringbone Stitches, a variation of the Scotch Stitch, Large Cross Stitches, Tent Stitches, 2 variations of Tiny Laticework with Tacking Stitches, and the Amadeus Stitch (which is repeated 4 times to form a twisting diamond shape). The ornament and the sampler use lots of Mill Hill Magnifica Beads and Swarovski's Crystal-Clear Paillettes, which add sparkly accents. The finished sampler looks so much more wonderful than a picture can capture. The sparkles really give it a Christmas feel.

In between teaching us the various stitches, Sandie shared with us about her life, her family, her business, and designing. She had us rolling with laughter many times! Designing began for her when she was a young housewife and mother looking for unique ways to personalize and decorate her home. Sandie took advantage of quiet times when her two youngsters were napping to stitch designs. She soon began experimenting and customizing the charts she purchased. Her one-of-a-kind works of needle art attracted the attention of a shop owner where she took them to be framed. The owners asked her where the designs had come from, and Sandie explained that she had designed them. They convinced her to sell them through their store, and then introduced her to many influential individuals in the industry. Sandie also visited needlework shops, met the shop owners face-to-face and introduced them to her designs. The Sweetheart Tree was the name of her first design, which later became the name of her company.



I've just got to tell you. I really got gifted at this retreat. I was certainly surprised and delighted. Mary gave me a frog wine bottom stopper, and Donna, one of the Stitching Witches, gave me a beautiful scarf she picked up in Italy on a recent trip. A group from NY that call themselves the Stitching Witches gave me this big frog that has a zip-up mouth! I have proclaimed her Miss Orts and put my orts inside her mouth. Actually, I like to dangle some orts outside her mouth, too. I also like to use it to nibble on other stitchers. Oh -- and they put gummy frogs inside it!



Look what Riona stitched for me! She is amazing! For one thing, I suspect that she stitches like the wind! The amount of stitching she completes in a year is mind blowing -- and her finishing is perfect. The design is called *Love Ewe*, which she found in *The Gift of Stitching* magazine. She did an expert job finishing it. She used some braid that she inherited from her grandmother who had worked as a seamstress. Gorgeous!



And then I was presented with a gift that put me over the edge and made me bawl like a baby in the face of such overwhelming generosity. Ruth, who attended the retreat with her daughter Sharon and granddaughter Elizabeth, is actually a knitter. She loves to attend the retreats and usually knits as the rest of us stitch. Ruth knit me this beautiful pillow, and attached to it were various pieces of stitching that Sharon made for me! Omigosh, the work that went into that!



Three Generations: Elizabeth, Sharon, and Ruth

Throughout all our time together, the door prizes just kept coming! WOW!!!!!!!!!! We enjoyed seeing what each other received -- and had a wonderful opportunity to see some hot-off-the-needle new designs donated by some very kind designers.



Dawn and Beverly with new designs from Blue Ribbon Designs



Virginia with a new Rosewood Manor design



Linda with a new Legacy Designs



Riona, Madelaine, Beverly and Mary all received cross stitch greeting cards -- a new item by Rosewood Manor.



Marilyn



Nancy



Terre

Next we had Show and Tell. We are so talented! WOW! We all enjoyed seeing each other's handiwork. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.



Laura



Deb



Dawn



Sharon



Barbara

We heard many interesting stories about the various pieces. Quite a few of them had been entered in fairs and won ribbons! We also saw some knitting.



Riona



Peggy



Sue



Sarah

I know that Sandie was very impressed with the work she saw, and impressed by the group in general. She told me that we made her work so easy that she hardly felt she had earned her keep! Many of us were experienced stitchers, and those who weren't learned so quickly, which is in large part due to her wonderful instructions.



All of our Show and Tell items were laid out on tables for us to all drool over.



You know, I really just don't know what can be better for a stitching addict than to get together with other addicts and spent two glorious days together getting to know a designer, stitching, eating, shopping, stitching, eating, laughing, and stitching! Well, I guess what would be better is if it lasted for more than 2 days! LOL!!

And now, here's a few words from some of the attendees and more pictures!

Sue



Saying thank you just doesn't seem like enough. You outdid yourself yet again. Sandie was an absolute doll and it was great to hear all of her wonderful stories about her designing world and her personal life. Food - always so yummy!! Favorites would be the corn chowder and the cheesecake. But I think this time you outdid yourself with our surprise - SANTA!!!! He was terrific. I wish he could have stayed a little longer, but I understand he's starting to get busy this time of year. Looking forward to February. ~ Cynthia (CT)

I had such a good time re-connecting with you and Debby and, of course, all the stitching friends. It was my first time at Mystic and everything was great - nice work space, nice hotel rooms, great food. And Santa came - what a treat! ~ Mary (MN)

I have to say I have never met such a friendly group. I have been to conferences for work but I have never felt as welcome as I felt last weekend. The project was beautiful, Sandie was a great teacher, and the experience was great! Everything was wonderful! I have recruited another person who is raring to come to the Sturbridge retreat. Hopefully she will be able to come I think she'll have a great time too. I will see you all soon I'm sure! TTFN! ~ Sarah

I had a great time. I love seeing all my stitching friends from all over. Sandie's designs were like WOW! I hate to say I never saw her designs before however I'll be stitching some in the future. I will probably finish stitching the ornament Thursday night at Donna's House. I don't have that much stitched on the sampler. The Food was OMG. Everything was perfect Sue. Every retreat is a pleasure to be at. I have been worried about getting back on track with my diet! I think I finally did today (Tuesday). I did not enjoy the trip back on the ferry. Seas were RUFF as the captain said over the loud speaker! Good thing I took that Dramamine an hour before cast off! Thanks again for all the hard work you do. Can't wait for Sturbridge! ~Liz, Stitchin Witch (NY)



Hope everyone got home safe and sound. We had the ferry ride from hell on the way back Sunday afternoon. I knew we were in trouble when I went up ahead of Donna and the Lizzes to get us a good seat and saw barf bags on every single table. But thanks to the meclizine we all popped at lunch, no one lost their clam chowder ;-) I miss everyone already! ~Terre (NY)

I had a great time... Thanks for all the work you do to help us have such an enjoyable time. ~ Marilyn

I had a great time as always, lots of food and stitching time, the food was good as usual, I missed the apple cider this year. Looking forward to the Sturbridge retreat. ~ Donna (NY)



Joanne modeled a Hop into Bed nightshirt and Stitcher's Hideaway Fleece Jacket. What a babe!



Thank you for the Hideaway! I so enjoyed our group and had a wonderful time getting to know Sandie. Everyone wowed me with their beautiful ornament exchange creations! Santa brought some cool stash and I'm over the moon with my Sudberry door prize! I'd be happy to share my email address. All are also welcome to contact me if they have any finishing needs. Hope to see everyone again in June. Hugs & stitches to all! ~ Dawn

I had a wonderful time last weekend! Thank you so much for putting everything together! You will certainly be seeing me again. ~ Barbara Thomas

Thanks, Sue, for another wonderful workshop. Had a great time seeing everyone old and new again. ~ Debby (ME)

I made it home safely in the fog Saturday night! I always look forward to my time at your retreats. I love your choice of designers & teachers. The class size is just right. I have made so many friends and enjoy seeing familiar faces and meeting new women who enjoy the same hobby as I do. There is enough teacher time and one-on-one time. And the Mystic Comfort is becoming my home away from home! Chris's Collection is becoming my not-so-local needlework shop - great selection and very friendly shop owner and assistant. I am anxiously waiting for February to get here! Thank you for coming up with the idea for the retreats and for planning them so well. Stitcher's Hideaway is a class act all the way. Hugs, Bev (CT)



Thanks for all you do to put together Stitcher's Hideaways. The designers, the projects, the goodies, the stash, the food...everything is just great. I love being with other stitchers, people who share a hobby and a passion. Talking about shops, favorite designers and current projects, as well as seeing completed Show & Tell and Christmas ornaments is very inspiring. I come home full of new ideas--I just wish real life didn't get in the way! See you in June!

~ Linda E

What a wonderful time we all had at the Mystic Retreat! How nice to finally meet Sandie after admiring and stitching her designs for quite a few years. The sampler and ornament are just so pretty and elegant! I have finished stitching the ornament and will be giving it to an EGA friend as a gift but I'm definitely keeping the sampler which is about 1/4 finished. As usual, food was yummy! Sue's surprise was awesome with Santa coming for a visit with gifts for everyone! Thanks, Sue, for all the time you spend on making your retreats so much fun for all of us! ~ Linda (ME)



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