

Betty Smith

Central Branch

"A Beary Enjoyable Adventure"



This ongoing adventure began when I was enjoying a *deferred leave* from teaching in Moncton on February 10, 1999! A "Make a Teddy Bear" six week course was advertised in the *Moncton Transcript* as being held in a Fabric store in Riverview that I could walk to from my home. Joan MacNair was a very patient teacher! We six students were required to purchase a metre of "fake fur" and a fur shawl on which to learn. I never imagined it would be a hobby that I am still enjoying. My fingers are starting to complain, so I'm not sure how much longer I will be able to make them. There are still coats waiting to be transformed!

The process is rather time consuming and it all begins with the delivery of a fur coat or jacket. Thank goodness we have an unfinished furnace room in the basement as it is where the "fur flies"! The satin lining is carefully taken out of the coat and it and any tags or buttons are put aside to be used later in the process. The coat is placed fur side down on the large cutting mat which is on the OLD table where I ate my meals and did my homework as a child in Grand Falls. The 18 pattern pieces are placed on the mat leather side up, checked to see that the fur is going the same way for each piece and then carefully cut out with a roller cutter. The same number of pieces are cut from cotton to become the lining. Stick glue works great so as not to wet the leather too much. After a couple of days drying, it's time to put the bear together. I use my sewing machine and hand sewing needles made specifically for "leather" and try to remember that they are not made for fingers!



The head has to be completed first as there are eyes, a nose and a mouth to be placed before the bear is stuffed with batting. The joint is inserted and sewn before being snapped into place in the neck of the body. Attaching the arms and the legs to the body follows. Then the stuffing begins! The open areas are sewn by hand and then the tail and ears are hand sewn to complete the bear. The satin lining of the coat is used for the bottom of the feet and the inside of the ears, as it matches the colouring of the fur. To complete the project, I make a bib which has the name of the "manufacturer" and sometimes the owner's name, if that information is available. A button from the coat is on it as well. Then it is ready for delivery. If the fur coat is large and in very good condition, I can usually get 2-3 bears made from it.

The hobby is very stress relieving and helps make the long cold winters pass by quickly. Sometimes I even have a cat on my lap to "help"! When asked how many teddy bears I have made . . . no idea! I should have kept a count, but I haven't. My guess would be upwards of 300! I rarely make one bear from a coat so as not to waste the fur. I can only make one from a jacket plus a Christmas ornament or two. Even when I was teaching, I'd head to the basement to "cool my jets" – a "beary" good way to keep calm and carry on!

If you have an idea for a *SPOT LIGHT Feature*, contact Larry Farrell: farell@rogers.com