

Gym Rat Rantings

by Bob Ring



Life with a Super Knitter

Let me describe my life with Pat the super knitter – a highly trained, finely tuned, left-handed knitting machine who wields sharps objects (knitting needles) like samurai swords.

It's instructive to watch Pat approach a new project. She thinks about it for a while, finds a pattern or designs her own, knits a small trial swatch to check the size, or several trial pieces to compare designs, sometimes consults with me, washes the selected trial piece to check shrinkage, and is finally ready to start. Along the way, Pat may have tried several different size swords (sorry, needles), yarn types, or colors of yarn - to get the size and design just right.

OK, she's ready to go. She "casts on." That's knitter-speak for getting the project started on her knitting needles. She proceeds. Soon she gets real quiet. I quickly learned not to say anything during this almost religious period that knitters call counting. God help anyone (me) who interrupts this counting (of stitches) to make conversation, even necessary conversation like, "The house is on fire." To be avoided at all costs are the words, "D___! I dropped a stitch." As the project proceeds, she may attach little pieces of thread, or cute doo-dads – markers for pattern changes - to the growing pile of sweater, scarf, or whatever yarn.

Some projects are really complex and require creative approaches. I remember a checkerboard sweater with 16 different brightly colored yarns. Can you imagine trying to keep track of 16 balls (official knitting term is skeins) of yarn – all attached to the growing sweater – at the same time. Pat devised an innovative egg-carton like box to organize and hold the yarn, and feed the proper color at the correct time.

Pat is a fast knitter! I've seen her knit an entire chemo cap at a baseball game. One time she started knitting a sweater on the first day of a week long vacation tour, and wore the completed sweater to the farewell dinner – to the amazement and delight of our fellow travelers who had been watching progress on the sweater all week.

To be fast, you've got to be focused and ready to go at any (free) time. Pat always carries (at least part of) her current project with her. Sometime this extra-preparedness leads to problems. A few weeks ago we were walking to the parking lot from the Arizona Historical Society, where I was doing some research, when Pat discovered that she was trailing yarn from her purse for a block and a half.

So what is the impact at home of living with a super knitter? Well, let's talk about Pat's "tools of the trade." Every spare drawer and closet shelf is filled with yarn – all types and colors. She has all sorts of needles – straight and circular; wooden, metal, or plastic; in every size imaginable; English and metric. She has a big odd-shaped contraption to wind yarn (into balls), and other smaller devices to spin wool (into yarn). She has several shelves of books and magazines on knitting.

Pat uses the bathroom off her office as a craft room – often a knitting station - laying out materials and projects in progress. She has so much knitting paraphernalia that she's always selling off the "extra" on eBay. The problem is, she buys more than she sells!

With all this stuff and an infinite amount of skill and energy, Pat has knitted warm sweaters, vests, socks, mittens, and scarves for family members and friends. I've suggested that she knit me a special warmer, but she claims not to have a pattern for that body part.