

MY SERGING EXPERIMENT

BY BARBARA SCHEY

Little did I think when I went along to a serging workshop to enable myself to be more relaxed with my BERNINA® 2500DCE, I would be writing an article about it for an American magazine! Anne van der Kley was the tutor and her statement (as a retired nurse) that she was “a nurse by profession and a ‘sergin’ by choice” set the relaxed tone for the workshop. Not that the exercises were relaxed, but the atmosphere was and I will never forget her referring to the upper looper as “that little pointy sticking out thing on top” – it all made sense to me. After thoroughly explaining all the functions of our 16 different machines, we then started on our exercises. And were we to use boring old overlocking thread? Oh no! Anne had us threading and unthreading our machines in a devious plot to convince us that the slowest way to thread the machine was to tie the next thread on to the last.

Eventually we got to the exercise that really interested me. This involved making fabric with the overlocker with the aid of Vilene 541 (those of you in the USA can substitute OESD’s Aqua Mesh stabilizer). This product dissolves in cold water but has much more body than other dissolving fabrics and does not require hooping. It also does not dissolve when moist hands touch it. We cut a series of 1” wide strips of the Vilene (length governed by the size of your piece of Vilene). Using embroidery thread in the upper and lower loopers and the left needle, we serged down the right hand edge of a piece of Vilene, then folded under the unserged section of the strip and brought it out to the right and serged down this piece, just catching the edge of the previous line of serging in the second one. This produced a little strip with two overlapping rows of serging. We then laid another strip of Vilene underneath our serged strip, protruding 1/4” to the right. We then serged this strip, just catching the edge of the previous serged strip. The next step was to turn the unserged piece of Vilene under and to the right as before and then serge again. Repeating these steps over and over again resulted in the creation of a very lacy sheet of fabric.

I was fascinated by this exercise and decided it was the answer to a problem I had – how to protect the collar of a miura shibori white jacket and dress I had made. I cut out the paper shape I had in mind to act as a guide. I made the shawl/collar in one piece and cut into it later. I threaded my serger with white rayon embroidery thread in the upper looper,



cream through the lower looper, and a very pale variegated thread on the needle (which had almost no tension on it) to give the piece life. I kept serging and adding strips until I had the desired shape of the collar. I then made a long straight piece, I marked the area that I needed to cut out for the neck, and stitched around it twice with small stitches on my BERNINA® sewing machine. I then cut this piece out and serged around the edge, then serged the center part of one side of the cowl to the neck edge of the shawl/collar. After this I soaked the piece in several changes of water. (I believe the liquid from the first soak is good for stiffening other fabrics.) When the piece dried, I found several places where I had missed serging into the previous row of stitching. A few of these I cheated and stitched with the sewing machine but mostly I hand stitched freshwater pearls around the edges of the spaces, creating a random decorative effect. I also finished off the "ends" of the strips by tying in these little pearls. I used a seam sealant to secure the ends.

This piece was meant to be an accessory to an elegant outfit but ended up taking over. It took me about a day and a half of serging to produce and another day of stitching/tying on pearls but I was very happy with the time spent.

My "normal" work is shibori dyeing fabric (mostly silk georgette) that I stitch into jackets and scarves which I occasionally embellish with freehand embroidery. However, I can see some edges and decorations of serged fabric creeping into this work in the future. I would recommend Anne as a tutor to anyone. I had looked on my 2500DCE as a tool to finish off the edges of my garments, never as a way of creating art pieces, but now I have an entirely different vision of my lovely serger.



BERNINA® Serger Technique Reference Book



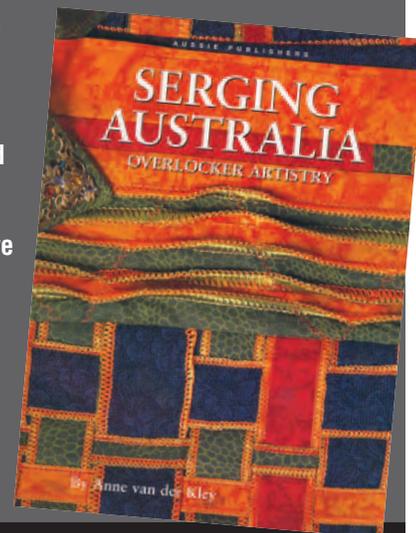
Sergers aren't just for making napkins and finishing garment edges. In addition to making "serger lace" fabric as described in Barbara Schey's "My Serging Experiment", they're also great for patchwork, garment construction, home decorating, and more.

To take advantage of all the specialty techniques that can be created using a serger, check out *Serger Technique Reference Book*. This full-color reference guide contains directions for almost every serger technique imaginable.



Visit your local BERNINA® dealer to "test drive" a serger or two and find out which model best suits your sewing style.

For more information on the "serged fabric" technique Barbara used for serger lace shawl, see *Sergering Australia: Overlocker Artistry* by Anne van der Kley. This inspiring book has something for everyone - quilting, heirloom, garments, crafts. Detailed photos and easy-to-follow instructions disprove the notion that "You can't do that with a serger!"



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