

## DEMONSTRATING LACEMAKING

by Doris O'Neill



*Doris O'Neill, joined L.A.C.E. in 1991 and I.O.L.I. in 1980. Doris held the position of Historian for L.A.C.E. for many years.*



*Janice Blair, member of L.A.C.E. since 1993 and I.O.L.I. since 1994, is shown in her demonstration attire. There is an exhibit of lace in the background.*

When I remember the various times I have been invited to demonstrate lacemaking, one thing seems to be of paramount importance: that is, be prepared. True, often you will receive that invitation in plenty of time to prick and set up a pattern on the pillow, wind the bobbins, decide on an appropriate costume to wear, even put together a small exhibit if the organizers of an event indicate they'd like that. Frequently, however, that invitation comes for an event in the very near future. Then you are glad you have several containers of lace—containers can be the inexpensive display cases sold at craft stores, the dimensional kind that have a raised glass or plastic lid, so the lace is not actually in contact with the glass. Alternatively, transparent page protectors can be used, if they are pinned securely to the fabric covering your table. Glass insect cases are perfect for displaying lace or lace tools, but they are heavy to carry to an event. To complete the exhibit, add framed lace you have done, a few recent lace magazines or lace books, a supply of your guild's membership brochures, and possibly a display board showing pictures of past lace guild workshops. Place all these on the neat cover you have ready for that display table. At outdoor events, tables are likely to be well-used and splintery: at library events, often tables have been used for craft projects, and are not smooth. So purchase and use a single-size bed sheet, black, brown or blue to cover the exhibit table.

Some lacemakers even have a partly-worked lace length on a pillow reserved just for demonstrations, while others prefer to get a few inches of a current project finished. In either case, you are PREPARED to show how lace is made.

An all-inclusive costume can be a simple beige apron or pinafore over ordinary clothing—lace-trimmed is nice—and a mob cap. Equally important, is to be able to answer questions the observers are sure to ask about the lace. Know something about the history of lace, where and when it began, where was it made in this country, why some bobbins have spangles but others do not, where one can purchase supplies, what kinds of threads are used, where information can be found on the Web, how long it takes to make a lace piece, how it is designed, what lace is considered “true (classic) lace”, how bobbin lace differs from tatting (useful to have a shuttle to show), why bobbin laces are named differently, which important figures in our history wore



*A photo from a demonstration in Geneva Illinois. Nancy Tweed, L.A.C.E. member since 2009, visits with an observer who passed by her pillow.*

lace, why handmade lace is expensive, and, ultimately “why do you do that, when you can buy machine-made lace”. (I personally like and agree with the answer one lacemaker gave: “for the exquisite pleasure and relaxation of moving the bobbins around, and the mental stimulation of figuring out the puzzles, and watching something grow on your pillow, and the suspense of waiting until you can pull out a few pins to see how it's coming along...”)

At the event itself, it is best to have a companion, or a volunteer who will watch your possessions for those times when it is necessary to leave your work. Things do tend to disappear or get damaged, alas, and your equipment is valuable. (I count a minimum value of \$350 for a display pillow set up with 22 pairs of spangled bobbins.)

If the event is indoors, remember to bring a small battery-operated light, perhaps an all-in-one with a magnifier. It's surprising how often the appointed day turns out to be gloomy or rainy, so even your specified space near a window is dark that day. If the event is outdoors in summer, be aware you might not have anticipated the heat wave which strikes that very day. Arm yourself with a small battery-operated fan, dress for the weather, bring along a water bottle, and forget about the mob hat and apron.

Above all, enjoy the day, and spread the word about the joy of making lace.

|   |
|---|
| Name: _____   |
| Project: _____  |
| Type Lace: _____  |
| Thread: _____   |
| No. Bobbins: _____  |
| <b>PLEASE DON'T TOUCH</b>   |
| Compliments of L.A.C.E.  |

*Pinning a card such as this one to your pillow will answer a lot of questions for the visitor's to your pillow.*

*Written for L.A.C.E. November 30, 2011.*