



N O T I O N S

Sometimes, it's the smallest connection. When a reader e-mailed to ask if *PieceWork* had ever published any articles on smocking—we had (see “Clare Embroidery,” July/August 1994, and “Smoc, Smicket, Smock Frock, and Fancy Gathering,” September/October 1997), seeing the word “smocking” on the monitor evoked poignant and fond memories for me.

My hands-down favorite dress the summer I was six was one that my grandmother had sewn and hand-smocked. I wanted to wear it every day, and I kept asking NaNa how she made smocking. I can still see her sitting in the chair by her sewing machine with fabric, needle, and thread, patiently showing me, again and again, how it was done.

A colleague, Marlene Blessing, recently showed me the inspired necklace and earrings that her sister, Deborah Loop, had made as a “beadwork family album” to celebrate the memory of their late mother, Inez Amy Hovland Loop (look for the necklace and earrings along with an interview of Loop in the October/November 2006 issue of *Beadwork*, one of *PieceWork*'s sister magazines). The necklace consists of a small folding frame containing family photographs together with a tiny beaded dress over a body made of wired *milagros* (Mexican charms) on a woven strand of earthen-colored beads. This dress and two other dresses symbolize elements of Inez's life and may be rotated as the wearer desires. The earrings serve as hangers for the two dresses not in use. In the interview, Loop explains, “I turned to craft to express not only my grief and confusion [over her mother's death] but also my pleasure in the recollections I have of her. . . .” Another connection between family and handwork.

While planning the photo shoot for this issue of *PieceWork*, I got out several of my quilts to see if any would be suitable as props. One, which I received from a dear family friend when I was nine or ten, is made of Dutch Girl blocks. As I looked at it spread out on the bed, I thought about the connection that the quilt provided between its maker and me. But—“Wait a minute, those aren't twenty Dutch Girls, they're twenty Sunbonnet Sues!” Besides recognizing a connection, I now had to research the quilt pattern. Trying to establish the provenance of a quilt pattern can be confusing, particularly because many patterns are known by more than a single name. That seems to be the case here: apparently, the name Dutch Girl was used more frequently as the pattern name in the South (I grew up in Virginia), whereas Sunbonnet Sue was used everywhere else.

As Stacy C. Hollander, senior curator and director of exhibitions at the American Folk Art Museum, said about African American quilts from the museum's collection (see page 18), “Present in each of these quilts is the echo of a path that has been followed before and that has been traced again.” I hope that this issue sparks your own connections, recollections, and paths.