

We May Have to Make a Substitution . . .

by Gail Sirna

Needlework teachers put so much effort into the designing and preparation of their classes. One of the worst events in the teacher's career may be a time when she, or a close loved one, falls ill and she cannot fulfill her contract. Most of us play over pain, whether mental or physical, on occasion, but there could come a time when you, the teacher, just cannot teach the class. I mean, just look at our demographic. I have to believe that the average of today's teachers hovers somewhere in the mid-50's, and that might mean disaster.

I used to tell the NAN candidates--"write your instruction so well, that if, on your way to class, you're struck down with appendicitis . . . Well, now I say "a gall bladder attack", and if we all continue teaching for another 10 or 15 years I might have to say "a heart attack." The rest of that admonition is "that another teacher can pick up your notebook and go teach your class with hardly a hitch."

There are at least three different scenarios where you might need someone to substitute for you.

The first is pretty easy and straightforward. If you get sick or wind up in the hospital a few days before visiting a chapter you might be able to get them to postpone the class. Often it's not a problem. Unless . . . they have rented a some fancy facility that required a deposit and the whole class has arranged time off to go to your class, then you might need a substitute.

Or maybe you're scheduled to teach at the QRS regional seminar, but it's still two or three weeks off, and you wind up flat on your back with a herniated disk. The doctor orders 6 weeks of therapy and bed rest. Here you'll need a substitute, but you should have time to make arrangements with one of our colleagues, send her a set of instructions, mail the kits ahead to someone, and talk the class over with your sub. Actually you're going to have to recruit someone else to do this mailing and shipping, if you're in

that bad shape. Just make sure the first thing you do is call the airlines and have them transfer your ticket to an "on hold" status; that way you'll be able to use it sometime in the future. Yes, it'll cost you a change fee, but it's better than losing the whole ticket

But what if you're already at a seminar, with 30 eager students in each of your classes, and you (1) have a gall bladder attack, (2) get hit by a pumpkin falling out of the hotel balcony, (3) your husband needs emergency surgery and you have to be there. What to do? My first thought is that you look over the list of seminar attendees and see if there is someone who is NOT already teaching and who kind of stitches like you, and ask her to teach your class. At least you should be able to go over the instruction booklet with her, before sending her off to the lionesses in the classroom. You will probably have to discuss it with the faculty committee, but under the circumstances they will probably be grateful if you can give them some guidance.

Now, the worst case scenario: you're at seminar and your roommate wakes up to find you unconscious in the other bed--let's not even consider why, because the diagnoses aren't all that wonderful. After calling 911 your roommate notifies the seminar committee and they have to decide what to do. They have 20-25 students with no teacher, people who have paid to be there and want their class. The committee no doubt will do what you would--see who's around that could teach for you, but wouldn't you like some input? (Okay, at this point you probably won't care).

This is why you--that's right, I mean YOU--should come up with a list of teachers who could substitute in one of your classes. In the very next contract ANG is going to be asking you for a list of subs, and EGA won't be far behind. So now is the time for you to be thinking about who could teach your classes.

First think about who, from among the band of

teachers stitches somewhat like you do, includes techniques akin to what you use, who seems to have the same kind of knowledge that you do. She doesn't have to design like you--in these scenarios the design will already be there--she just needs to have most of the skills that you have.

When thinking of these possible subs do not overlook the certification candidates, for they too have shown an interest in teaching, and presumably have the ability to stand up in front of a group and impart knowledge.

But you should also consider one or two of your very talented students. Perhaps there is an especially apt person who has taken 2 or more classes from you, and who seems to have outstanding embroidery skills. This might be another alternative, for you can't count on having a certified, or almost certified, teacher floating around at any given seminar, and who is ready to step up to the plate for you.

Now the next consideration is what we've been harping on at NAN for some 30 years: write your directions and lesson plans so well, that if you cannot teach your class, that some other knowledgeable person can take your paperwork and carry on for you. This is why we recommend teachers' notebooks with all the information necessary to conduct the class right there in one place, and easily followable by a substitute.

Your visual aids should be there, and extra instructions, time allowances, etc.--Just what we teach in certification.

This was the discussion at a recent NETA meeting and several teachers inquired about the special knowledge--often of a historical nature--that they also give while teaching their classes. Well, that kind of information should also be in their lesson plans. Of course the sub won't do as good a job as the teacher who has spent years researching her cherished subject matter, but at least there will be something to share with the students.

Now the other issue is who gets paid when a substitute is necessary? Certainly the sub should get something, but she really hasn't done most of the work. After all, it is the teacher who designed the piece and wrote the instructions and packed the kits, etc, etc. So at NETA we recommended that the sub get 75 or 80 percent of the teaching fee, with the remainder going to the designing teacher. No, it's not a perfect solution, but it does reward both parties.

So it's time for you to be thinking about your list of subs--whether you want to or not, because one of these days, probably quite soon, you are going to be asked to provide this list. And the guilds are going to want more than one name. No one will ever do as good a job as you would, but please, think: Who would be a good replacement for you?

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| Book Critique . . . Jennifer Rieffenberg, TP Candidate |
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On Teaching Adults

Given today's technology and resources available on the internet, this report covers a number of articles and publications available on the web. For this topic, I found a broader scope of ideas and theories more valuable than reading a single, focused book on the topic. The following URL's were found and read, providing a good summarization of information

for teaching adults.

The article's sources range from non-profit resources, to universities, to government services. In all cases, there are a few common ideas that are presented, thus reinforcing the theme, regardless of the topic to be taught.