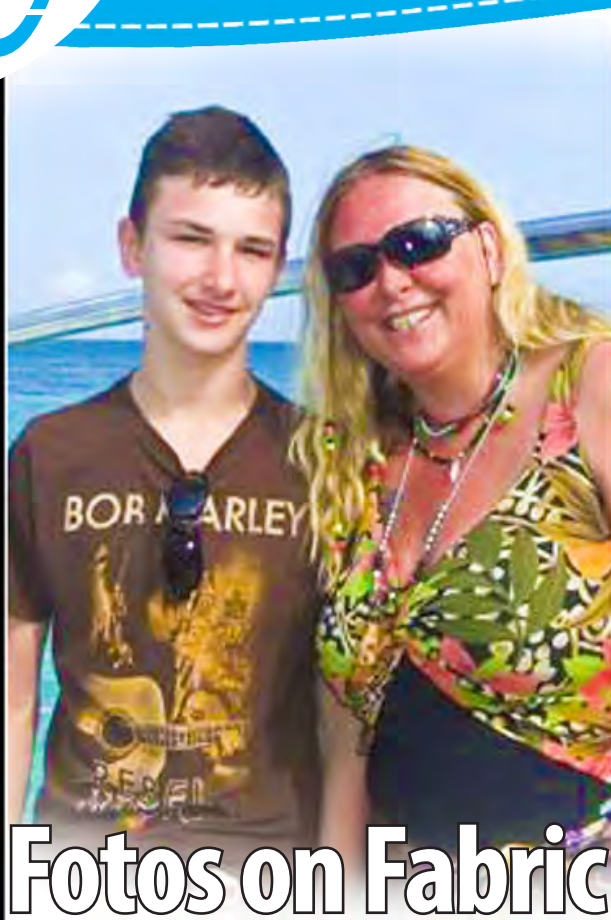
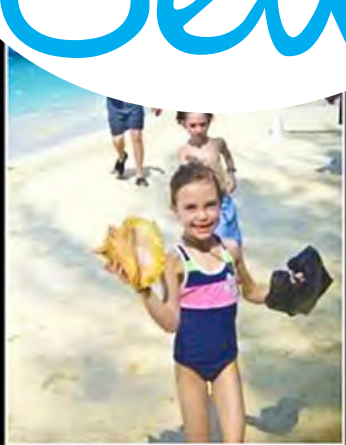


INSPIRED TO Sew

A glimpse into the creative heart of today's most talented sewing & quilting artists.



Fotos on Fabric Val Sjoblom





Will this favorite pic of Rita & I on Madeira Beach, FL be transferred to a quilt? You bet!

Sometimes you take a great pic and just want to keep it close rather than hidden in a scrap book or in that digital cloud high up in the sky. So began my quest for transferring pics on quilts. Little did I know until a post popped up on my Facebook newsfeed, that Rita Farro, our writer extraordinaire was on a similar hunt. I had found Fotos on Fabric in an online search, but when talking to Rita found out that she actually met the owner as a vendor at the Sewing & Stitchery Expo in Puyallup WA. Voilla! Meet Val Sjoblom, answer to our photo transfer quests and an inspiration in entrepreneurship and ... just maybe, the solution to your photo transfer project. Enjoy this special issue! Sew SCHMETZ® & Grabbit Too!

Rhonda

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In this Issue:

Sewing Star: Val Sjoblom
Page 3
Needle Points: SCHMETZ® Chrome
Page 12

Cover: Val's Fotos on Fabric

Interview by: Rita Farro
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What Inspires
YOU to Sew?



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Sewing
Star

Val Sjoblom
Fotos on Fabric

Issue 46





Val with the Gypsy Stallion, Foto on Fabric.

Val Sjoblom

In 1982, as a divorced single mother, Val wanted a fresh start. She left her small town in Northern Minnesota and moved her four kids and five Arabian horses to the Twin Cities. She had no idea how tough things could get in the big city. She worked all sorts of jobs (usually two or three at a time) just to make ends meet. When she was 36 years old, she went to night school and earned a law enforcement degree. Although it seemed like a good idea at a time, being a rookie police officer would mean working the night shift in downtown Minneapolis. So, she became a correction's officer instead. When the Mystic Lake Casino opened in Prior Lake, Minnesota, she got hired as a blackjack dealer.

By 2002, Val's children, Kimberlee, Jeremy, Chad, and Janalee were launched, but her mother wasn't doing well back home in International Falls. Although she didn't plan on staying, Val decided to move back for a while. Then — life took one of those unexpected turns. She fell in love, married Larry Sjoblom, and International Falls, MN once again became her home.



A sampling of Val's antique stoves.

Val was an avid collector of antique stoves, and she wanted to make a quilt featuring photos of her stove collection. She was excited about the project and took some great photos of her stoves. She bought a top-of-the-line home ink-jet printer, figured out the software, and enthusiastically pushed "print." Her first attempts were using fabric photo sheets, but the fiber content of the sheets made the "fabric" stiff. Finding a way to get these photos transferred to fabric became Val's obsession. Over the years, she tried everything — bubble jet solutions, butcher paper to carry quality cotton fabric through the printer, special inks — she even bought a heat press. No matter what method she tried, the photos faded after a single test laundering.

During this time, Val started to quilt and she decided to learn how to use a longarm quilt machine. She purchased her "Statler" and started a longarm quilting business, On A Wing And A Prayer Quilting (www.OnaWingQuilting.com). She named her machine "Elvis" because he shakes, rattles and rolls and "returns to sender" quickly.

International Falls, Minnesota, is known as the "Icebox of the Nation," and they have one famous son — Chicago Bears football player "Bronko Nagurski." His daughter, Jan, came to Val in 2010 and asked if she could put a large portrait of her Dad on fabric so she could use it to make a quilt top.



Bronko Nagurski: The turning point in Val's business.

That moment was a turning point for Val. It was proof that other people wanted what she wanted — the ability to put a large photo on fabric to make a quilt. It became her mission, and she started to research digital fabric printing in earnest. She traveled to several different companies to see their equipment and study the process. She found a large digital printer that could deliver the quality she hoped for... but with a large sticker price — \$20,000. Every single person in her life told her she was CRAZY, but she bought her first large format printer anyway.

She felt if she could print — customers would come.

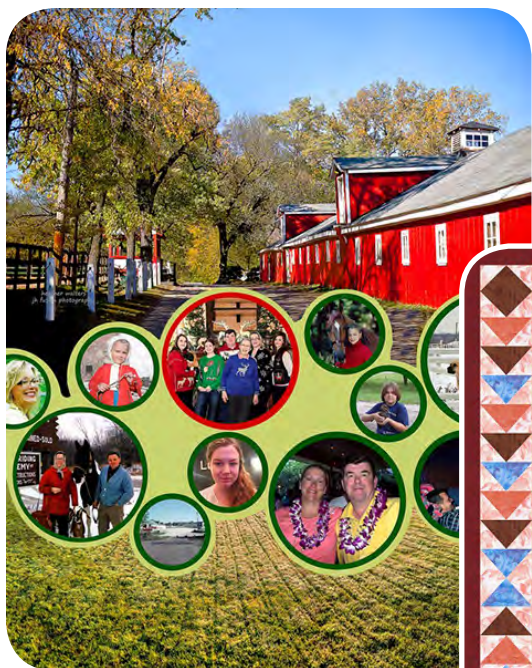
The Fotos On Fabric adventure began in 2010 with the purchase of that first large format digital printer. It could print large photos on 100% Kona cotton. Fotos On Fabric could also do photo editing, including changing photos to black and white, sepia tones or beautiful color. They can print custom designs, including original art onto fabric. Fifty-eight (58) inches is the maximum width with no limit to length. They have the ability to print a very large photo in two pieces which can be sewn together to make a king size project.



Fotos on Fabric finished projects.

In 2012, Fotos On Fabric rented a booth at the International Quilt Market in Houston, Texas. Val displayed many photo quilts, which got everybody's attention. Every quilt shop owner who came into the booth had a horror story about a customer who invested hundreds of dollars into a memory quilt — only to discover that the water-soluble ink photos washed away the first time they laundered the treasured memory quilt. After that show the Fotos On Fabric business exploded.

Fotos On Fabric has printed orders from all over the world. They have printed thousands of family photos for memory quilts, as well as prayer shawls for Israel, life size pictures of people, pets, horses, and vacation photos. YOU NAME IT! A National Geographic photographer wanted her photos of elephants and reptiles from Zimbabwe, Africa printed on fabric. One of the more unusual orders was from the Brooklyn Museum in New York, a life size photo of "Marie Antoinette."



Fotos on Fabric finished projects.

Val says, "our customers use their custom photo fabric just like any other yardage. They make quilts, or curtains, pillowcases, stuffed animals, tote bags, shower curtains. You name it and they sew it. People are so creative! And they are delighted that their finished projects will hold up through normal laundering. Fotos On Fabric has been a wild ride for 7 years. We've purchased additional printers and are currently launching a new option — finished custom tea towels and placemats with your photos on them."

Like all over-achievers, Val's great ideas just keep coming. There was an empty veterinarian clinic on Highway 53, coming into International Falls — and every time Val drove by the building, had a vision. She wanted to open a store where people could come, visit with their neighbors, take some classes, exchange ideas, and make their creative dreams come true. Val and Larry opened Studio 53 Fabric and Gifts Quilt Shop in June of 2015. The first thing she did was hire her mother to be the store "GREETER." "Mom tells everybody it took her 94 years to find the job of her dreams. She has become an icon, and she is the heart of the store."



**Studio 53 Fabric and Gifts Quilt Shop
International Falls, MN.**

The irony is that Val's creative journey began because she was an avid lover and collector of antique stoves. After opening Studio 53, a man came into the store, fell in love with the stoves and offered \$50,000 for the entire collection. She sold her beloved stoves, paid bills and ordered more fabric!!

After completion of the huge remodel of her new building, Val Sjoblom has three businesses under one roof: On a Wing and A Prayer longarm quilting, Fotos on Fabric, and Studio 53 Fabric and Gifts Quilt Shop.

She says, most days *"we're so busy, we don't know if we found a rope or lost our horse..."*

www.onawingquilting.com
www.FotosOnFabric.com
<http://studio53fabricandgifts.com>

— written by Rita Farro



Needle Points with Rhonda



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