



MIGNON S. JEFFORDS

**CHARTER MEMBER
PRESIDENT 1984-1998**

Mignon was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina and she attended Breneau College for three years. She married Bill in 1949.

After marriage and while Bill was studying for his MA, Mignon finished her college education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She and Bill had two daughters, one son and a number of grandchildren.

Mignon began collecting tape measures in the early 1960's after finding her grandmother's tape measure in an old machine drawer. After Bill's stepmother passed away and during the period when they were cleaning out her home, Mignon found an old aluminum thimble and decided it might be fun to collect thimbles as well. She joined "Thimbletter" and she was "hooked". Besides thimbles, Mignon was a member of a local garden and also bridge club. She did fancy needlework and also enjoyed reading and traveling with her husband.

She once said that her greatest joy from thimble collecting were the many wonderful friends that she made through TCI.

Anyone who walked into Mignon Jeffords' home knew immediately that she is a collector. Her collections were numerous and scattered about the house. The kitchen walls were covered with sample tins; a stand in the dining room held a portion of her knife rests.

Mignon began collecting many years ago. She laughingly said that somehow pack rat genes found their way into her blood stream, or else she was born with them, and they had never left! Mignon said, "I have a dear friend named Halle, and from the first time I met her, she always said "give me two of anything and I have a collection." This became Mignon's motto.

She collected many things: knife rests, miniature lamps, glass shoes, Santas and tilt pens. Then she stumbled upon her Grandmother's tape measure. The tape measure was shaped like a turtle. On its back was the message "pull my head but not my leg." This intrigued her and at the next antiques show she visited, she began looking for tapes. Soon Mignon discovered the variety of tape measures in different shapes and made of different materials.

In the earlier days of her collecting, she would reminisce "Of course, in the 1960's, most tapes cost from 50c to \$3." She told a story of a visit to an antiques store where she asked, "Do you have any tape measures?" The reply would be, "No but we have these old thimbles." She would reply, "Thanks, but I'm not interested in thimbles." She did wonder how many times she had passed up that Salem Witch, a Stitch-in-Time or a Golden Spike!

From tape measures, it was but a small jump to the many thimbles and sewing tools which were tucked into just about every nook and cranny in her home. Mignon said that she liked to hang things on the walls and this led to the start of her collecting of thimbles. She had Bill's Mother's aluminum thimble and ordered a cabinet, hung it on the wall and put the one thimble in it. She then asked Mother if she had any thimbles and was given four. Next, eight aunts were asked and with each giving her one or two, another cabinet was needed.

Like most longtime collectors, Mignon had gone through the process of refinement and selectivity. She had gone full circle from collecting the most incidental items to her most precious rare gold thimble. When asked if she had a favorite, she replied, "I love them all, but I must admit enamels always catch my eye. Knitting needle guards are also a favorite. However, it makes me happy to be able to find a \$1 needle threader and add that to my collection."

Mignon's collection of needlework tools and thimbles were displayed throughout her house. Many were stored in a dental cabinet, others in a spool-shaped spool cabinet found at a small country store. Some of her favorite small tools were displayed in the living room in a glass-topped table made from an old printer's drawer. A **Brainerd and Armstrong** spool cabinet was also filled with thimbles.

TCI gave Mignon the opportunity to really let her enthusiasm grow and she was a past President of TCI, serving for two terms. She retired from the Board in 1990 and then went on to the Nominating Committee as Chairman. She authored a booklet titled "Sharing Sewing Sets". Mignon was also the recipient of the 1990 Myrtle Lundquist Award.

Mignon attended many conventions over the years and she was also a member of the secretive **Vickie Pin Society** – a very small group of TCI members who had fun collecting, trading and fighting over elaborate souvenir pins or brooches that were made to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilees! Other members included: Elizabeth Waciorski, Gay Ann Rogers, Irene Schwall, Nerylla Taunton and Merle Sauvé.



An example of a Queen Victoria Jubilee pin
Diamond Jubilee 1837 - 1897

Mignon passed away in 1997 and her collection was sold at a Skinner Discovery Auction in 1998. Proceeds from the sale were donated to the Spartanburg County Foundation.

There are just a few of the thimbles that were in Mignon's collection:



**American, c.1870
Simons Bros. Tri-colored
Gold birds and foliage.**



**Germany, c.1930 .800
set w/Lapis stones.**



**Norwegian, c.1915
H.F. Hjortdahl. Moonstone
top, birds and foliage.**



**American, c.1920
Ketcham & McDougall
Sterling w/gold band.**



**English, c.1898 Charles
Horner. Louise rim.**



**English, c.1911 Coronation
Goldsmiths & Silversmiths Co.**



**English, c.1987 Peter
Swingler "Prettige Feestdagen".**



**Continental, c. 1860
Gold w/enamel band.**



**Norwegian, c.1900
Moonstone top. Clement Berg.**



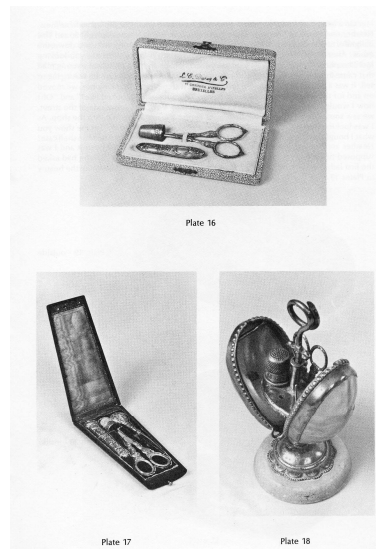
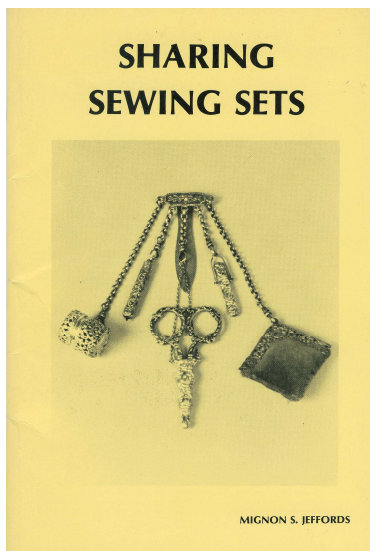
**Norwegian, c.1985
David-Andersen.**



**Scandinavian, stone top
Griffins, .830S c. 1930.**



**American, Simons Bros.
1904 St. Louis World's Fair.**



**Photo: *Sharing Sewing Sets*, Mignon S. Jeffords.
Published in 1984. This booklet is out-of-print.**

Quote from Mignon's booklet: "At the hotel I asked the concierge about street markets, and he told me there was one on Saturday morning. With much anticipation on my part, we set out in the very cold and misty weather. It rained most of Friday night, so I was afraid this might hinder the dealers; but they were well prepared and all had tents set up. It was a great market and I found many interesting things, but then I came upon this dealer with the sets in Plats 16 and 17. I immediately bought the one in Plat 16 but felt she was high on the other one. Bill asked her if she would take less, and she quoted a figure I felt was still high. We told her we would think about it and went to have lunch. After much discussion, we decided to go back and buy it. When we arrived at her tent, she was closed for lunch. We looked around some more, went back and she was still gone! There were several antique shops across the street so we walked over there to look. One of the first things I saw was the little Mother-of-Pearl egg in Plate 18. It was missing some of its tools but the scissors were there. Never having seen one of these for sale before, I told Bill I believed I would just as soon have it as the sewing set at the street market. We purchased it and spent a little more time looking around. When it was time to go back to the hotel Bill said "Let's try the lady one more time; and if she is back we will buy the set." So I held my breath as we approached her tent and sure enough, there she stood. She reduced the set even more so I am sure this was one of those times I was supposed to have this set!."



A most unusual thimble shield!

Trademark –"For: SEWING AID IN THE FORM OF A GUARD TO BE WORN ON AND PROTECT THE THUMB OF THE WEARER, in CLASS 20 (U.S. CL 50).

First use on or about May 10, 1976; in commerce on or about May 10, 1976. Ser. No. 90,893, filed June 18, 1976."

U.S. Patent July 25, 1978 Des. 248,598 - Inventor Melvin Herman Bahmer, 11257 Allegheny, Sun Valley, Calif. 91352



**Brass c. late 1800's FARE WELL
Flower and vine design.**



**American, c.1900's Sterling Silver
Souvenir – Mount Vernon.**



**Brass c. late 1800's
Holly Bells.**

Mignon, like many other collectors, would create a Season's Greetings card each year to send to her special friends. The cards had pictures of items in her collection. Here are a few of the ones she sent:



**Miniature J. & P. Coats cabinet.
American, gold thimbles.**



**Bone needle cases, thimble holder slipper,
knitting guards.**



**Mignon's note read: "My ship came in"
Merry Christmas.**



**Porcelain doll, thimble holder and pin cushion.
English, c.1970's silver & enamel thimble.
Brass tape measure with a Christmas scene.**



Miniature sewing etui filled with tiny bone tools.