

# Needlepoint requires patience, sk

by Donna Heath

"Needlepoint is a passion with me. It's probably my favorite type of stitchery," Neva Peterson said.

Her recently completed needlepoint mural of the Last Supper has over 62,000 stitches and took her six months to complete.

A real work of art, it will be passed down as an heirloom in her family. Copied from an original painting by Leonardo da Vinci, the depth of tone in colors and the dimension are exceptional.

Peterson bought the picture in kit form. It was manufactured in France, cost \$120 and came without instructions. Framing the finished needlepoint cost another \$106. Skill and patience were required to produce the finished product.

"I had seen this particular picture advertised in a craft magazine several years ago. I was going to order it then but didn't, and when I had time to work on it I couldn't find the ad," she said.

"I had almost given up ever finding it when my daughter, Julette, spotted it in a magazine she subscribed to so I ordered it immediately."

Peterson was surprised to discover there were no instructions in the kit. Wool yarn was provided, and the design was simply printed in color on the fabric backing. Her job was to follow the colors as coded with a basic needlepoint stitch.

"The trouble was, the pattern was not exact and would have been crooked, except I compensated by counting rows to keep it square," she said.

"I was really surprised the colors of yarn so closely matched the colors on the design print," she added, pointing out she already knew how to do



**A STEADY HAND AND A SKILLED EYE** are necessary in needlepoint, and Neva Peterson, Pine City, has both. She

needlepoint since she had taken a class in the technique and had completed a woodland scene.

"Since I spend so much of my time here at the laundry, (Pine City Launderers and Cleaners) it took most of my free time to work on this," she said as she pinpointed special features in her

picture. "I worked on a rolled frame and often took it to our lake cabin on weekends where I worked almost steady."

According to Peterson, one of the most difficult parts of the picture were the wine goblets, bread and plates on the Last Supper table.



## skill, but it's worth the effort



anticipated, and I really love it."

A perfectionist by nature, Peterson learned to crochet when she was just seven years old and went on to master all types of needlework after that.

"I also love to do counted cross stitch and have completed four Norman Rockwell pictures using this method."

Experience has taught her to add a few touches to her work that aren't given in instruction books.

"They never mention outlining figures, but I do it because I believe it makes the design stand out," she said. "I use two strands of embroidery floss for outlining and just let my ideas flow. It is sort of like painting with a needle and thread."

If she makes a mistake in her work she does not hesitate to rip it out and start over.

"I really believe if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well, and there should be no flaws. I guess I've always had the patience to keep at something until it is right," she said, reciting the merits of perfection in needlework and the satisfaction she gets from completing a flawless piece.

According to Peterson, many people begin needlework by choosing a project that is beyond a beginner's capability. They get discouraged and think they aren't creative, when actually, if they began on a more modest scale, they would have succeeded and progressed gradually to more complex patterns.

Looking at *The Last Supper* and contemplating the work involved she said, "You know, I never believed people when they said a certain work of art was priceless. After this, I understand what they mean."

recently completed a pattern of "The Last Supper," a project which was a major undertaking, even for a skilled craftsman.

"They are so small and are shaded in different colors of thread so I had to keep changing colors in my needle," she said.

Proper framing was also important.

"I had it done at Helen's Gallery, and I told her to cover it with glass because I was afraid it

would become soiled or fade through the years," Peterson said. "She called and asked me if I would change my mind, pointing out that glass over the needlepoint really detracted from it. I decided to forget the glass, and I'm happy I did. The framing added a dimension to it I hadn't