

"It's amazing what one can accomplish when one doesn't know what one can't do!!" —Garfield the Cat

The first reaction most people have when they look at metal filigree work is, "Wow! How did they do that? I could never make that. It's too complicated—too delicate." To such comments, all I can say is to keep Garfield's words of wisdom in mind when working with filigree.

When I began making silver jewelry, the first work I did was filigree, but I didn't know filigree was supposed to be difficult. The first stone I cut was an opal—a stone even experienced jewelers shy away from. Some people would say that I've done things backward, that I didn't start at the "beginning." But I didn't know there was a "beginning." I only knew that I wanted to make filigree jewelry, the opportunity presented itself, and I learned.

I began my career in jewelry design quite by accident. Back in 1987, when the New Age fad came into full bloom, I was a college student who couldn't afford to spend \$60 or more on a piece of crystal jewelry. But I could buy 50-cent Arkansas quartz crystals at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum in Washington, DC, and I could buy craft wire and supplies at a local craft store—so I made my own crystal jewelry! One of my college professors liked my work and asked me to make a set for her, too. I began experimenting with quartz and other crystals, bead caps, beading wire, and lots of cyanoacrylate glue.

I made and sold enough jewelry to buy myself a student ticket to Norway to visit my then-fiancé, Bjorn Moen. As it turned out, Bjorn had once wanted to make jewelry himself. (During the 1970s, Bjorn and his father had taken courses in the basic *solje* technique, the Norwegian form of filigree work used to decorate Norway's national costumes.) But life intervened, and Bjorn set aside jewelrymaking to pursue other interests over the next decade and a half.

That summer in Norway, Bjorn dragged all the supplies out of storage and showed me the basics: how to cut, bend, and form filigree shapes and how to solder and pickle metal. I made four simple shapes—using an antiquated torch with a mouthpiece I had to blow into to mix air with the propane!

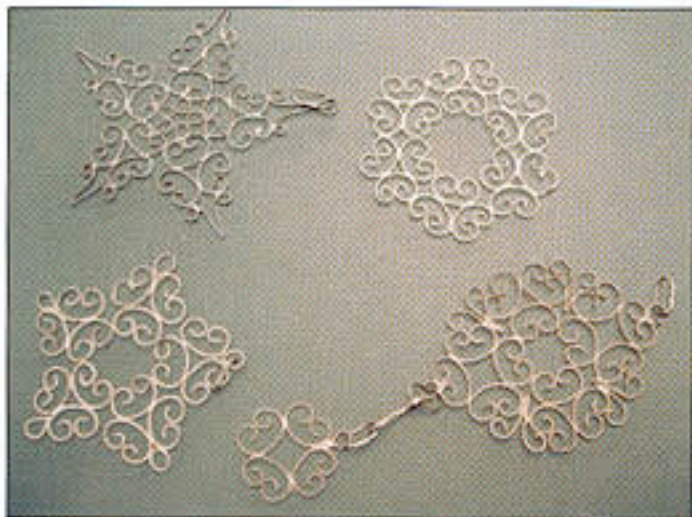
Despite working with such outmoded tools, I was hooked. When I returned home, I bought a modern torch, a bottle of muriatic acid (used for cleaning bricks, this is actually a weak



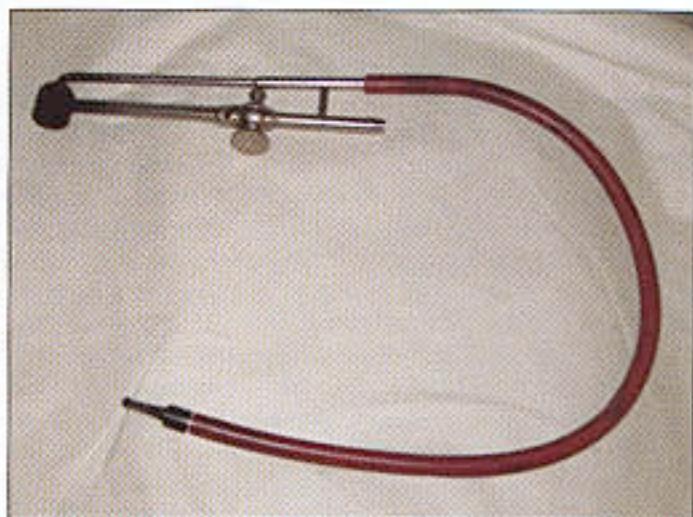
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solution of hydrochloric acid), a few basic tools, and some silver wire. I began experimenting and eventually found a way to make filigree wire. I also discovered what worked and didn't work, and just how much heat I could use before my project self-destructed. I found that I could not solder with stones in place (at least not the many quartz stones I had). I also learned that while muriatic acid worked to pickle the metal, it rusted my tools and, if I didn't want holes in my clothes, I had to add baking soda to the rinse water to neutralize the acid.

Since then, I've picked up many more tips—from books, goldsmiths, and even the Internet, but I'm largely self-taught. And if I can do it, so can you. Filigree work isn't hard; the only hard part is adjusting your mindset, and this book will help you do just that. So turn the page to learn how you, too, can create beautiful filigree jewelry.



Some of my first filigree pieces. Take a close look at the shapes involved: you'll use them all in the projects that follow.



My first torch, operated by blowing air into the mouthpiece.

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