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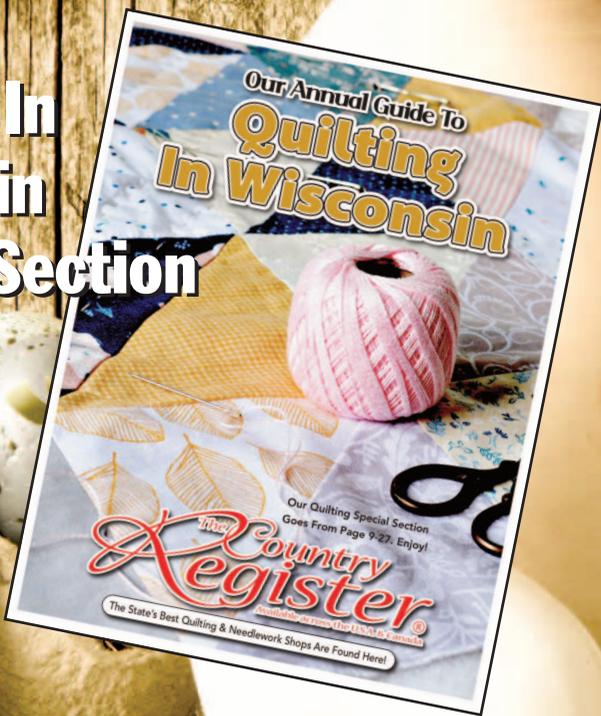
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Inside:
Quilting In
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Special Section



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The Country Register Of Wisconsin

**This Issue Available Throughout
March-April 2026**

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The Country Register® of Wisconsin

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Quilts and print publications: old school and cool

By Scott Hughes, Publisher

EAU CLAIRE, WI - This issue includes our annual Quilting In Wisconsin special section, an amazing resource for avid quilters as well as those of you who have always wanted to take it up but just didn't know how to start. Turn the pages and find out!

The advertisers in this issue have all of the expertise, experience and modern equipment for sale to help you expand or explore this passion. Be sure to mention to any of them you call or visit that you found them in The Country Register. They will LOVE to hear that.

Make new friends, buy some new equipment, learn about a new technique to make your next quilt the quilt of your dreams.

This is the perfect time, so just do it!

Thank you for picking up this issue of The Country Register and spending a little time reading these pages. You know, print publications like ours are sometimes considered old school — but we think you'll agree that old school is still pretty cool, whether that's a cuddly quilt or a nice, little print publication ... like this one!



The Country Register Of Wisconsin

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Schedule of Events

Great Sales & Promotions In Our Favorite Places!

March

- 1-31250th Anniversary Shop Hop - Bolt & Skein Quilt Shop - Shawano
- 1-31250th Anniversary Shop Hop - Hertschners - Stevens Point
- 1-31250th Anniversary Shop Hop - Quilt Kits & Beyond - Marshfield
- 3“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 6-7Vintage Shop Hop - The Paisley Star - Boscobel
- 6-7Vintage Shop Hop - The Old Junction Mill - Milton
- 10“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 17“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 21Worldwide Quilting Day Celebration - The Paisley Star - Boscobel
- 24“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 26-29Fat Quarter Frenzy - Bolt & Skein Quilt Shop - Shawano
- 28Crazy Quilters Guild Show - Parkview Middle School - Mukwonago
- 28-29Barn Door Quilts Vending At Crazy Quilters Guild Show
Mukwonago
- 28-29The Duke’s Stash Vending At Crazy Quilters Guild Show
Mukwonago
- 31“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien

April

- 1-30Spring Is Sprung Sale - Bolt & Skein Quilt Shop - Shawano
- 7“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 8-11NE Iowa Shop Hop - Forest Mills Quilt Shop - Postville, IA
- 11-12Barn Door Quilts Vending At Marinette Quilt Show - Marinette
- 11-12Northwoods Quilt Show - Marinette Rec Center - Marinette
- 13-18April Showers Event - Going To Pieces Quilt Co - Appleton

April

- 17-18Barn Door Quilts Vending At Green Bay Quilt Show - Green Bay
- 14“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 21“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien
- 28“After Hours” Facebook Live - The Pickett Fence - Prairie du Chien

May

- 1-2Junkin Market Days Spring Market - Alliance Center - Hudson
- 1-3Barn Door Quilts Vending At Fiber_+Fabric Festival - Rosemont, IL
- 2-3Twisted Threads Quilt Show - Simek Center - Medford
- 2-3Needle & Quilting Workshop Vending At
Twisted Threads Quilt Show - Medford
- 14-16USA 250 Sew-Quilt-Create Event
Nancy Zieman Sewing Studio - Beaver Dam

June

- 1-30Wisconsin Quilt Shop Hop - 60+ Shops Statewide



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A Lesson From The Trees

By Julie A. Druck

I came across a story about a man who purchased a piece of property to build a home alongside a large lake. The location was heavily wooded, so he had the majority of the trees bulldozed and the land cleared, leaving only a few choice specimens. Not long after that, a soaking rain that lasted for days poured over and saturated the site. Following the rain came heavy winds, and many of the choice trees that the man had left standing fell over. He had not realized that the roots of those trees were intricately intertwined with the trees he had bulldozed. Their root systems had been compromised by the massive upheaval of the ground. Without the strength of their fellow trees, the choice ones were destroyed as well.

Upon reading the conclusion of that story, my mind jumped to a scene I had viewed a few days prior. I had been watching the funeral of President Jimmy Carter which took place on a frigid cold January day. As the color guard was waiting outside the National Cathedral until it was time to move the casket into the church, there were several military men standing near

the hearse with flags. One man held the Presidential Flag of the United States. I should probably say that he held ON to the flag. In the intense cold and wind, it was taking every ounce of his strength and power to not be whipped about. In fact, several times he was blown sideways. He fought against the wind and moved back to his original position, only to be blown sideways again. My heart went out to him.

Then I noticed the young soldier who held the American flag. He, too, was fighting to stand still and hang onto the flag. But I realized that he wasn't struggling as much because the other two members of the color guard were literally pressed up against him, infusing him with their strength as well. He was fighting to hold onto the flag, but he was able to stay in place because of the added strength of his comrades.

Connecting these two stories is the thread that there is strength in numbers. It's easy to get blown off course or toppled over when we are left on our own. We need the strength and encouragement and help of one another if we're going to remain upright.

As we move into spring, I look forward to paying a little more attention to the trees that are beginning to bud around our farm. In the past, I've recognized some of their contributions to my life — the perseverance of their sap to provide us with the sweet deliciousness of syrup, their abundant crowns shade us from the summer's heat, and in autumn we are awed by their flaming beauty.

But this spring, I want to acknowledge the trees' gift to us that's hidden from view — the reminder that our intertwined roots are what

make us strong. I want to follow their example, and diligently and persistently work at weaving my connections with others, so that when the rains and winds come, we all remain standing upright — stronger, because we are being held up by each other.

Julie Druck is from York, Pennsylvania, and writes from her farm in Skunk Hollow. She'd welcome your comments at thedrucks@net-zero.com.

Life On My Farm - Garden Fairies

By Donna Jo Copeland, Farmeress
Breezy Manor Farm

I believe in magic, always have. And a garden is one of the places magic truly happens.

Think about it. We take a seed or a cutting, put them into our garden soil, water and wait. Sometimes beautiful plants emerge giving us fabulous flowers, wonderful fruits and vegetables. Sometimes not. That's where magic comes in, I believe.

The growing of plants, any plant, brings us joy. Nurturing a growing entity speaks to our souls. I think it's the same for farmers as well as gardeners. You can do everything right and still fail. But when it all works then there's magic.

Every year in my gardens I plan something new — for instance, new beds, new plant varieties, and new methods. And I always ask for the blessings of the fairies. I leave blue bottles (for that is the favorite color of fairies), up-turned flower pots, and dense foliage for their homes and shelter.

I used to have a lovely stack of blue and green bottles in a corner of the garden but it collapsed. This year I intend to fashion a more permanent bottle tower. Bottles facing east for the morning fairies, west for the evening ones.

Morning fairies have wings glistening with dew drops and are very busy flitting around as they rejoice in the sunshine, blessing plants. Evening fairies are the ones I notice most gracefully floating over plants at eventide, pausing to say their prayers.

Gardens can calm a troubled or stressed mind. Hands in the soil, green growing plants surrounding you, magic fills your aura.

The queen of the garden fairies I think is the beloved dragon fly. With her majestic wings and her playful silhouette, the queen hovers over your garden spreading magic. Be still and listen you can hear her singing.

Last year due to incessant rain I couldn't get my vegetable garden soil tilled. I grew tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, green beans and potatoes in old feed sacks. Filling them half full of barn compost and sweepings, I punched holes in the bottom for drainage and set them up against the fence. Very little watering required and no weeding. I will be doing this again with more sacks.

The real beauty in this method is when harvest is over you just dump the bags out on the garden, enriching the soil. Some of the feed sacks I will reuse, some I will burn.

As the world is a scary, stressful place right now I urge you all to plant a garden, large or small. Size doesn't matter; it's the fresh air, the growing, the tending. Watch for garden fairies, give them a safe place. Let their magic enfold you.

Peace and love my friends - Donna Jo

Sandy's Lime Jello Salad

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of unsweetened applesauce
- 1 3 oz. package of lime Jello
- 8 oz. 7-up

Heat 2 cups of unsweetened applesauce until very hot, not boiling. Add one 3-ounce package of lime Jello. Stir well.

Let cool, and then stir in 8 ounces of 7-Up, mix well.

Pour into an 8x8 pan, refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

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Everything Is Coming Up Crocuses

By Janet M. Bair

I love spring bulbs! Out of the many flowers I have planted over the years, crocuses and daffodils are the most enduring. I can hardly wait to see our purple and yellow hyacinths blooming. Sadly, our tulips have not survived the squirrels' descent upon them.

What is especially fun is that my "spring flower bed" is located right next to our house in a very sunny spot. In January, the daffodils and crocuses shoot their green tips through a frozen earth. Snow doesn't seem to stop their daring rise above ground.

This has been a most encouraging spot in our yard, for when all looks bleak and dead, the daffodils remain undefeated year after year. Surprisingly, our crocuses somehow have become scattered all about our front

lawn. I know I didn't plant the bulbs in the middle of the lawn. Who moved them? Only the squirrels know for sure.

Last year I counted 32 lavender crocus flowers blooming among the grass. I know I originally planted yellow and white crocuses, too, but I guess they taste better because they have disappeared? It has been kind of fun to see where the flowers pop up.

With spring coming, maybe I will get busy like the squirrels. I'll sew some new flowered hot mats or cloth napkins. Or I could create a new wall hanging for the front door. It's time to finish up the larger quilting projects before our two spare bedrooms need to become space for summer visitors. The bedroom I sew in is not air conditioned which makes for uncomfortable quilting days in the summer.

I just finished an orange and yellow quilt

top that needs quilting. Our quilt guild sews Comfort Quilts for The Hole in the Wall Gang Summer Camp in CT. The last collection day for quilts is in May. I have two other quilts in process besides the orange one to finish by then.

I thought the lavender quilt I'm working on would be easy. However, I bought the fabric two years ago and didn't realize there wouldn't be enough for the pattern I chose until after I cut it out. I will have to improvise something.

Isn't that what we all do with life — we improvise? Yes, the squirrels may have changed my garden design but it's still beautiful. My quilt will still make some little girl happy with whatever pattern I improvise.

What projects are you working on? What are your plans this spring? Even if they have to be changed around a bit, I hope that you



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find some colorful ways to make your days brighter.

©2025 Janet M. Bair. Bair lives in Ansonia, CT. You may contact her at library-bair@hotmail.com.

Letters Worth Writing Home About

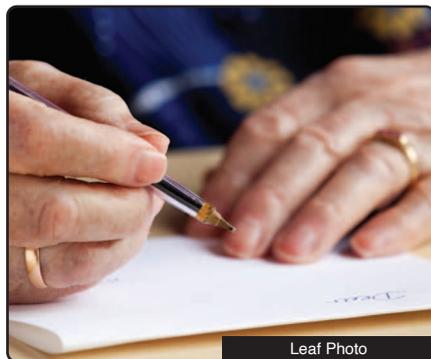
By Kerri Habben Bosman

Since I could write, I have loved writing letters. One of my favorite gifts as a child was new stationery, the kind that came in a pretty box with matching paper and envelopes all bound together by a ribbon. I was the kid that couldn't wait to write "thank you" letters.

It helped that I saw family writing letters. Dad often used his clipboard with water-marked paper on top of a ruled guide so that each line he wrote would be properly spaced. His handwriting was exceptional, having grown up when penmanship was an indicator of character. Uncle Henry, who lived across the street from us, always had his old Royal typewriter on their dining room table except for family dinners. I loved using his typewriter. I'd leave him a note if he wasn't in the room and then the next time I came over one was waiting for me. When he died in 1992, I placed a typed note in his suit pocket. It read: "I came by to see you today. I pray that I shall live well enough to see you again."

Ten years later by coincidence, I became pen pals with the son of someone Uncle Henry knew in the 1930s. I never met Harold in person, but we were both writers. We sent works in-progress for the other's suggestions. We wrote for 12 years.

When I was 20, my dad suggested I write to the widow of a captain he'd worked with before retiring after 40 years as a ship dispatcher. He thought we'd have a lot in com-



Leaf Photo

mon. We did, and we telephoned and wrote letters for over 20 years. When Dad died in 2001, I called Jane, ready with the prepared speech I'd used in the "letting people know" calls. Except that when I tried to talk to Jane, my throat suddenly became a glob of wet marbles. Her response to my garbled words has stayed with me: "Old shipmates are always old shipmates."

Perhaps the most important letters I have ever written are the more than 700 letters sent to my mother-in-law. I wrote to her at least two times a week from when I first met her in 2019 to her passing in late 2025 at the age of 104. She lived 1,021 miles from us in Kenosha, Wisconsin. My letters shared all that was happening for us and all of our family here. Most of us rely on emails and texts now, but Mom didn't. She needed letters to be read and reread with a cup of tea and a cookie or two.

In person I called her "Mom," but in my

letters I addressed her as "Mary," her given name. By the time Wayne and I married in 2020, she was 100 years old and had long been "Mom" and "Grandma Mary." With most of her peers no longer with us, I wanted her to see herself as she'd been her whole life.

Her letters were written on handmade cards with pictures and details of the kids, namely her grown grandchildren, their spouses and ever-growing great-grandchildren. She knew when laundry was in the dryer and what was for dinner. She knew how the garden was growing and how each of us was evolving, too. Most importantly, she knew she was a part of each of us all the

time. Each letter ended with: "Wayne sends his love, as do I. We think of you every day."

Selfishly perhaps, I miss writing to Mom. At 104 she had earned a peace beyond our temporal and limited world. But I am also comforted because old shipmates in our sea of life will always be old shipmates. And I pray that I shall live well enough to see her again.

Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer in Cape Carteret, NC. Her email is 913jeeves@gmail.com.

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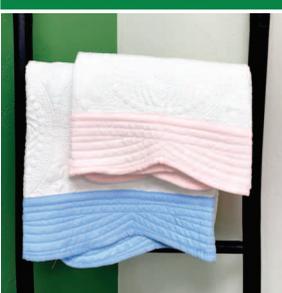
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Prescription For Adventure - The Alaska Good Friday Earthquake, March 1964

By Naomi Gaede-Penner

I don't recall the new Easter dress I wore in 1964, nor do I recall Mom searching for eggs at the two grocery stores so we could dye them. All I remember is being terrified. In March 1964, our family lived on a homestead outside Soldotna, Alaska, on the Kenai Peninsula, where my father was one of the first permanent physicians. My parents, three siblings (ages 6, 8, and 12), and I (age 13) experienced the Alaska Good Friday earthquake, which I remember well.

(The following story adapted from "Alaska Bush Pilot Doctor." As told by my father.)

There were no pressing medical needs on this Good Friday holiday, so my medical partner and I decided not to hold clinic. Instead, I was working in the back woods cleaning up fallen timber and digging trenches to divert water away from the house.

This was an awkward time of year with old, dirty snow mixed with sand and gravel; Alaskans called it "breakup." The combination of daytime 25- to 40-degree temperatures melted the snow into slush, and then overnight lows of 5 to 10 degrees froze the slush back to ice. The still-frozen ground beneath the surface prevented the daytime water from draining properly and small lakes formed around the house. Homesteaders who did not have gravel roads parked their vehicles by a main road and slogged a mile or more in boots to get home.

"Elmer!"

I looked up and saw my wife, Ruby, coming toward me.

"One of your OBs is on the phone."

The pregnant woman had been fortunate to get through on our telephone line, shared with a number of other people. Sometimes I'd pick up the phone and hear a teenage girl just listening to her boyfriend breathe, or so it seemed. There had been times when I needed to make a critical call and had to break into a conversation, introducing myself as Dr. Gaede. Obviously, there wasn't much privacy or confidentiality.

Within a few minutes of the telephone conversation, Mrs. Smith gave me — and anyone else who might have been listening — an experienced progress report on her condition.

This was not her first baby. Without hesitation, I told her I'd meet her at the clinic around 5:15 p.m.

I changed my work clothes, sined from winter brush fire burning, and headed out the door.

"If this is the real thing, I won't be back for supper," I called to Ruby.

The VW micro-bus skated over the water on ice road, then across the bridge that spanned the Kenai River. The bridge was the only one connecting the lower Kenai Peninsula towns to the main part of the Peninsula.

Mrs. Smith met me in the clinic parking lot and took her muddy boots off at the door. She had driven herself to town. Chances were that her husband was in the oilfield, and a friend was watching her other children.

"It's a mess out there!" She shook her head and held her stomach. "I didn't plan on having a baby at breakup when the roads are so bad."

I began my evaluation. Blood pressure normal; fetal heart rate normal. The baby's head was low. I needed to call a nurse right away.

Abruptly, the room swayed. I grasped the examining table to steady myself. Was I dizzy? I sat down on the nearby tall stool. The movement continued, now with a distant rumble and a stronger force. I looked at Mrs. Smith. Our puzzled eyes met.

Earthquake!

"Let's get out of here!" I shouted above the din and helped her off the table. I held on to her arm, and we careened down the hall to the emergency ramp door, which I deemed most solid.

The shaking intensified. As we looked out the door, I saw tall spruce and aspen trees whip violently back and forth until their tops nearly touched the ground. Like the sound of surf, the roar became deafening. The post office across the street jumped alive and gyrated on the convulsing ground. Cars lurched crazily on the road. I'd never been in an earthquake like this before.

In horror, I watched a jagged crack open a foot in front of a car, then suddenly clap shut. The smell of sulfur filled the air. The ground rolled and groaned in agony.

After four never ending minutes, the nightmare stopped — or so I thought.

"I'm going home," said Mrs. Smith in a shaky voice. "I don't want to have my baby

right now."

She walked over to her boots, then out the front door to her car, and drove off.

The large clock on the wall hung crookedly and had stopped at 5:36. I pushed back the furniture in the waiting room, which had danced out of place, then called Ruby. The phone was dead. I had to get home.

Just as I opened the front door, a state trooper pushed in. The muscular man with neatly clipped hair looked wild-eyed and uncertain.

"Doc, you've got to stay. Emergencies will be coming in!"

I'd never seen him so frantic and wondered what he knew that I didn't. I had no idea about my family's safety, but I'd been ordered to stay at my post as a physician.

Later, Ruby told me of her experience. She had heard a loud thud and then felt a jolt, as though something large had run into the house. She and the children were sitting at the supper table, and even when they realized it was an earthquake, they expected it to subside, as earthquakes had done before. When the shaking and noise increased, she feared the house would crumble.

"Let's get out of here!" she'd screamed.

She and our children had made their way drunkenly toward the front door. Unable to maintain their balance, they had collapsed onto the cold ground, without shoes or coats. Trees had swayed like feathers. The ground had rumbled and split open, emitting swamp gas from the shallow fields below. After hour-long minutes, they'd returned to the house. The only damage she found was water sloshing out of her suds-saver tub in the laundry room and a fallen flower pot.

She had tried to call me, but when she picked up the phone, all she heard was a woman screaming hysterically. Ruby had told her that she was scared, too, but the phone lines were dead, and no one could be reached. As the evening shadows crept in, Ruby had found candles. Remarkably, after several hours, electricity was restored, and she turned on the radio — to the shocking news from a Seattle station that no one knew what had happened to Anchorage.

In the clinic laboratory, I found a battery-operated radio. I was surprised by the difficulty in finding stations. Instead, there was a lot of static. This was a big state. Certainly not all stations were down.

Finally, I tuned into a Seattle station. Gradually, and with jaw-dropping disbelief, I learned what had happened in Anchorage, 150 miles away. The announcer's reports were graphic and grim, and sent chills down my back: houses and people had been swallowed up, bridges were destroyed, and entire streets had dropped below the surface. The extent of the damage in Alaska had only begun to be assessed.

At that moment, no one knew the earthquake had registered 9.2 on the Richter scale, making it the strongest earthquake recorded in North America. Nor did they know the epicenter was 100 miles east of Anchorage.

The Good Friday sun slipped away. Hour by

hour, the reports became worse. Aftershocks added to everyone's trepidation. A new report informed us that the earthquake had churned up a tidal wave. Our homestead was three miles from the beach, and even at that distance, we were close to sea level, and water could rush inland. In the utter blackness, no one would be able to see it coming.

The next day, I drove home. This was not the same town I'd driven through the day before. Signs lay crumpled on the ground, buildings had slits down their sides, and streets were cracked. I was relieved to see the bridge across the Kenai River was still intact, unlike 141 or 204 in other parts of the Kenai Peninsula, which left many small towns isolated.

Two days later, on Easter, the Anchorage Daily Times began publishing lists of casualties in Anchorage and showed pictures of buckled downtown buildings, cars fallen into yawning pits, burst water mains, snapped power poles, and houses sloughed off the bluff down to Cook Inlet. Governor Egan estimated damages in Anchorage alone to be at \$250 million, which he said was conservative.

Unlike Anchorage and the coastal towns, Soldotna was in pretty good shape. There was no major structural damage, and because there was no city water or sewer, no main lines were broken. Within the week, we would hear cargo planes overhead bringing food and supplies to the nearby town of Kenai.

The following day, the Times provided instructions for Anchorage residents regarding gasoline, food supplies, fuel oil, water, and field toilets, mail delivery, typhoid shots, and schools. Casualty figures increased, although actual bodies could not be found for those swallowed into the ground. More than 2,000 people were homeless.

In coastal towns on and near the Kenai Peninsula, docks were ripped loose, and crushed boats littered waterways and beaches. In some places, the land table had dropped.

The Easter church service took on a new meaning as I thought of the initial count of 104 or more people killed and the grieving of those who had lost these loved ones. I hoped they would receive spiritual comfort. I thought of the biblical Easter story, where an earthquake shook the enormous rock from the entrance of Jesus' tomb. The guards attending this tomb were frightened and confused — and I could certainly understand why. This would be an Easter that our family, and other longtime Alaskans, would never forget.

A week later, Mrs. Smith returned, and the "Earthquake Baby," born during breakup, did arrive.

Read about Naomi's books at www.prescriptionforadventure.com. Some books can be purchased on Amazon. Others can be ordered from her at prescriptionforadventure.com or 303-506-6181. Follow her on Facebook (*Prescription for Adventure*).

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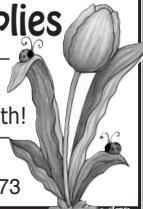


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Back Porch Break - Are You Feeling Egg-Centric?

By Nancy Parker Brummett

Memories of Easters past always include fond recollections of the annual egg-dyeing experience. We remember watching our mom spreading out yesterday's newspaper on the kitchen table and getting out the egg dyeing kit from the grocery store. Today's kits have fancy add-ons like stickers and such, but we just recall the package of tablets in different colors, the one copper wire egg dipper we took turns with, the wax crayon for writing our names on the eggs we chose, and the box with the punch-out holes for displaying our finished designs. For many of us it was the first time we inhaled the pungent smell of vinegar, as we watched intently for the different colored tablets to dissolve in the cups of hot water. It didn't take long to discover, once the white hard-boiled eggs had cooled enough to be carefully dipped in the dye, that the blue, green and purple dyes would work their magic first while the orange and yellow dyes took much longer.

And red always turned out pink, right?

I'm glad I also have memories of dyeing Easter eggs with my boys and with several of our grandchildren over the years. Inevitably some child would turn over a cup of dye and



Evgenyatamanenko Photo

it would flow over the newspaper onto the floor, someone would drop an egg and crack it, or a grandchild would complain that a sibling was hogging the best colors, the dipper, or the crayon.

But when all was said and done and the mess was cleaned up, we had a beautiful array of colored eggs nestled in fake green grass in a basket — all ready for an Easter morning egg

hunt. There might have even been some slightly multi-colored egg salad to enjoy after Easter in the days before we knew about salmonella!

Whereas kids can have just as much fun hunting for plastic eggs as real ones, especially if there's a piece of candy or other surprise inside each one, much fancier eggs from different cultures have been a part of the art world

for centuries and are often displayed under glass in golden egg cups in museums. Whether it's the delicately painted Ukrainian pysanky egg or the jewel-encrusted Faberge one, they are truly works of art.

The eggs displayed on my coffee table each Easter are the multi-colored marble ones I collected on travels in Germany and Italy in the early 1970s. But I'm thinking this year I may just toss one of those egg dyeing kits in my grocery basket and have an egg-stravagant dyeing experience again. While I'm waiting for the fizzy tablets to reach their potential, I'll turn in my Bible to Isaiah 43:19 and be reminded of God's promise: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" For the symbolism of the Easter egg, of any variety, should not be missed even by the youngest of us.

New life, new birth, the promise of spring and of resurrection. That's Easter in an egg shell.

Nancy Parker Brummett is an author and freelance writer in Colorado Springs, CO. Follow her on Facebook, Instagram and Linked In or subscribe to her blog posts at www.nancyparkerbrummett.com.

The Beauty Of Rainy Days

By Janet Young

Light rain has begun to fall, and here we are on the first week of April, preparing ourselves, to experience what traditionally has been one of the rainiest months of the year.

As you watch the raindrops slide slowly down the window, have you ever stopped to think about the beauty that rain brings forth — especially in the springtime. Could it be because everything is painted beautifully ... the trees look brighter, the flowers are more colorful, and rain sends a signal to the grass that it is time to wake up and start growing.

Have you ever heard the rhythmic sounds of

raindrops cascading on your roof? Before long that sound, much like white noise creates a sound so soothing, before you know it you are fast asleep.

Even in literature, rain symbolizes life, purity, being born, and cleansing. Even songs have been sung about rain. For example, "A Rainy Night in Georgia" may not be a happy representation of rain, however there is the pop song, "I Love a Rainy Night." This is a catchy tune as the title implies extolling the virtues of rain. In the movies, Gene Kelly was famous for that dance scene in "Singing in the Rain." And last but not least, children's nursery rhymes talked about rain in, "Rain, Rain Go

Away," and "It's Raining, It's Pouring." There are many celebrations of rain.

Perhaps the next time it rains, you will have an attitude of gratitude. Because rain also supplies us with our much-needed water, that basically sustains life. I'd say that is a very important reason to embrace rainy days. So, don't let those raindrops get you down.

Instead, the next time it rains why not become like a child again. Grab your raincoat (if it is a cool day), an umbrella, and your boots. Then go for a walk in the rain. While you're at it, why not stomp your feet in a puddle or two, or if you are in a secluded area, why not dance in the rain. It will lift your spirits, and

put a smile on your face.

And perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of rain is when we get that occasional glimpse of the rainbow. I leave you with this quote from Gilbert K. Chesterton: "If you want a rainbow, you have to put up with the rain." Happy spring!

©2026 Janet Young. Young is a certified tea and etiquette consultant, co-founder of Mid-Atlantic Tea Business Association, and prior owner of Over The Teacup.



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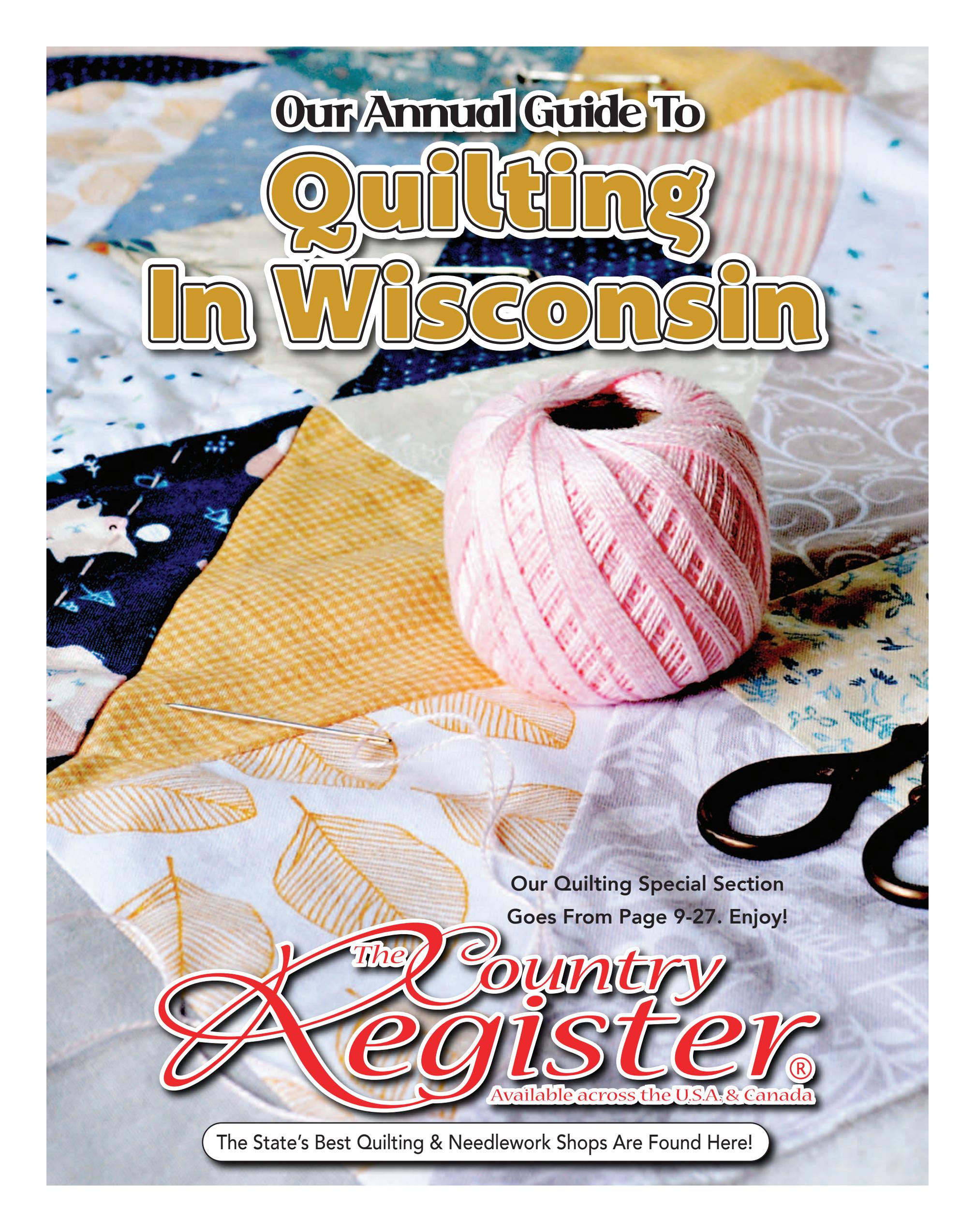
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If You're In A Quilting Funk, Try A Round Robin Quilt

By Judy Sharer

The excitement of making a round robin quilt is creating it with friends and not knowing exactly how it will look once completed. If you are in a quilters guild or have a social group of friends who sew, this could be a great project.

There are two ways to create a round robin. First, you can create a single quilt that begins with a themed center, which is usually made by the owner. The center is passed from person to person each adding another border to the quilt contributing to the theme the original person chose. To complete this add a border quilt, whenever the quilt top is in your possession,

you choose what to add to all four sides of the piece. It can be appliqued or pieced. Each quilt is usually passed within the group one time around the circle of members as the masterpiece grows. A certain time frame for the piece to be passed to the next person is set by the group. As you exchange the quilt top the group decides whether to show the progress that's been made or keep it a secret until the end to show the owner of the original block.

The second way a round robin can work is each member in the group makes an individual block for the original person to assemble into to a quilt top. Smaller groups may choose to make more than one block per person, but each person

makes a block for the other people in the group. The original person chooses the block size and a pattern for the block or they leave the pattern up to the people making the block for a scrappy quilt look.

In both cases often the original person chooses the colors and can even give each member a cut of fabric to use in the border or block they make. The colors and fabric help tie the quilt together as they add to the border or make the block to grow the quilt into a piece of art.

Over the years I've been involved in making several round robin quilts and it's always fun. It can also be a little nerve-racking at times as you worry whether or not the final owner of the quilt will like what you've made. Then on reveal day you wait on pins and needles to see what your finished piece or quilt blocks will look like.

One of the members in our small group was pregnant and we decided to make a

round robin baby quilt to surprise her. You could also do a round robin quilt with family members as a birthday present or make one for a family reunion. Clubs can also use this method to make a raffle quilt.

Regardless, if it's for yourself or to give away, give it a try! This technique is a fun and exciting project to make with friends.

©2025 Judy Sharer. Sharer is the author of a sweet historical romance family saga series titled, "A Plains Life." This four-book series published by The Wild Rose Press is appropriate for the entire family and is available online wherever books and eBooks are sold. Visit Judy's website judysharer.com and follow her on Facebook and LinkedIn. Please leave a book review if you enjoy the writing. Look for Judy's next release titled, "Secrets in Room Four" coming this spring.



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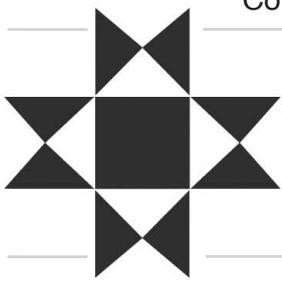
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And Sew On ...

By Wayne M. Bosman

It might have been the cowboy shirts. Or maybe the black corduroy pants.

Either way, some of my earliest memories center around Mom's sewing machine. When I was quite young, Mom made most of the clothes for my brothers and me. Dad hadn't settled into a career yet and making your own clothes was a thrifty way to keep the budget balanced. There were four of us brothers, all under 5 years old, and it seemed that by the time each child outgrew an outfit there wasn't much left of it to hand down to the next youngest.

When my two older brothers were at school during the day, my brother Ron and I spent a good bit of time in Mom's bedroom watching her work at the old Singer treadle driven machine. We were both fascinated with it, watching the treadle go up and down and listening to the steady sounds as she used her "spare" time keeping us in clothing. She still remembered when Dad got her the electric motor for the machine. It was 1947.

The cowboy shirts were a memorable special project for her, finishing one for each of us before Christmas. I remember the corduroy pants for the softness and warmth in the Wisconsin winter. Mom grew up in a time when many, if not most, of her friends made their own outfits. She had a drawer full of patterns that she had made or wanted to

make.

Eventually, as we became teenagers and as she had to spend more time being the unpaid worker at Dad's growing business, the Singer started to gather dust. She made some clothes for my sister, who was six years younger, and did alterations on the tight pants that were the style then. By the time bell bottoms were in vogue, the Singer was retired.

As time went on, my fascination with sewing machines remained. I spent 49 years as a car mechanic and learned to value machines of all types for their simplicity and usefulness. Every once in a while I would happen on a sewing machine that spurred my curiosity. I would usually end up buying it and spending happy hours getting it back in working order. I never learned to actually sew with them, so they would end up in the hands of someone who could.

The latest acquisition is a 1984 Montgomery Ward machine that cost \$10 at an estate sale. I always have mixed feelings when I get something from an estate sale. Someone is clearing out all of the personal items from another person's life. The buyers are looking for useful things and it is easy to forget that someone loved and used those things. When I opened up the machine, the care that the previous owner had put into it was evident. The tools are neat, clean and organized. There was a small sampler of some of the stitches, but even more, it felt loved. I went online to

find an operators manual and threaded the machine. It worked beautifully. My wife Kerri's eyes lit up as she tried it out.

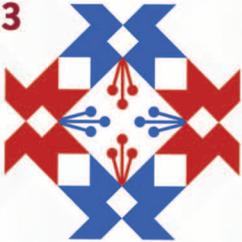
Kerri learned to sew from her mother. Her skill of choice is crocheting, so she only pulls out her mother's 1960 Singer when she decides to make a new apron or alter a dress for dancing. Because she really enjoys the handwork, she has hand-sewed each of my grandchildren pillowcases that are personalized to each's particular interests and favorite colors. National Parks, sports teams, zebras, the Eiffel Tower, flamingos, dinosaurs and sea creatures have all appeared on the pillowcases. She always does the final stitches with a little prayer that laying their heads on the things that they love will bring good dreams. It can't hurt, can it?

Wayne M. Bosman is a retired auto mechanic living in Cape Carteret, NC. He has the good fortune to be married to Kerri Habben Bosman, who is a regular contributor. His email is wbosman1@gmail.com.

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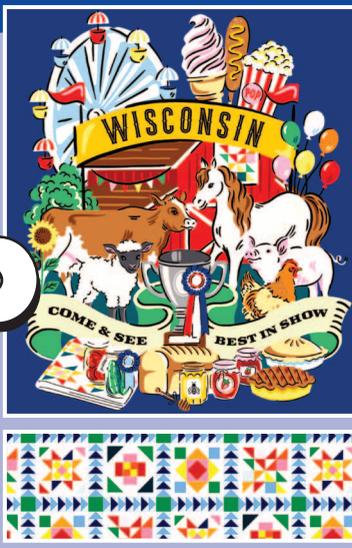
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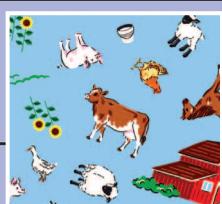


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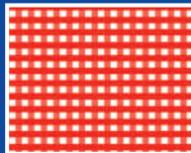
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Sew & Sew Retreats Offering Four Destinations For Craft Travel in '26

By Meghan Diemel, Editor
The Country Register of Wisconsin

Sew & Sew Retreats is offering four amazing opportunities in 2026 for overseas travel that includes two separate week-long stays at Chateau Dumas in southern France, a third trip that centers around a week in Paris, and a week-long trip to sites in Denmark, with attendees staying in the city of Copenhagen.

The trips, which are coordinated and supported by Linda Sweek of Sew & Sew Retreats, bring together like-minded creatives of various skill levels and interests.

The trips were Sweek's brainchild. As she explained, she's always been interested in fiber art, with her specialty focused on embroidery.

"My grandmother was an artist; she took me under her wings and taught me a lot about art," Sweek said. "So, I really see my fiber creations from an artistic standpoint, [and] I've always been interested in textiles. Also, I love to travel. I learned a lot about how to plan trips, both as a child watching my mom, but also in my career — I was in marketing, communications, public relations, and at times I would put together big events like this ... [with] lots and lots of components and details.

"... One day, about 30 years ago, I'm at lunch with a friend who asked, 'So if you weren't doing this, what would you like to do?' And out of my mouth came, 'Someday, I would like to hold textile retreats in Europe,' which was so bizarre. I was in marketing at the time, I had small children, and I wasn't creating fiber art full time. It was just so weird to have that come out of my mouth."

Life continued to happen for Sweek, who said she's visited France several times and feels it has so much magic for visitors. She had been caring for her grandson during

weekdays, and then her son broke the news — they were moving to northern Wisconsin. She said she cried initially, as any grandma would, but about a minute later had a realization, which was a lifetime in the making.

"Out of my mouth came, 'I could go to France!'"

Originally, Sweek was planning a three-month stay in France to immerse herself in French textiles — the regional history, production, purpose and beauty. As she explained, from one end of France to the other, fabrics uniquely French have survived centuries — toile, damask, ticking, Jacquard, French Provencal, Matelassé and French linen, plus lace, threads and buttons. She wanted to know everything she could about them.

As she was researching places for a long-term stay in southern France, she stumbled upon Chateau Dumas — a place that was founded by Lizzie Hulme in 2005. Lizzie, according to Sweek, has a love of all things creative and is obsessed with textiles. Her Chateau Dumas is a venue that offers luxury accommodation, delicious food and a beautiful studio space geared toward textile workshops.

Within a few weeks, Sweek said the gears in her brain shifted to those words she said 30 years ago — to take a group to Europe for a textile retreat. Now, she's been there three years with group trips, and this year is no different.

"Under the brand 'Celebrate French Textiles,' we go to the chateau for a week, then there's a week in Paris, and there's a week back at the chateau," Sweek said. "Each week has a different teacher, and they're all sold separately, so it works with people's calendars or what they want to focus on. I also have teachers lined up for the next two years because they're so excited about the idea of teaching at Chateau Dumas, which has its

own wonderful reputation."

During "Week 1" at Chateau Dumas, September 2-8, 2026, Suzanne Smart will guide attendees through creating a storytelling collage. If you love collage, collecting treasures, and adding beautiful hand stitches to your work, this is for you. During the immersive week, attendees will explore the art of fabric collage and hand stitching — creating something entirely unique and personal to each participant. Smart's workshops are known for their warmth, storytelling and inspiration. This retreat offers the perfect blend of creativity, relaxation and community.

She will gently guide attendees through her creative process, sharing the techniques that appear throughout her own stitched stories and textile books. They'll have the chance to see and handle some of Smart's favorite works and cloth books, full of layered fabrics, delicate hand stitches and storytelling.

Using a mix of old and new fabrics, lace, and vintage paper, attendees learn how to create collaged "fabrics." These newly made textiles can become a base for the student's stitched compositions or be used with one of Smart's templates, featuring her signature animals, birds and houses.

Whether class members choose to work from a template or design their own imagery, Smart will be on hand throughout to guide creative decisions, helping attendees with composition, texture, and story in their work.

During "Week 3" at Chateau Dumas, September 13-19, 2026, attendees will enjoy the company of Nichole Vogelsinger, of WILDBOHO.

Nichole is a vibrant fiber artist, author, and embroidery enthusiast who believes that stitching should be equal parts creativity and chaos (the fun kind!)

Designed especially for this intimate retreat in France, and blending two of her most beloved workshops, this class invites attendees to explore both the structured beauty of embroidery and the freedom of designing textured art.

Each day will unfold in stages, beginning with a technique that you will learn how to incorporate into your embroidery: fabric painting, needle felting or beadwork. The embroidery will be worked in a series of layers that will create depth and dimension. WILDBOHO is all about making your own choices, not following specific patterns, and creating your own one-of-a-kind piece of fiber art.

Through guided instruction, demonstrations, and abundant time to stitch, Nichole will share her process for blending techniques, curating color and embracing your own aesthetic. Attendees will leave not only with a richly textured piece in progress, but with renewed creative confidence and a deeper connection to the joy of making by hand.

During the first week stay at the chateau, attendees will visit the fantastic flea market in Toulouse to look for trimmings, fabrics and vintage treasures to incorporate into your work or to take home. For the second week at the chateau, attendees take a trip to the de-

lightful and picturesque medieval city of Albi, birthplace of artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Attendees during both weeks will enjoy a visit from a vintage textile dealer, as well as a lovely Sunday morning visit to the atmospheric market in Saint-Antonin-van-Nobel.

With delicious chef-created meals, attendees stay in charming accommodations in the beautiful 18th century chateau and enjoy walking the grounds or gardens and the large swimming pool.

In between the trips to Chateau Dumas is the Paris trip that runs September 8-13, 2026. During that trip, attendees will immerse themselves in the exquisite and historic textiles of the past and present.

Attendees will shop quintessential haberdasheries, flea markets and the famed fabric stores in Montmartre, tour the Musée Jouy de Toile, the Versailles palace and gardens, as well as Musée de Cluny and a backstage tour, including costumes, of the Palais (Opéra) Garnier or Opéra Bastille. People who attend can also enjoy a delightful dinner cruise on the River Seine.

During this Paris trip, Sweek said attendees will have a workshop with Ruth Hughes of Wild Fiber Embroidery. Hughes is known for her abstract embroidery. She will show how to create texture and develop contemporary shape. Plus, it will be held at Au Ver à Soie, the makers of exquisite silk threads. Hughes will collaborate with them to add their thread to the design — just for attendees!

The final trip of 2026, 'Celebrate a Heartfelt Christmas in Copenhagen by Sew & Sew Retreats,' is planned for December 5-14, 2026. Enjoy Christmas markets, Nordic traditions, and a variety of workshops hosted by creatives in and around the Copenhagen.

All levels of experience will enjoy the workshops, from beginners to advanced. Though hand-stitching and embroidery are the primary emphasis, paper cutting is an important craft in Denmark and as such, a paper workshop is included in the 2026 itinerary, as the focus is on the "fiber arts."

Torben Jarlström Clausen will teach attendees during his paper cutting workshop. Paper cutting holds significant cultural importance in Denmark as a deeply ingrained folk art tradition, storytelling medium and iconic national craft.

His goal is to spread awareness that something as simple as a pair of scissors and a piece of paper can be used for reflection, meaningful connection — and to create imaginative and creative paper cuts.

Through his paper cuts, he's telling the story of the paper cut people, who are trapped deep inside the paper, before he starts cutting and creating their shapes and sizes.

He said he can sense that the paper cut people are caught in their sadness within the paper. They are unfulfilled and have something in their lives that weighs them down. After he starts cutting, they are all cut free and given the freedom to travel around in this wonderful and diverse world we live in.

Continued On Page 13



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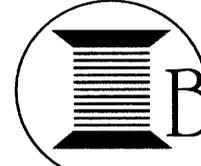
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Trip Destinations Include Chateau Dumas, Paris & Copenhagen

Continued From Page 12

It's a universal story about us as human beings and how we must take care of our own lives in order to figure out what makes us unhappy — and how we can find happiness. That's why all his paper cut people smile and are happy.

Kari Bender, of The Needle Workshop and The Quilting Workshop in Wausau, Wisconsin, will also be on hand as an instructor. Bender will be teaching the group how to create the famous woven hearts for a cozy wool scarf. When finished it will be the perfect "hygge" addition to wear while exploring the Christmas markets.

The Danish heart, or "julehjerte," is a traditional Christmas decoration in Denmark. Streets are lined with them all aglow; shop windows and homes are decorated with them. The heart shape represents love, togetherness and enduring relationships. It is a tangible piece of Danish culture that brings people together and embodies the spirit of Christmas.

The oldest known woven Christmas hearts were made by the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen in 1860. In 1871, the first guide to making them was published in the Official Nordic Handicraft Journal. In the early 1900s Danish children began crafting the woven Christmas hearts in school to improve fine motor skills and creativity.

Now, they are a Danish Christmas staple. Many families gather in December to weave hearts together, often as a cozy pre-Christmas activity. Bender said you don't have to have a certain level of skill to participate in her class.

"The class I am doing is designed to be very traditional looking, but we will go through step by step how to do it," she said. "It's not a complicated technique. It's more of a fun project to learn a few things, try something new, and it's

something that everyone should be able to finish, because there are alternatives if people don't feel comfortable with one particular technique."

Jessie Chorley, known for creating whimsical scenes and stories, is the featured artist who will teach a two-day Christmas themed workshop. Jessie is a London-based embroidery artist, author and tutor who teaches world-wide.

Her hands-on approach, her appreciation of slow craft, and the creative way of life that she celebrates as an artist, were passed down to her through her own family of artists, makers and craftspeople and comes through on her textile art. Jessie says her embroidery is her "happy place, bringing travel, incredible friendships, inspiring collaborations and a sense of fulfillment into my life."

Her work is made over time. Pieces individually tell and describe a scene and entice us with objects of different scales within them. Each piece has a strong element of storytelling, a timeless quality, and are richly hand embroidered.

That's what makes her Christmas pieces so perfect. We each have our own stories and memories of the holiday and Jessie's embroidery artworks remind us of those stories and warm feelings. In the workshop, Jessie will have several Christmas templates available for each attendee to personalize for their own soon-to-be treasured embroidered work.

There will also be a visit to the Greve Museum, where a group of women discovered the secrets of old Hedebo textiles and recreated them in their own work. The museum offers classes where attendees can try their hand at these traditional forms of embroidery. Greve Museum is an old farm with exhibitions on rural life from 1800-1900, local history, art and craftsmanship including embroidery. Hedebo Embroidery is the common name of seven different embroidery

variations which were developed sequentially and used in Denmark from the end of the 1700s to the mid 1900-century. Hedebo embroidery is something special in Denmark and is internationally mentioned in connection with other white embroideries such as Venetian embroidery and Hardanger embroidery. These types of embroidery are done on white linen using white linen or cotton thread.

The visit to the museum includes a workshop, guided tour, talk, as well as lunch and afternoon coffee, tea, and cake. A very experienced teacher of Hedebo embroidery will lead the workshop in English. Each participant will be able to take home embroidery materials and a written English guide.

If Chateau Dumas, Paris or Copenhagen seem like they're the perfect fit for your next getaway, but you're unsure of traveling alone and perhaps have a spouse or partner who isn't interested in craft and fiber art, Sweek and Bender say there is plenty to see and do outside of the organized activities.

"Or if they want to take a spouse or a friend who isn't crafty, that's fine too, because there are lots of alternatives," said Bender. "I feel like every European city, from what I know, is very walkable, or it's easy to navigate, even for someone from the United States. And again, the people are so incredibly friendly that you don't have to be afraid to ask someone what to do or where to go."

Bender is really looking forward to visiting Copenhagen again. "I hope it creates wonderful memories," Bender said. "I hope that they can find a little thing at the markets that will kind of share that warmth, that hygge feeling with their families, and to be able to just enjoy the culture of Denmark and to see a different lifestyle, and have fun and learn something, not just in needle-



Chateau Dumas Photo

Chateau Dumas, located in southwest France, an hour north of Toulouse.

work. The needlework is part of it for me, [but] the culture is a huge part of it."

Sweek said she really enjoys watching attendees' creativity blossom throughout their stays. "That immersion is wonderful to watch, and how people blossom with and become confident in creating something brand-new to them," she added. "I've had people who come because it's the Chateau [Dumas], and they're like, 'Okay, I'll make a quilt.' [They have] never quilted before but wanted that experience. But they also learned about the culture, the food, and so much about textiles."

Above all, no matter which trip entices someone to travel abroad this coming fall or winter, Bender and Sweek hope people have fun and enrich their lives.

For more information about the trips, including a detailed itinerary, costs and how to sign up, visit <https://www.sewandsewretreats.com/home-sewing-retreat>.



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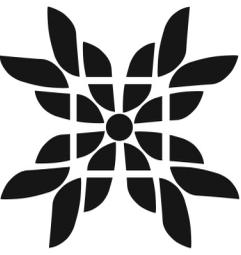


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Batting Breakdown: Choosing The Right Batting For Longevity, Drape & Warmth

By Steve Baker

Batting is the quiet backbone of every quilt — rarely seen, often overlooked and yet responsible for how a quilt feels, moves and survives over time.

Two quilts made with the same pattern and fabrics can age very differently. One may soften beautifully with use, draping like a well-loved garment. Another may feel stiff, lose warmth or break down sooner than expected. When this happens, the difference may not be just the fabric or the stitching, it's the batting.

Choosing the right batting isn't about finding a universal "best." It's about understanding how batting affects longevity, drape, warmth and even how a quilt per-

forms under the bright lights of a show or competition. When you understand these factors, you can choose batting with intention, and that intention shows years later.

Batting lives between the quilt top and backing, doing work that is both structural and sensory. It influences how a quilt ages, how it responds to washing, how it hangs on a wall and how it feels when wrapped around a body. Many quilters choose batting out of habit, and while familiarity has its place, thoughtful batting choices turn a quilt into something that truly lasts.

Four key factors should guide batting selection: longevity, drape, warmth and show performance. Longevity reflects how well a quilt withstands time, use and washing. Drape describes how fluidly a



MaxCab Photo

quilt folds and moves, an important consideration for bed quilts, lap quilts and show quilts alike. Warmth depends not just on thickness, but on insulation and breathability. And, for quilts destined for competition, batting plays a major role in stitch definition, visual depth and how the quilt hangs under strong lighting.

Cotton batting is a traditional favorite, known for breathability and a classic crinkled look that develops over time. It offers excellent stitch definition and works well for heirloom, wall and traditional quilts. Polyester batting provides lightweight loft and strong warmth, making it ideal for comforters and cold-climate quilts, though it can feel stiffer and less breathable over time. Wool batting strikes a beautiful balance, offering natural loft, graceful drape, temperature regulation and long-term resilience — making it a favorite for bed quilts.

Specialty batts such as bamboo, silk and blends bring additional options. Bamboo

offers exceptional softness and drape, silk provides luxury with minimal bulk and blended batts balance durability and feel. These choices shine when matched thoughtfully to a quilt's purpose.

Before buying batting, it helps to ask one simple question: How do I want this quilt to feel 10 years from now? That answer often clarifies priorities better than any label.

There is no universally "best" batting, only the batting that best serves the quilt you are making. Chosen with intention, batting helps quilts age gracefully, remaining beautiful, functional and meaningful for years to come.

Steve Baker is the director of marketing at SewEndipitous located at 1093A Albright Road in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Visit www.SewEndipitous.com for more information.

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Quilts Of Valor Play An Integral Role In Showing Support For Our Veterans

By Meghan Diemel, Editor
The Country Register of Wisconsin

Of the many philanthropic projects Wisconsin quilters give time, materials and effort to throughout the year, creating Quilts of Valor for veterans ranks near the top of the list.

At a national level, the Quilts of Valor Foundation had donated 437,630 quilts as of January 31, 2026 to those brave veterans across the country who gave so much for all of us.

The Quilts of Valor Foundation began in 2003 with a dream, according to the national foundation's website <https://www.qovf.org/>. Founder Catherine Roberts' son Nat was deployed in Iraq when she dreamed of a way to make an impact on soldiers just like her son.

As she remembered, "The dream was as vivid as real life. I saw a young man sitting on the side of his bed in the middle of the night, hunched over. The permeating feeling was one of utter despair. I could see his war demons clustered around, dragging him down into an emotional gutter. Then, as if viewing a movie, I saw him in the next scene wrapped in a quilt. His whole demeanor changed from one of despair to one of hope and well-being. The quilt had made this dramatic change. The message of my dream was, 'quilts equal healing.'

"The model appeared simple: have a volunteer team who would donate their time and materials to make a quilt. One person would piece the top and the other would quilt it. I saw the name for this special quilt: it was Quilt of Valor, a QOV."

Roberts developed a set of standards of excellence for Quilts of Valor. It has to be a quality-made quilt, not a "charity quilt." A Quilt of Valor had to be quilted, not tied, which meant hand or machine quilting. It would be "awarded," not just passed out like magazines or videos, and veterans would know they were being thanked for their service, sacrifice and valor in serving the nation.



One such group doing the good work for veterans through Quilts of Valor is the Wisconsin Northwoods Quilts of Valor chapter. This past November they gave away more than 20 quilts, and chapter members work hard to build up their inventory of quilts for veterans throughout the year.

Members Nancy Hainstock and Diane Goers said they learn of their very deserving veterans in a variety of ways, like through community contacts and by way of other people nominating the veterans using the national Quilts of Valor online



form. In the case of the latter introduction, the national organization then contacts the most local group to the veteran who has been nominated to start the process.

When it comes to the actual ceremony, the Quilts of Valor group will thank the veterans, explain what the Quilts of Valor is and how it was started, and then they explain the quilt itself, taking it layer by layer and step by step so the veterans understand the work that went into making each quilt so special for them.

The group will then read the veterans biography for the attendees, what branch

they were in, what rank and jobs they held while they served and when they were discharged.

"It's really emotional," Diane said. "We [hosted] one that was all Vietnam vets. When it was all done, it was so cool because about 10 of them were there, and they all stood around and talked together, like it was a brotherhood of all these Vietnam vets. It's just really, really cool."

"It really moves you," added Nancy. "We did one as a presentation up at the school last year on Veterans Day ... and the guy's name was Dale, and he cried through the whole presentation. He was leaning on his son's shoulder ... he [came up to the front to get his quilt] and he's just crying. He's got his head on my shoulder and everybody else and just crying — making me cry. It's so emotional, so that's our reward."

The material and time for the quilts is all donated, and the quilts are done in high-quality material. They have used Moda material in the past, and have also been given donations of money by the Women's Auxiliary in Colfax for the purchase of fabric. The goal is to make the highest quality of quilt possible for the veterans.

They also make an effort to label the quilts — something all quilters know is so important to quilt perseverance.

"On all the quilts is there is a label on the back of the quilt that says [who it is presented to], the date that we presented it, and who made it," said Diane.

The donation of the quilts to veterans fills the hearts of all involved, and helps the former members of the armed forces understand just how much they're appreciated and respected. If you'd like to make a donation to the Quilts of Valor chapter in your neck of the woods, you want to start your own Quilts of Valor chapter in your area, or you have a veteran you'd like to nominate, please visit www.qovf.org for more information.

Photos courtesy of the Wisconsin Northwoods Quilts of Valor chapter.

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Learning Sewing & Needlework With Grandma & Great-Grandma Nash

By Nancy J. Nash

My father's parents passed away before I was born, but my mother's mother lived until I was a young adult. My great-grandmother lived until I was a sophomore in high school. Both were skilled seamstresses and together with Mom, they taught me basic stitches and techniques.

I felt like I was exploring a new land with comrades. As I made new discoveries, they kept pace with me and they cheered me on. There is nothing like sharing a project with those who love you and encourage your efforts. This may explain why, after all these years, I enjoy mending clothing. It brings back memories of working peacefully side by side, our minds solving problems and our fingers plying needle and thread through fabric. Varieties of textiles — with their endless range of designs, arrays of color and pleasing textures — continue to fascinate me and attract my attention. I learned to love such things at an early age.

I picture my great-grandmother sitting in a chair by a window, mending socks for the "menfolk" in our family. Her stitches are so tiny that we joke that they are machine made. My father pulls up a chair and she regales him with stories of her youth, like the time a few of her brothers ran out of town the young man hired to run their small village school.

She was a stately woman, fairly tall with



ramrod-straight posture. Her white hair, soft as milkweed silk, was pinned up on top of her head. It had turned white in her early twenties from a fever she barely survived.

To me, she exemplified perseverance. My mother used to tell me how my great-grandmother had walked home from weekly shopping trips in order to save her bus money to purchase a watch for my great-grandfather. When he later passed away before his scheduled retirement, she was denied any of his pension, so she rented rooms in her house and managed to scrape by. During the Great Depression, she made dresses for my mother to save money for the family.

She could be quite spontaneous. Once a year we'd invite her to a country fair in a nearby town.

"I'll get my sweater," was her quick reply.

With her love of life, no wonder she lived into her 90s!

My grandmother opened my eyes to new horizons. She instructed me as I tried my hand at crocheting and knitting. However, when my grandmother got bogged down attempting to turn the heel of a knitted sock, I came to the rescue by poring over the pattern's written directions. I managed to figure out how to do it and told Grandma, and then she took over. She mastered the technique and gave away that first pair of heavy socks to one of the "menfolk." Outdoors in cold and snow, the socks kept feet warm and dry. Almost instantly, a waiting list formed for Grandma's winter socks, both menfolk and womenfolk cherishing their thick warmth.

Grandma introduced me to a pattern for a patchwork quilt called Grandmother's Gar-

den. It intrigued me that scraps of cloth could be made to represent a house, a walkway and clusters of flowering plants. I delighted in how our imaginations could play with an abstract design. Years later, I came across an article that juxtaposed photos of old quilts with photos of abstract art by famous modern painters. There were amazing similarities between the intricate geometric patterns of the quilts and the paintings done on canvas.

Most of the quiltmakers were probably farm women with little formal education and yet they produced designs strikingly similar to those of highly educated artists. It is not surprising that the art quilters of today produce work with the primary purpose of uplifting the mind and soul of the viewer.

As I look back, one of the main lessons I absorbed from my grandmother and great-grandmother was the importance of perseverance — the ability to plow through thick and thin to reach a goal. Perseverance is necessary for a child to learn skills and to develop vision for what can be done with them. It is vital to life's journey at any age.

©2026 Nancy J. Nash. Nash is the author of "Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story" and "Little Rooster's Christmas Eve." She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. Email her at nancynash341@gmail.com.

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Clutter Happens - Lessons From A Quilt

By Julie Pirtle

I am a collector of romance. Not hearts. Not Gothic novels. I enjoy the romance of items that show a long life. Do they tell a story? If not, is it easy to imagine a story befitting of their valor for withstanding the test of time?

While thrift finds are always fun, my favorite pieces are those that have been passed down by my family. I love to be the keeper of the history they shared with my ancestors. It's a feeling hard to put into words, but if you know ... you know.

My favorite treasures that have been entrusted to me are quilts that were made by my great-grandmothers. They hang like proud family crests on the wall of my guest room. They are uneven. The corners don't match up when folded. Some colors have faded and some hand stitching is not as strong as it used to be.

Even with all those irregularities, they are still stunning. One is a wedding ring pattern that was made for my grandmother by her mom. It was a gift for their wedding in the early 1940s. I remember seeing it on their bed as a young child ... well into the '60s.



Julie Pirtle Photo

The other quilt is a carnival of small colored scraps. It is bordered with a bright seafoam green fabric. The pieces came from old shirts, dresses, blouses... anything that could be reused to create a fabric masterpiece. (Looks like upcycling isn't such a new trend after all!)

Over the centuries, quilts have been mainstays in the lives of those who used them. Women made them for their families as a necessity. After all, running to the department store for a new blanket wasn't really an option!

When I see a really old quilt, I like to think about who used it. Were they travers-

ing cross-country in a covered wagon? Was it used in a backwoods farmhouse? Did it grace the bed in a Victorian home?

As important as the usage was the way most quilts were made. In the days before any electronic diversions, people actually talked to each other! In this way, the quilting bee became the social club of local groups of women.

Together, they spent quality time. I imagine there was a lot of gossip, tears and laughter. All the while, their busy and crafty hands sewed stitch by stitch, making the creation a community effort.

In a time of our lives when life is uncer-

tain and the world is a little crazy, I think we should take some wisdom from those quilts and the artisans that made them. It didn't matter what array of colors were sewn together. It was beautiful. Spending time together allows for a time of support and healing. It was also beautiful.

The stitches that connect the pieces of us together as a community are there if we take the time to see it. The seams holding those pieces together bind us as one. We humans all need the warmth of community ... and quilts.

Quilts make life softer. Old quilts make us wiser with the stories they tell. Let's make a pact to be softer and listen to those that have stories to share. We've got this. I know we do.

Julie Pirtle lives in Eagle Point, Oregon. She is a professional organizer and owner/operator of Clutter Happens. She also works with clients nationally through video consultations. The clutter challenged can reach her on Facebook: /clutter-happens or email her directly: clutter-happens@yahoo.com.



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Shoebox Quilts Inspire Quilters To Think Outside Of The Box

By Meghan Diemel, Editor
The Country Register of Wisconsin

If your local quilting group or quilt shop is looking for a fun and creative way to enjoy quilting, why not try a shoebox shuffle in 2026?

At The Needle Workshop and The Quilting Workshop in Wausau, owner Kari Bender has been hosting a shoebox shuffle event since October of 2024. Bender said she got the idea from longtime friend Marsha Rowell, who devised the activity with another shop owner while living in New Hampshire. It was originally created as a way to provide quilters with a free class each month, increase foot traffic for the store owner, and create an event that helped quilters think outside the “box,” so to speak.

Though quilting groups can nudge the guidelines to fit their needs, the basic idea is that people choose the block they want to make. Typically, a pattern is not included in the box. That way people can choose an easy block or more difficult one which makes it more user friendly. Material is placed in a shoebox (or craft box). Then the shoebox travels around the group, and each month a quilter receives a new shoebox. Using the fabric inside, they make a quilt block. Once completed, the quilter puts the quilt block and the remainder of the fabric back inside the shoebox and passes it on to the next quilter at the next monthly meeting.

At the end of 12 months, each quilter gets their own shoebox back with 12 beautiful quilt blocks inside.

Rowell told Bender that while she initially thought about doing a round robin quilt, she thought that would be too hard for newer quilters. Knowing there were a lot of newer quilters coming to the shop, Rowell came up with the once-a-month timing, where they would come in, learn a little something and then do a swap.

Bender said they have found about 5 yards of fabric is a great starting place,



and you put that fabric into a craft box, the kind that are readily available at most craft stores (serving as the “shoebox”).

“So, the first month, we will have the person hand it to the person on their right,” she explained. “It involves some record keeping, so we have to make note of who has that box. And then over the course of the next year, we [continue to] shuffle so someone different gets your box every single month. They will make a block for you that meets your specifications. So maybe you want stars, or maybe you want no stars ... you can put what you

want, you can list the size block you want.”

Bender said participants keep their requests within reason.

“So, some people will just say, ‘I want a 12-inch finished block.’ Others will say, ‘I want a 9-inch finished block.’ And now we have people who will say, ‘I’d like each of you to make four, six-inch blocks,’ or something like that.

“And most of the time, people will say, ‘Don’t add fabric.’ But we did have one participant pass around an ‘I Spy’ quilt, and she wanted it for her grandson. [For that quilt], people were encouraged to add novelty fabrics, just to widen the scope of what was in it, so their block could use something from their stash.

“We’ve had one person pass around a background fabric and say, ‘Just make me something,’ Bender added. “Some people have just gone crazy with it, but most of us stick with the ‘5 yards of fabric, don’t add anything, and make me something’ [direction].”

Bender ensures the pace of the

monthly project allows for completion of the project, and then a few months off for everyone to enjoy a bit of a breather before starting the next round.

“Theoretically, that gives people time to finish theirs and bring it back completed before they start the new one,” she said. “It goes 12 months once it starts.”

Bender said a big part of the Shoebox Shuffle’s success is the camaraderie among quilters.

“They enjoy getting together once a month for an hour,” she said. “Some of them have gotten to be good friends and are certainly acquaintances, so that that’s a huge part of it, as it is in any quilting group or stitching group. The other thing is, it makes people — pardon the pun — get out of their box, so they have to work with things that they might not normally work with, myself included.

“For example, I’m not a yellow girl, and I’ll get a box with yellow in it, and I have to work with it. And it makes you just kind of broaden your thinking to say, ‘Oh, look at this. This is actually quite pretty.’”

Bender said she would encourage other shops to give the Shoebox Shuffle a try.

“It’s minimal work,” she said. “You have to have, like I said, somebody to keep the records, to know who’s got what box, and make sure that the rules are laid out so that even if you can’t attend, your box needs to be here, because it’s not fair to someone else to be here and not go home with a box. You do need sort of a shepherd to make sure those kinds of things happen.

“But otherwise, it’s just fun, and it’s great to see the reveal. Nobody gets to see their box until the end, so there’s that sense of anticipation. It’s really just a fun thing and you can do it with any number of people.”

It is also greatly appreciated by quilters who frequent the activity and Bender’s shop. She said she has many return participants, which speaks to the positive experience for the quilters.

“For the most part, it’s a pretty solid core of people who do it, so I think people really do enjoy it, and it is [typically] only one block each month, so it’s not overwhelming,” she said.

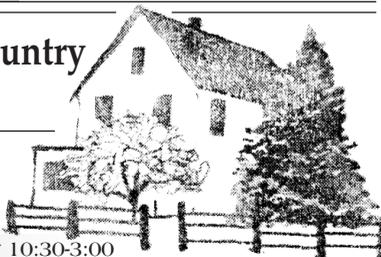
Photos courtesy of Kari Bender at The Needle Workshop/The Quilting Workshop.

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A Guide To Overcoming Perfectionism In Quilting: Imperfections Make The Handmade Perfect

By Steve Baker

Quilting is a beautiful art form that allows us to express our creativity and create stunning pieces of fabric art. However, perfectionism can often hinder our progress and enjoyment in this craft.

Here, we will explore techniques and mindset shifts that can help you overcome perfectionism and embrace the beauty of imperfections in quilting.

1. *Recognize the Root of Perfectionism:* Understanding the underlying causes of perfectionism is crucial to overcoming it. Perfectionism often stems from fear of failure, self-doubt or the desire for external validation. By acknowledging these emotions and recognizing that they are normal, you can shift your mindset towards a more positive and accepting approach.

2. *Set Realistic Goals:* Setting realistic goals is essential in combating perfectionism. Break down your quilting projects into smaller, manageable tasks and set achiev-

able milestones. This will help you focus on progress rather than perfection. Celebrate each milestone reached, no matter how small and acknowledge the effort you put into it.

3. *Embrace Mistakes as Learning Opportunities:* Mistakes are an inevitable part of any creative process, including quilting. Instead of viewing mistakes as failures, reframe them as valuable learning opportunities. Analyze what went wrong, identify areas for improvement and use these insights to grow as a quilter. Remember, even the most experienced quilters make mistakes! They are the natural by-products of mastering any skill. Mistakes are born in action and only inaction can stop mistakes from happening.

4. *Practice Mindfulness:* Incorporating mindfulness techniques into your quilting practice can help you stay present and focused on the process rather than obsessing over the outcome. Take deep breaths, observe the texture and colors of the fabric and

immerse yourself in the joy of quilting. Mindfulness can help quiet the inner critic and allow you to enjoy the journey.

5. *Seek Support and Community:* Connecting with fellow quilters who understand your struggles can be immensely helpful in overcoming perfectionism. Join quilting groups, attend workshops and classes or participate in online forums to share your experiences and learn from others. Surrounding yourself with a supportive community can provide encouragement, inspiration and a fresh perspective on quilting.

6. *Embrace Imperfections:* Quilting in an art form that celebrates individuality and uniqueness. Embrace the imperfections in your work as part of its charm and character. Remember that quilts with minor flaws will still be stunning and cherished. Allow yourself to let go of unrealistic expectations and enjoy the process of creating something beautiful. Or put another way, you can buy a "perfect" quilt in the store, but where is the pleasure in that? Those "perfect" quilts might even be beautiful, but they have no real story, no real essence that comes from being made by hand. Truthfully, their perfection strips them of all personality and character.

When you realize your perfectionism has

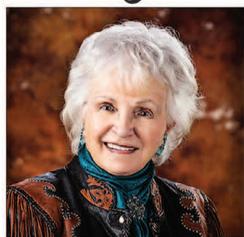
become a lingering and ongoing limitation, lean on the earworm "Let it Go!" from Disney's movie Frozen. (Sorry, now you'll never get that song out of your head.)

Wanting to do your best is an admirable trait that can lead to outstanding work if it remains balanced with realistic expectations. Letting go of perfectionism can be quite freeing and open you up to levels of creativity and exploration of new techniques in ways you could never imagine.

Overcoming perfectionism in quilting is a journey that requires patience, self-compassion and a shift in mindset. Allow yourself some grace in your human experience. By recognizing the root causes of perfectionism, setting realistic goals, embracing mistakes, practicing mindfulness, seeking support and embracing imperfections, you can free yourself from the constraints of perfection and truly enjoy the art of quilting. Remember, the love and passion we put into our quilts, with all our imperfections, is what makes them truly unique and special.

Steve Baker is the director of marketing at SewEndipitous located at 1093A Albright Road in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Visit www.SewEndipitous.com for more information.

Cowgirl Poet, Quilter, Entertainer



Yvonne Hollenbeck
Grandma's Homemade Aprons

I remember Grandma,
and I guess I always will;
I remember how she welcomed me
to her house up on the hill;

Her homemade pies and cookies
were the best I've ever ate
and I loved her pansy garden,
and the roses by her gate.

But the one thing I remember
most about those days of yore,
was the homemade cotton aprons
that my grandma always wore.

All the grandmas wore them;
be they slender gals, or fat;
those aprons kept their dresses clean
but they were more than that.

They always had a pocket,
where she kept her handkerchief,

and peppermints for grandkids
and she'd wipe our little cheeks

With the tail of that old apron,
when a tear would happen by
from a fall or from a skinned up knee
things that'd make a young one cry.

She'd gather up the ends of it,
and use it for a bag
when picking garden produce,
even used it for a rag.

She made her pretty aprons
from feed sacks she had picked
when buying special chicken feed
or starter for her chicks.

What happened to those aprons?
No one wears them any more;
those homemade cotton aprons
that our grandmas always wore.

Order Yvonne's new book, "A Stitch in Rhyme" at
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Yvonne Hollenbeck, from Clearfield, SD, performs her original poetry throughout the United States, captivating audiences in her wake. She is one of the most published cowgirl poets in the West and is not only a popular banquet and civic entertainer, but also co-writes songs with many western entertainers. Yvonne also pens a weekly column in the "Farmer-Rancher Exchange" and writes articles about life in rural America in various publications throughout the West. For more information, visit <https://www.yvonnehollenbeck.com>



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A Quilt's Written History Is One Of Its Most Valuable Components

By Rachel Greco

Every quilt has a story. Some we know and some we don't. You may know all about the quilter who made your quilt, but will those who come after you? One of the most valuable parts of a quilt is a written history of provenance, a written record of ownership of a work of art, used as a guide to authenticity or quality.

If you have inherited a family quilt (or made one yourself), you will want to document it. If you have any old family quilts you are keeping in the closet, it is probably time you took them out and documented what you know about them. There's a lot of information to gather, and it won't get any easier as time passes. Before memories fade

and you forget what you know about them, here's what you should record. Write down as much as you know using all of the criteria listed.

If the quilter is still alive, talk with her or him about when and how they made the quilt. If possible, get a picture of her/him with the quilt and record any memories that you have. (Did you sleep under it as a child?)

If the quilter is no longer living, try to find those who remember them. Make sure you have the full name, where they lived, birth and death dates (years) and any stories about her/him that people remember. If there is special information about the quilt, record that as well. Document as much as you possibly can (picture of the quilter, copy of obit-

uary, picture of the quilt from the past, etc.)

Add any history of how you received the quilt. Include names and biographical information of everyone who owned the quilt. Once you have recorded the history, keep a notebook or journal, register it with your local guild or historical society's registry project, and keep it with the quilt.

The following is a list of the information you will want to record when documenting your quilt:

Maker's Name. Write down the maker's name, birth date and death date (if they have passed). Record this person's relation to you if there is one. Using the rule: who, what, when, where, why and how, write down what you know about this person.

Name of the Pattern. Write down any names you know for the quilt, including the popular references, and the name the quilt was referred to by your family.

Condition. Write down whether the quilt is excellent, good, fair, poor or deteriorating. Make a note of any stains or holes, what kind they are and where they are located. Write down any repairs that are made with the date made, if known.

Technique. Is this quilt pieced by hand or machine, embellished, stuffed, painted or stenciled, signed with ink, embroidered,

etc.?

Construction Style. Does this quilt have a scalloped edge? Is it square, curved or cut-out at the corners? What are the borders? What type of binding was used?

Is it a quilt top only? If finished, did the quilter use hand or machine quilting, ties or tacks? Does it have all three layers? Is it thin or thick? Try to determine what type of batting was used.

What types of quilting designs were used? Were they straight lines, outline, stenciled or shapes? What color thread was used?

How is the back put together? Is it one piece of fabric or more? What colors or patterns? Is there a label? Is it signed or is there anything quilted into the quilt?

Types of Fabric Used. Is it cotton, silk, wool or of an unknown mixtures? Do your best to determine the fabric type.

Overall Quality. Professionals and collectors have personal scales for rating a quilt. You might record whether this quilt is your favorite or most prized quilt or any other information that would help you.

Estimate the Date. Try to be specific. If you know a date, write it down. If you aren't sure, give any dates for when you have owned the quilt and anything anyone said

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Continued From Page 20

when they gave it to you or you purchased it from someone.

Where was the quilt made? How did it come to you?

Does the quilt have any special historic or family significance? Was the quilt made for a particular event or person? Were the fabrics or design chosen for a specific reason?

Does the quilt have any dates or lettering on it? What does it say?

Do you have any documentation about the quilt or quilt maker such as letters, pictures, or diaries? Write down and include as much information as possible about the quilt and quilt maker.

Take Photographs. Take pictures of the

whole front and back. Take several close-ups of the details and workmanship. Use natural light if possible. Take more pictures that you think you'll need; then pick the best ones that showcase your quilt.

Memory Pocket. You can make a muslin label for your quilt using a pigma pen to write information on a square or rectangle of muslin. Stitch this carefully to the back of the quilt, sewing only through the backing, not the face of the quilt. You can also make a memory pocket with a front, back and flap to use for storing your documentation papers. Sew to the back of the quilt as you would a label.

Record basic information on the pocket itself, including "Remove Before Cleaning."

And finally, if you believe that this quilt has special significance to you, you might want to find a certified quilt historian near you who can help you by appraising the quilt. Most charge a fee; however, the information they give you could prove invaluable.

Remember, you may think your own quilt is significant only for you; however, generations to come may value your thoughts and documentation more than you will ever know.

Rachel Greco owns Grandma's Attic, a traditional quilt shop and a large online store in Dallas, Oregon. She has written several books and patterns and runs Grandma's Quilt Club, a monthly quilt class where participants collect quilt blocks, learn about quilt history, and make new friends. Learn more at <https://grandmasatticquilting.com>.



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Why Quilting Has Been Historically Undervalued As Art

By Steve Baker

Quilts have always required vision, technical mastery and an understanding of color, composition and pattern. They demand patience, problem-solving and the ability to think both structurally and creatively simultaneously. And yet, for much of history, quilting has been treated as something less than art, described instead as a pastime, a domestic task or a hobby practiced quietly at home.

This disconnect has little to do with the quality of the work itself. It has everything to do with how art has been defined, who has been allowed to claim that title and which kinds of creativity society has chosen to elevate. To understand why

quilting has been undervalued, we must look beyond stitches and fabrics and examine the cultural systems that shaped our ideas about art.

For centuries, Western culture has drawn a line between “art” and “craft.” Art was framed as expressive and intellectual, meant to be contemplated. Craft was practical, repetitive and designed for use. This divide created a hierarchy, elevating painting and sculpture while relegating textiles and other functional objects to a lower status. The assumption was simple and flawed: if something serves a purpose, it cannot also be art.

Quilts challenged that assumption from the start. With few exceptions, they are undeniably functional — meant to warm,

protect and comfort. But they are also composed, designed and intentionally created. The fact that a quilt can live on a bed rather than a gallery wall has long been used to disqualify it, rather than to recognize its remarkable ability to unite beauty and utility in a single object.

Quilting’s association with women’s domestic labor further contributed to its dismissal. Quilts were made primarily by women in private spaces, often without pay or recognition. Skills passed from mother to daughter were seen as tradition rather than innovation. Even when quilts displayed extraordinary design and technical excellence, they were described as “pretty” or “handy,” rather than artistic. This mirrors a broader history in which women’s creative labor, especially when tied to care, home or community, has been undervalued.

Quilts also defied another deeply rooted myth: that art must be rare, fragile and removed from everyday life. Quilts are meant to be used, washed, repaired and loved. They wear the marks of time openly, something many art forms are not brave enough to attempt. Their endurance is not a flaw, but a testament to their power. Far from being merely decorative, quilts

have always functioned as a form of storytelling and a historical record. They preserve memory, identity and lived experience in cloth. In communities where voices were marginalized or silenced, quilts became a visual language communicating history, resilience and belonging without words.

In recent decades, museums and galleries have begun to reframe quilts as textile or fiber art, acknowledging what quilters have always known. Still, quilting is often dismissed today as “just a hobby,” a perception reinforced by mass production and cultural habit rather than by merit.

Quilts do not need permission to be art. They never did. Their beauty lies not only in design, but in endurance — in their ability to be used, loved and passed on while still holding meaning. Quilts have always been art. We are simply learning how to see them as they deserve and recognize quilters as the artists they are.

Steve Baker is the director of marketing at SewEndipitous located at 1093A Albright Road in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Visit www.SewEndipitous.com for more information.



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Writing From Life - Samplers Teach Balance

By Jeanette Lukowski

Starting a new hobby seems to include learning the language associated with said hobby. Like with so many other things, this knowledge appears to come in waves.

Once upon a time, I thought that transitioning from sewing my own clothes to quilting would be easy! Terms like “seam allowance” and “bias edges” were familiar to me, while the new terms — “flying geese,” “stabilizer,” “raw-edge applique,” “paper-piecing,” and “samplers” are part of my skill-building journey.

My first quilted sampler is a small wall hanging, created as part of a quilt guild challenge. Using a pattern book I already owned, I selected 12 different blocks; I used some region-specific fabrics curated from the local quilt store; I added generic white sashing around each of the 6” blocks; I machine quilted the project; I then moved away from the area before the wall hanging could be displayed with the other guild members’ samplers.

My second (current) sampler, then, is just something I’m working on alone.

With downloadable patterns being released

for free every week (from one of the larger quilting fabric companies), I began this path blindly. (The company, and its many contributing designers might know where the overall design is headed, but I don’t. I don’t even know how many block designs are being released.)

The week before the program started, I spent a bit of time thinking about how my color-coordinated self could be balanced against the uncertainty of the paced release. But, like when I chose to nurse my babies some 30 years ago, I told myself I could quit anytime I wanted to. (They each reached the sixth month before I tapped out.)

So, if I was going to participate in the quilting sampler project, what colors would I use? After all, I had taken that Color Theory class; I felt more confident in my ability to choose complementary colors. But ... how many would I need? How much fabric of each?

What if I choose “wrong”? Maybe a theme, or season then.

Christmas was my first thought. But, I have very specific Christmas quilt patterns already in my sewing collection, just waiting for the time to create them.

Fourth of July? Not knowing how large the project might become, I eliminated that option because I couldn’t imagine using a Fourth of July themed quilt for anything other than sitting on a curb, watching a summer parade.

Easter? Valentine’s day? Halloween?

October gets cold enough to cuddle under a quilt, I can abandon the project, making a variety of table runners or whatnot if I run out of steam, and I already have a small plastic tote with a variety of Halloween fabrics.

Working on blocks 15, 16, and 17, I’ve been

discovering the lesson of “balance,” along with some new skills. What happens, for instance, if I place this dense design next to a tone-on-tone? How does the value of the block read if I change this fabric to that one? Hmmm.

Yep, I’m still having fun.

©2026 Jeanette Lukowski. Jeanette is a mother, grandmother, teacher and author who lives in Alexandria, MN. She is inspired by the lives of strong women. Her email address is: writingfromlife@yahoo.com.

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Through The Gifts Of Their Hands, Quilters Make A Difference For Those In Need

By Meghan Diemel, Editor
The Country Register of Wisconsin

The quilting community has long-been known for its philanthropic efforts. Every year, my social media feeds are full of quilting groups and individual quilters giving their handmade works of warmth and comfort to those in need. A variety of organizations exist worldwide to accept donations from caring quilters, such as Project Linus, Quilts Beyond Borders, My Very Own Blanket and Binky Patrol — and more than likely there are people right in your own backyard who could

benefit from the gift of a handmade quilt.

In 2025, Hope Village in Chippewa Falls was the beneficiary of quilters' generosity, as they received the donation of handmade quilts for their residents. The nonprofit provides shelter to people in the community who are experiencing homelessness, by way of tiny houses.

Started in 2015 when Mike Cohoon identified a need for emergency housing in Chippewa Falls, his idea was to build tiny houses to provide free transitional housing for people that are experiencing homelessness due to unexpected events in their lives and help them get back on their

feet.

An appeal was made to the local churches to provide space for one or two tiny houses, and five local churches stepped up and offered to place them next to their church. Cohoon and his team were able to grow the number of tiny houses available with the support of volunteers and donations over time, as well as city officials.

Today, Hope Village has expanded the number of tiny homes and properties available for families, and the same process of vetting each guest continues to assure a safe environment for all. Mentors keep in contact daily via phone calls/texts and meet once a week with the guest(s) and a Hope Village navigator to discuss their progress on their secure living goals.

Goals include progress toward health care, financial security, stable housing, transportation, food resources and steady employment. As long as progress is made toward those goals each week, guests can remain at Hope Village.

By the fall of 2025, Hope Village had served 164 families (approximately 310 individuals).

"We received a number of quilts from the [Chippewa Falls] Senior Center, some full-size quilts, and others that were lap quilts," said Cohoon, who is Hope Village's executive director. "And those quilts are able to go to the families who are living in the tiny houses ... all of the items that we stock the tiny houses with, when they move out into permanent housing, they can take those things with them. So, especially things like a handmade quilt, it is something that's handmade and just shows caring and love.

"And I think when people receive something that handmade, it's a special thing for them, and they cherish those things more than something that's store bought," he added.

It's deeply unfortunate that so many stereotypes follow our neighbors who find themselves unhoused. In truth, any number of factors can lead to homelessness, including but not limited to affordable housing shortages, poverty and economic factors like low wages in the face of the rising cost of living, health issues, extreme medical debt, and domestic violence.

In discussing the impact of homelessness in Wisconsin, Cohoon referenced ALICE households. This is a metric developed by the United Way in New Jersey, and now used across the country, to understand how many people in a population are on the brink of financial ruin, and for whom homelessness is a constant risk. ALICE stands for, "Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed."

ALICE households represent individuals and families who are working but

earn above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) yet still do not make enough to afford the basic necessities in the communities where they live. In the Chippewa Valley, this percentage lands often between 30 and more than 40 percent, depending on the town. Cohoon said it's important not to judge the unhoused, but to understand how they got there and how they can be helped into housing.

"Those are people who are working, but they have limited assets, so when something happens like even auto repair or falling behind on a bill because of a medical situation, people are at risk quicker than what most people imagine," he said. "... We do find that folks [who] fall into homelessness often are in an area where they don't have family members to support them. Or perhaps they are leaving a lifestyle that they don't want to be in anymore, so they've left some of their friends behind to make their lives better."

And, it's not just adults. Cohoon said that as of the fall of 2025, the school district in Chippewa Falls referenced 15 families that were without a home — that they were aware of. Throughout the county, the Chippewa County hunger and Homeless Advocacy Council estimated there were about 250 families in Chippewa County that were experiencing homelessness in the fall of 2025.

With the donations of quilts that were recently made by the senior center, Cohoon said it gives their residents the feeling that someone in the community cares for them, and cares about their well-being. They gladly accept donations of quilts and blankets, but also items like soup bowl cozies.

"Oftentimes, the guests will make a meal in their house," he said. "But the eating space, if you've got six people living in the tiny house ... is rather small. So, having something like that to hold on their lap would be a good idea."

Additionally, those who are gifted in crafting can create projects for the children outside of blankets as well.

"Some of the kids do homework, of course, in their tiny houses," Cohoon said. "So I've seen these little lap desks that are kind of quilted on the bottom [and] something like that would certainly be useful."

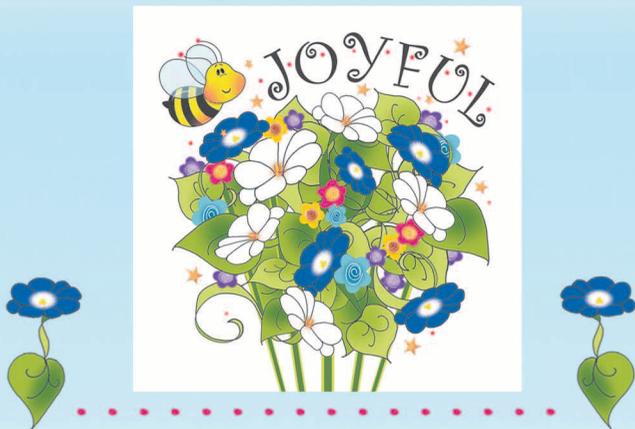
If you are interested in donating your handcrafted goods for a philanthropic need, those needs exist throughout the state. All it takes is a phone call to your local social services agency or school district and it's a pretty good bet you'll be given ideas for handcrafted quilt or craft projects that can be donated by your group or club.

"[We're] always appreciative of those donations," Cohoon said.



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It is a deep and meaningful expression. Joy connects people to each other, while happiness consists of momentary connections. Finding true joy can be found through volunteering to help others in any way that highlights your personal gifts or experiences. In this time of new beginnings the **Girlfriend Wisdom** is:

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Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton.
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Challenge Yourself Through Quilting

By Diane L. Murtha

How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. Practice will improve your quilting, too, but I'd like to suggest another way.

Challenges!

Like many of you, I started with traditional quilts. I always admired the beautiful quilts my grandmother made with few tools and fabric choices. So, challenging myself to use primarily what I had and to always quilt it myself, has been my basic philosophy. Then I got hooked on challenge projects.

I have participated in more than 50 challenges. I don't have an art or design degree, so I rarely know what I am doing, but I always have a lot of fun, and I usually learn something. Challenges have completely reinvigorated my love of quilting, and they can inspire your designs and quilting too.

The reasons I love challenge projects may also appeal to you. They are usually a smaller-sized quilt, for example 12"x12", 20"x20" and even as small as 5"x7". Due to their relatively small size, there is less commitment in fabric, time and money. And you are free to play with a color pallet (the required fabric) you might not normally use or a technique (required theme) you haven't used before. Maybe after trying something new in a challenge, you will have the confidence to use it in a full-size project. I find this very exhilarating. It forces me to grow. You learn something every time you try something new, even if it's you NEVER want to do that technique again! I have experienced this a time or two.

By challenging yourself you can:

- Learn new techniques or expand a current skill.
- Exercise creativity.
- Become inspired.
- Achieve recognition or a goal, for example, sell a piece, become published, exhibit at a special location, copyright a pattern, or win an award.
- You might reinvigorate your fiber passion like I have.



Philip Image Photo

Challenges allow you to release your inhibitions, so be bold. Try varying block size. Use bold color combinations. Try asymmetrical or another offset layout. Experiment with an uneven or irregular edge, or a unique binding. Add hand stitching in a contrasting color. How can it be wrong? Become a trendsetter!

Of course, you can simply play on your own, but if you are like me, a structured challenge helps. There are several types of challenges, both informal and formal. Quilt guilds offer informal member challenges. Major and local quilt shows (like QuiltCon) hold annual challenges. Fabric stores and manufacturers (like Cherrywood Hand Dyed Fabrics, Riley Blake Designs, FreeSpirit Fabrics, etc.), pattern designers, and thread and tool companies also offer opportunities to be creative. Art Quilting magazine offers a "Reader Challenge" every issue, as do other magazines.

There are numerous free or low-cost online events for everything from free motion quilting, improv piecing, and stash busting projects to quilt-a-longs offered by quilters and designers.

Find other ways to challenge yourself. Try new things. Practice your free motion quilting on a charity quilt or volunteer in other ways to push your creative limits. We all keep leftover and rejected blocks or find giveaway items

at a guild meeting. Challenge yourself to make something of them. Read quilt magazines, especially articles — don't just look at the patterns. I bet you will find useful information in every article to add to your toolbox for future use. Utilize the talent within your quilt guilds by asking a member for help learning something. Attend lectures at guild and quilt shows. Again, even if the topic isn't "your thing," chances are you will learn something. Listen to podcasts and watch YouTube videos. Watch demonstrations and try new tools, notions, and rulers at quilt shows. Yes, sometimes they try to sell something, but not always.

Take a class either on a new technique or as a refresher on previous skill. Ten years ago, I took a modern improv class from Jacque Gering, best known for walking foot quilting, before I even knew what modern quilting was. I also tried walking foot quilting and love it!

Try a new or different tool. How many of you have bought something and not used it? I can tell you why I haven't. I was comfortable using my routine go-to method and it would take a little extra time to stretch and try something new. But I promise, it's worth it. Give that drawer or basket full of new tools a try. If you incorporate any of these practices, you'll add to your quilter's toolbox and increase your skills and confidence. It's

helped me, and it will improve your modern quilting too.

Inspiration is truly all around us. Make a new habit of looking at everything through a quilter's lens. I keep a binder of photos and ideas for future reference.

- Remember, not every mistake is a ruined effort. Re-think it. Consider how you might incorporate it into your current project or a future one.

- Our spouses and non-quilting friends are not thinking of the Quilt Police, or our limitations when they offer ideas. It's up to us to learn the skill to incorporate their ideas in some way.

- Any magazine can be a great source of inspiration. Look at colors, shapes, and texture of the clothes and accessories in a fashion magazine. Notice wall color, floor rug designs, and furniture shape and texture in home magazines.

- Adult coloring books can have great free motion quilting ideas.

- Use your photos. Also try using your children's or grandchildren's drawings, which tend to be simple and bold in color choices. Children haven't yet been told a tree can't be purple.

I love sharing my enthusiasm and excitement about challenges. Quilters often express to me that I inspired them to finally try something they have wanted to do. I hope I have done that for you!

Diane L. Murtha is an award-winning quilter, fiber artist, author, and international lecturer and instructor. Quilting for more than 50 years, she gravitated to art quilts and discovered she loves challenges. Her quilts and articles are included in books, 30-plus magazines, and multiple juried exhibits and international shows. Diane published her first book, "Artful Insights in Fiber: Quilted Bits of Wit & Wisdom" in March 2023. She currently resides in Iowa. Learn more at: www.dianeLmurtha.com or follow on @dianelmurtha.



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When To Quit Your Quilt

By Barbara Polston

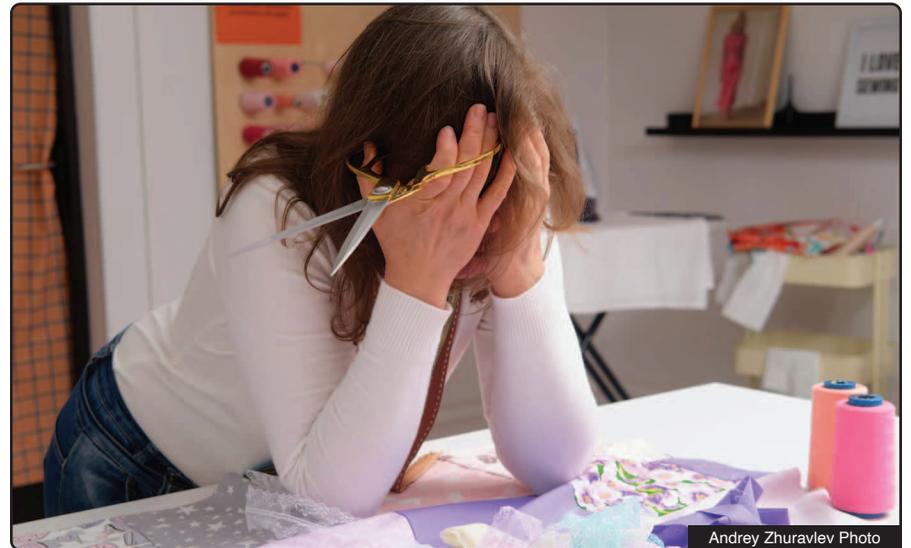
You've had that type of day. You know, the kind of day where everything you touch seems to turn to garbage? I had one of those days recently.

While poking around my favorite quilt shop, I came across a line of fabric that was perfection itself. Designed in soft lavender, grey, gold and cream, the fabric was printed with doves, wheat sheaves and gentle florals. Despite my commitment not to buy more fabric, I couldn't leave it behind. I didn't have a project in mind; I just wanted to see these beautiful fabrics flow under my needle and turn into something lovely.

I searched out a pattern that I thought would showcase the loveliness waiting on my sewing table. Months ago, I cut all the strips and pieces necessary. Everything was waiting for time to sew.

Finally, the day arrived! I was excited

to open my project box and begin. The pattern, although not difficult, did require some precision piecing. It was necessary to sew strips together into a unit that would measure and fit precisely to its neighbor. I just couldn't find the "sweet spot." Pieces either ended up too narrow or too wide. I found myself re-sewing seams to make the wide narrower and employing my seam ripper on those too narrow to restitch them hoping for a wider result. Threads were flying everywhere! I was spending the same amount of time unsewing as I was sewing. Something was wrong with every unit. It was frustrating and no fun at all. Each time I tried to assemble a block, my family heard my grunts and groans of dismay emanating from my sewing space. Perhaps, I thought, I should just put this away for today and try again later. Although it was a struggle, I completed half of the blocks needed for the



Andrey Zhuravlev Photo

quilt top.

I really wanted to make progress on this project. The next day, I sat down to piece blocks again, filled with trepidation. Low and behold, everything flowed together perfectly! I found the "sweet spot" and every strip I pieced fit perfectly with its neighbor. No ripping. No re-sewing. It was so enjoyable to have this success and I finished the rest of the needed blocks in record time. All the blocks were ready to lay out, piece into rows and finish into the largest section of the quilt top. What a difference a day can make!

What is the lesson here? I believe that there are some days when things just aren't working and it's okay to walk away. While the desire might be to forge ahead,

maybe it's better to quit and try again another time.

H.G. Wells had it right when he said, "If you fell down yesterday, stand up today."

©2026 Barbara Polston. Barbara is the author of "Quilting with Doilies: Inspiration, Techniques, and Projects" (Schiffer Press, 2015) and a series of children's books inviting young children to share in "The Adventures of Puppy Brian" (www.puppybrian.com). Barbara lives in Tucson, Arizona where she has failed at retirement, but is getting more time for sewing in a variety of forms. Contact Barbara at barbarapolston-quilter@gmail.com.

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- 2 lbs. green seedless grapes
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- 8 oz. sour cream
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- 1 tsp. vanilla extract, to taste

Topping:

- 1 c. brown sugar, packed
- 1 c. crushed pecans

METHOD

Wash & stem grapes. Set aside. Mix sour cream, cream cheese, white sugar & vanilla by hand until blended. Stir grapes into mixture & pour in a large serving bowl. For topping: combine brown sugar & crushed pecans. Sprinkle over the top of the grapes to cover completely. Chill overnight.

Cheryl Potts contributed recipe

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Did I Do That? A Reminder To Clean Your Lint From Your Sewing Machine

By Deb Heatherly

Some of us may be old enough to remember that question coming from the mouth of Steve Urkel, played by Jameel White, on the television show “Family Matters.” In 1989 he was slated for a single appearance, but the character was so well received that it became a breakout role for him that lasted until 1998. You could not help but laugh at this line and the many others that became his trademark.

When I had my quilt shop, I often heard this question in another context. Time and time again it was said by customers picking up their sewing machines after they had been serviced. They were referring to the Ziploc bag of lint that our repairman always attached to their machines. The bags were a gentle reminder that their machines needed a little more love between projects.

When I saw some of these bags, I wondered to myself how the machine was still running. Many times, I heard, “It was running just fine and all of a sudden it refused to sew correctly.” After seeing those bags, it was easy to figure out why.

Sadly, this happens to all of us. We are so excited about starting the next project that we forget about the lint that gets trapped inside the machine from our fabric and threads. It really is a good idea to clean out the bobbin



area after each quilt and take the machine in for a professional cleaning once a year. Doing so helps the machine run smoothly and helps us continue to create for years to come.

Think of it like owning a car. The car needs oil changes, new wiper blades, new tires, etc. from time to time so that it can continue to get us from one place to the next. (Like your local quilt shop or the next shop hop!) Proper maintenance can help ward off costly repairs. (Money we could have spent on fabric at the local quilt chop.)

Knowing all of this, I was recently the one who was surprised at the amount of lint I cleaned out of my machine. I was on a deadline for several new patterns and had simply moved from one quilt to the next without



stopping to clean. In fact, if I had not spotted lint trying to escape from the nether regions of the machine when I had to change my bobbin, I would probably still be stitching along. “Okay, fine, I’ll clean you out” I said.

Timmy, my furry studio helper sat quietly watching as I pulled out clump after clump and a few times a little paw tried to help.

“This is not good” I told him. “Mom has got to do better and I vow to clean after every quilt from now on.”

He just looked at me and purred.

Funny, so did my machine after its little bit of pampering.

Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and the author of eight popular pattern books. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, “Grids Girls,” for tips and inspiration, and two free mysteries each year: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/770429649800457/>.

Shop Owners are invited to join her group just for you, “Grids Girls for Quilt Shop Owners Only” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273593657256524>.

Visit Deb’s website at www.Debcatsn-quilts.com.

Piecing Life Together - Traveling

By Barbara Polston

Most of us, I believe, plan to travel in the months ahead, whether that’s for business, family obligations or pleasure. I’m planning a trip to visit my oldest daughter and will be flying. In addition to all the things that need to be packed — clothing, toiletries and the like — whenever I travel, I spend quite a bit of time thinking about what I will be bringing along to fill spare moments.

There is always a book or two to read on the plane. On this trip, I’m bringing the latest selection of my book club. I expect I will be done with the reading and ready for our meeting, occurring the evening after I return home.

What seems to occupy most of my thoughts is what sewing or crafting project will come along. There are several things that must be considered. One of the first things is the size of the project. With airlines charging for additional bags or too much weight, this is important. Currently, I have some finishing handwork that needs to be done on two good-

size quilt projects. Either would take up quite a bit of valuable suitcase space or require a second suitcase and additional baggage charges. Shipping the projects ahead of time seems like an unnecessary expense and risks them getting lost in transit, going or coming back. Neither of those projects seem like good options for this trip but would be strong contenders if I were driving. If I had a quilting project that could be broken down into small units of handwork, such as an English Paper Piecing project, that would be a good choice. Unfortunately, I don’t have such a project planned for the near future, so that won’t work either.

As luck would have it, I am ready to start a new counted cross-stitch project. I was gifted another embroidery project, Japanese sashiko, that is ready to go and I am anxious to try. Both projects fit nicely in my embroidery bag and won’t take up very much space in my suitcase. These will be coming along with me, giving me plenty of things to work on while I’m away and relaxing with my daughter. She is thinking she will work on some

embroidery projects while I’m there, a plan we are calling mother-daughter parallel crafting. She was gifted with the same Japanese sashiko kit and I’m wondering if we will truly be in parallel, working on the same project but bringing our individual interpretations to the work. I am looking forward to a bit of a surprise.

Safe travels! Happy stitching!

©2026 Barbara Polston. Barbara is the author of “Quilting with Doilies: Inspiration, Techniques, and Projects” (Schiffer Press, 2015) and a series of children’s books inviting young children to share in “The Adventures of Puppy Brian” (www.puppybrian.com). Barbara lives in Tucson, Arizona where she has failed at retirement, but is getting more time for sewing in a variety of forms. Contact Barbara at barbarapolstonquilter@gmail.com.

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Wisconsin's Specialty Shopping Guide

Advertiser Listing

Copies of The Country Register are available at each of the businesses below and at various community visitor centers.

Check out the Schedule of Events on Page 3 to find out when the shops are having their Sales & Special Events!

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