

THE

VIRTUAL QUILT

A Newsletter for Online Quilters

Issue24 • May, 1998



Playing With A Full Deck

Sue Pierce's idea for a set of quilts patterned after playing cards soon became a full house —so obviously, they had to go on tour.

[Read about this traveling exhibit.](#)

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THE TRAVELING QUILTER:

A QUILTER'S TOUR OF THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAII

By Patricia Littlefield

The island of Hawaii, where I live, is the largest of the Hawaiian Islands and is almost diamond shaped, if you are willing to stretch your imagination a little. Fabric and quilt shops are few and far between, but I have located at least one in each of the points of the diamond, which lie roughly on a north/south, east/west axis, again if you are able to bend your thinking a bit.

For example, if you begin in Hilo, situated on the eastern flanks of the extinct volcano, Mauna Kea, and the largest city on what everybody calls the Big Island, you will be on the eastern point of the diamond. There, in an old building that has been restored, you will find Dragon Mama, which is owned and operated by Utae Arai.

Dragon Mama
622 Kamehameha Avenue
Hilo, Hawaii 808 934-9081

Dragon Mama began in Oakland, California in 1988, specializing in Japanese fabrics and kimonos, and moved to Hilo, Hawaii, in 1992. Since moving to the Big Island, Dragon Mama now sells natural fiber futons (Japanese beds), meditation pillows, tatami and bamboo mats, and Shoji lanterns as well as fabric. Bolts of organically grown, natural colored cotton Japanese fabrics march up the walls on one side while Indonesian and Indian batiks and African and Hawaiian prints line the shelves on the other. A large selection of silk and Japanese Yukata and Ikat fabric for kimonos is for sale as well.

Shoji lamps, some floor- and some table-size, with panes made of rice paper, provide soft lighting, and there are small, low bamboo and oak tables nearby with books on Japanese textiles and art displayed on them. A couple of futons have been set up around the store, and buckwheat hulls and kapok for filling them are sold by the pound. An assortment of diverse items are also available -- hemp yarn, tabis for your feet, scrunchies for your ponytail, tee shirts, silk kimonos, and note cards to send to friends back on the Mainland. You feel very much as if you might be in a shop in Tokyo.

I asked Utae, who was showing a new employee how to wrap and address a package going to a customer in Germany when I walked in, how she chose the name for her shop. She laughed and replied, "Well, the dragon is a good luck symbol in Asia, not like it is here, and I wanted something that would be catchy, so I decided to call it Dragon Mama!"

When you visit Dragon Mama, try to make your visit on a Wednesday or a Saturday because on those days, a block and a half down Kamehameha Avenue is the local Farmer's Market which is a unique experience all its own. There, all kinds of fresh fish and produce, much of it unknown to Mainland eyes and taste buds, are for sale. Not to mention the beautiful orchids, heliconia, plumeria, ginger, and other exotic flowers that are available. There



Inside Dragon Mama.



Kathi Tripp inspects the goods at Kilauea Kreations.

are also small, nearby restaurants where you can sample local food if you are so inclined.

As yet Dragon Mama does not have an e-mail address, website, or catalogue, although Utae told me that when she gets requests from visitors after they have returned home, she tries to accommodate them, if at all possible. So, if you have a yen for Japanese culture, arts, and textiles, Dragon Mama is a must-see stop the next time you are in Hilo.

Traveling southwest from Hilo on Highway 11 to the southernmost point of the diamond that is the Big Island of Hawaii, takes you up towards the Kilauea Volcano in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Kilauea Volcano has been erupting continuously since 1983, and in the process has created more than 500 acres of new land. Just before you reach the entrance to the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, you will see a sign pointing off to the right to the village of Volcano.

After you turn off Highway 11, you come to a tee in the road. Take the left arm of the tee and drive down about a half a mile until you see the Lava Rock Cafe on your right. Turn into the parking lot, and Kilauea Kreations will be directly in front of you.

Kilauea Kreations Volcano, Hawaii 808 967-8090

Kilauea Kreations is owned by Kathi Tripp and her

husband. Kathi and her mother-in-law had long talked about opening a shop that would provide the fabrics, thread, patterns, and all the things that local quilters needed to make their Hawaiian quilts. There was no place nearby to buy them.

So Kathi's husband remodeled the 1930s service station that was on their property, and she and her mother-in-law opened Kilauea Kreations on July 4, 1995. Hawaiian prints, batiks, and Moda hand-dyed fabrics are a specialty. The small shop is filled with a wide selection of fabric, thread, quilt and pillow kits, patterns, materials for laulau weaving, and all kinds of quilting gadgetry, the kind to which we all are susceptible.

Kilauea Kreations is run as a co-op that includes other artisans besides quilters. In addition to several quilters, including a master quilter, there is a potter, a basket weaver, and a seamstress who, in return for the opportunity to exhibit their work, take turns, one day a week, to run the shop. Thus, there are also note cards, clothing, and jewelry, basketry, and pottery in every form imaginable everywhere. Exquisite Hawaiian quilts hang from the ceiling, walls, and on a quilt rack by the door.

Volcano has a very active quilting guild. About half the members make Hawaiian quilts and half make patchwork quilts. Classes taught by guild members are offered at Kilauea Kreations, as well as by well-known quilters from Honolulu to teach them. Kathi comes from missionary stock, and has been around quilting all her life. Her mother-in-law, who unfortunately died a month after Kilauea Kreations opened its door, is the one who really got her hooked on quilting, she said.

Kathi's current passion is watercolor quilts, and she showed me a picture of one that she'd made that has since been sold. Business has been good, she said, even though her shop is off the main road. She enjoys meeting quilters from all over the world who find her shop listed on the Internet and stop by when they are on the Big Island. Back on Highway 11, heading northwest, with Mauna Loa, a still active volcano off to your right, you will go through Na'alehu, the southernmost town in the United States, and then the road will turn due north. Past the communities of Ho'okena, Napo'opo'o, Captain

Cook, and Kealakekua, on the southwest coast of the Big Island, you will drive until you come to Kainaliu. On the makai or ocean side of Highway 11, you will see a row of weathered little shops. In the middle of them is Kimura's Fabrics, the quilt shop on the western point of the diamond.

Kimura's Fabrics Kainaliu Village, on Highway 11 Kainaliu, Hawaii 808 322-3771

Entering Kimura's Fabrics on the Big Island of Hawaii is like stepping backward in time. It is Hawaii as it was before 1941 and Pearl Harbor. The Kimura family lives in a house behind the store, which is connected to it by a little walkway.

This old-fashioned general store, founded in 1926 in Kainaliu Village offers a variety of goods, but the fabrics are a specialty. Owner Irene Kimura and her daughter make buying trips to California once or twice a year to select cottons, silks, and much more. One specialty of course is Hawaiian prints of which there is a huge selection. In addition, Kimura's carries notions, all kinds of craft supplies, Hawaiian quilt kits, and patterns of all brands, including Patterns Pacifica, which has patterns for island style clothing, such as muu mus and Aloha shirts.

When you first walk into Kimura's Fabrics, you are overwhelmed by the enormous array of bolts of fabric. They are stacked all over, jammed on tables, stuffed on shelves and in closets, piles reaching higher than your head. Fabric is everywhere.

You wonder how on earth does Mrs. Kimura know what she has in stock! Well, I can attest to the fact that she does. Not long ago, when I dropped by to browse just a bit and perhaps pick up some fabric for the border of an attic windows quilt I was making. I really was hesitant and undecided about what would look best. Mrs. Kimura took one look at my quilt top, and asked, "How about yellow?"

She quickly darted off down one aisle, around a corner and into another. (I had a hard time keeping up with her, as she is very tiny and immediately disappeared among all the upright bolts of fabric.) She stopped and pulled out a bolt of yellow cotton. It was obvious that she had known just exactly where that particular bolt of fabric was. When asked when her next sale would be,

Mrs. Kimura replied, "Everyday is a sale 'cause my prices are low, and we carry the best fabrics, not the kind the other stores sell."

Once a year, Kimura Fabrics takes inventory. Local quilting guild members sign up to help, and it is an event all look forward to. This year we got there at 8:00 A.M., and Mrs. Kimura first fed us muffins, tea, and coffee in her little house behind the store, across the little bridgelike walkway.

Then we paired off and began going through bolt by bolt, counting the yardage on each, and noting the price and date. (To be able to spend an entire morning surrounded by fabrics of all description in every color possible is truly a quilter's version of Paradise.)

My partner and I worked for four hours and marveled that there could ever be a complete inventory, since it took us so long just to do about 100 bolts. Then in the mail in a couple of months, a gift certificate from Kimura's Fabrics arrived. It was Mrs. Kimura's way of



Kimura's Fabrics. Mrs. Irene Kimura and the author, Patricia Littlefield.

saying thank you for our help.

I now have a legitimate reason to return to Kimura's Fabrics. I can hardly wait.

To reach the north point of the Big Island's diamond, continue on Highway 11 until you get to Kailua-Kona. There, at the intersection of Palani Road, the highway becomes Highway 19 and is called the Queen Kahahumanu Highway or the Queen K to the locals. Follow it north to the junction near the community of Kawaihae and take the road to the right and continue until you come to the town of Waimea, which is often called Kamuela to distinguish it from the town of the

same name on the island of Oahu. You are still on Highway 11, but now it's called the Mamalahoa Highway.

There are only two traffic lights in Waimea. As you approach the second one, you will see the police station on your right with Mauna Kea looming in the distance to the south. Turn right and on your immediate left, located between a florist shop and the Salvation Army Thrift Shop, is Top Stitch.

Top Stitch
64-1067 Mamalahoa Highway
Kamuela, Hawaii 96743
808 885-4482

Opened in 1979 as a fabric store in Kailua-Kona, Top Stitch was moved in 1988 by its original owner to the town of Waimea, and just a year ago, it was bought by Ellie Erickson. Ellie, originally from Pennsylvania, came to Hawaii for the first time over thirty years ago because her mother lived here. She has long had an interest in quilting but became interested in Hawaiian quilting while working at Top Stitch in Kailua-Kona and becoming acquainted with a woman who ran a quilt shop at that time called the Pineapple Patch in nearby

Halualoa. Since moving the store to Waimea, Ellie says she has learned a great deal more from local Hawaiian quilters.

Top Stitch is a neat and tidy little shop, about 600 square feet in all, which now caters to quilters of both Hawaiian and American persuasion as an American quilting guild has been started in the area during the past year. Quilts, both Hawaiian and traditional patchwork, hang on the walls.

Besides batiks and Hawaiian fabrics, Top Stitch carries Kona Cotton and other high quality brands, and a basket of ribbon-tied fat quarters sits on the counter by the cash register. There is also a complete array of notions and gadgetry for the quilter along one wall. There are many items here that cannot be found in the other forty-nine states, such as an extensive inventory of Hawaiian appliqué pattern books and counted cross stitch patterns, as well as batik-printed note cards, Hawaiian tee shirt dresses, brass bookmarks in Hawaiian quilt block patterns, and Hawaiian quilt pillow kits.

Top Stitch has offered some quilting classes and with interest in American quilting building in the area, they feel that in the future a need will arise for more.

By continuing on Highway 19, you will return via the Hamakua coast to Hilo where you started your Big Island quilting adventure. Should you decide to come



Irene Kubo, behind the counter at Top Stitch.

to the Big Island for a vacation, I hope that you will make a point to visit one or more of the quilting and fabric shops located here.

Until then, Aloha nui loa.

Patricia Littlefield was a reading specialist in the San Francisco Bay Area for twenty-three years before moving to the Big Island of Hawaii in 1991 with her husband. She has been a free-lance writer and copy editor since the '70s, reviewing educational software, writing and copyediting computer documentation, educational curricula, and a weekly newspaper column for parents.

Of her current island residence, she writes: "Hawaii has always been the place I wanted to live since growing up watching 8 mm movies of Honolulu my parents took on a trip around the world in 1935. I took up quilting again a year ago after a fifteen-year hiatus and am totally smitten."



**Outside
Kimura's
Fabrics.**

**Interior,
Dragon Mama.**



PCQuilt for Windows

PCQuilt for Windows is easy to learn and easy to use quilting software. The block and the quilt are on the same screen so you can see your quilt emerge as you design and color your blocks. Combine blocks in a variety of ways to see endless new designs. The program includes all the features that have always made PCQuilt easy and fun to use. Now with the new Windows version, PCQuilt will help you estimate your yardage, print templates, quilts and blocks, and has a friendly Windows interface with easy to use toolbars. PCQuilt comes with a extensive library of blocks, border, quilts, palettes and fabric patterns.

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Nina Antze 7061 Lynch Road Sebastopol, CA 95472 1-800-731-8886



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****New: Save on Fabric!**** PineTree is now discounting fabric! With more than 2000 bolts on the floor, more fabric goes on the website catalog each week, at prices 20% off retail. Don't miss PineTree's ****New**** Stash Stockers(tm), the exciting selections of six fat quarters from top manufacturers!

Shopping online for quilting supplies is now easier than ever! PineTree Quiltworks now offers a secure server for credit card transactions! Just scope out the website catalog at <http://quilt.com/pinetree> and place your credit card order from the **new** secure website order form. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover are welcome.

PineTree's your source for discounted quilting supplies and books! PineTree offers attentive customer service and prompt shipping, along with website convenience and 20% discounts! Be sure to check out the online catalog at <http://quilt.com/Pinetree> for **new, new, new** items and a partial listing of books!

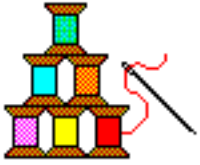
Watch the website for more fabric! New selections just posted, and more on the way!

PineTree now carries the complete line of EQ software and related products -- at discount prices. We've just received EQ's New **SEW PRECISE** stand-alone software for foundation piecing, and we love it! It joins EQ 3 and Block Base software and the books, **TOO MUCH FUN, EQ3 SIMPLIFIED: The Basics**, and the **EQ3 BLOCK BOOK**.

You'll find a huge selection of batting, from Quilter's Cotton fine cotton batts to the full lines of Hobbs' and Fairfield's cottons, blends, and polys. Look for tools to make applique easier and more fun; fabric and hand care products; pencils and markers; templates and template plastic; needlecraft gloves; rotary cutters and related supplies; rippers, clippers, snippers, and scissors; machine sewing needles; seven (!) brands of hand sewing needles - including Jeana Kimball's renowned Foxglove Cottage needles; basting systems; thread, including Mettler and Gutermann cotton sewing and quilting, Tire silk sewing, and Sulky rayon, metallic, and sliver, and ***new*** Roxy 100% cotton thread on economical 1200-yard spools; patterns ... and more. There are many more books at PineTree than you'll find in the books listing online, so if you don't see what you want, ask for it! All books are discounted 20%.

Check out the catalog on the web at <http://quilt.com/Pinetree>. Free with each order: a hard copy of the catalog and a Mettler thread color card!

PineTree is online to answer questions about quilting products at pinetree@quiltworks.com



CHARMS & SCHNIBBLES: NEWS NOTES FROM ALL OVER

TVQ recently received the following news of quilting events in Britain from Celia Eddy:

British Quilt Study Group

The Heritage Committee intend to establish a British Quilt Study Group, along the lines of those in other countries, notably America, Australia and Canada, and the Council of The Quilters' Guild of the British Isles have agreed to this plan.

The Group will not be an independent organisation but will exist within the Guild, albeit having a distinct identity. The aims of the Group will be in keeping with the broad remit of the Guild's educational and charitable purposes. In this way, it will have all the advantages conferred by the Guild's charitable status as well as some funding for the start-up process. The intention is that the Group will eventually be self-supporting.

The Group will exist primarily to encourage and support scholarly research and study of quilts and other textile-related subjects. An annual Conference/Seminar Day will provide a platform for the presentation of scholarly papers, which will subsequently be published as a Journal which will be free to subscribing members but which would be available for other Guild members to buy. It is recognised that not all Guild members will want to join the Group. The suggestion is that membership should be by an additional subscription, the exact amount of which to be fixed when we have some idea of the number of Guild members likely to join.

We have arranged to hold an Inaugural Quilt Study/Seminar Day at the Whitworth Gallery and this will take place on Saturday October 31st. It will be open to all Quilters' Guild members at an admission fee of 12.50 pounds and to non-members at an admission fee of 15.00 pounds. The Inaugural Quilt Study Day will coincide with the Common Threads Exhibition which be at the Whitworth from 10th September to 15th November. Jennifer Harris has kindly offered to give those who attend the Study Day a guided tour of Common Threads.

Our speakers for the Day will be Dorothy Osler: The Strippy Quilt: Its Origins and Development

Deryn O'Connor, Tina Fenwick Smith and Pauline Adams: Aspects of Turkey Red.

It is hoped that there will be time for the presentation of some Gemini-papers, and for a Show and Tell of antique quilts drawn from the Guild,s Collection.

Also at the Whitworth:

COMMON THREADS A Major Exhibition by four British Quilt Artists Pauline Burbidge Jo Budd Dinah Prentice Michele Walker

Those attending the Inaugural Quilt Study Day will be given a special Guided Tour of the Exhibition by the Curator Jennifer Harris

COMMON THREADS

A Major Exhibition by Four British Quilt Artists

September sees the launch of an exhibition by four leading British Quilt Artists. COMMON THREADS, at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, UK, from 11th September to 15th November, then touring to various locations, will feature the work of Pauline Burbidge, Jo Budd, Dinah Prentice and Michele Walker. A substantial body of contemporary and recent work will be displayed but there will also be a retrospective element to the exhibition, each artist showing examples of past works through which her progress can be charted.

Today's quiltmakers may still see themselves firmly rooted within a tradition but they are increasingly open to new ideas and influences. This is reflected in the truly meteoric rise in quality and availability of courses and classes for quilters and textile enthusiasts at all levels.. For this reason, COMMON THREADS will, I believe, be welcomed and appreciated by quilting enthusiasts of all shades, from modest hobbyists who take an interest in current developments to aspiring textile artists. COMMON THREADS promises to be a welcome and timely chance both to study the work and development of the individual artists and to gain an overview of the current state of British Quilt Art.



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We also specialize in custom logos for quilt guilds and businesses. Also available are quality embroidered custom labels for quilt backs. No minimum quantity is required and vendor inquiries are welcome.

E-mail us for more information at bob@desertthreads.sparks.nv.us or visit our website at

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We offer t-shirts and sweatshirts in sizes from medium to xxx-large. All of our quilts are machine pieced. Most of our patterns are easy enough for beginning quilters. The photo at right shows our watercolor sweatshirt called "Kristie's Watercolor." There are 361 pieces in the quilt. Come see what else we have to offer at our website at

<http://www.sierratel.com/thequiltblock>

Or e-mail for more information to gastinc@sierratel.com

The Quilt Block
P.O. Box 127
Midpines, CA 95345

(209) 742-5418 Fax: (209) 742-7662

PRODUCT REVIEW: THIMBLES

He Said/She Said

Lynn and Rob Holland

HE SAID:

The little things are always the most important, it seems. Like that little box from the jewelry store.

For hand quilters, the little thing of most importance is the thimble. It is crucial to both the effectiveness and comfort of the quilter while trying to make those little bitty stitches. It's hard to get 10 stitches to the inch when your fingertip is a bloody stump from between-stabs.

So what's a fella to do?

Well, the creative and indefatigable quilting notions industry has not let us down. In the most recent mail order catalogues I've seen enough different thimbles to confuse even the most discerning of shoppers, and you could spend a fortune on these contraptions and perhaps never find the right one for you. That's why I'm here to share my wealth of experience and injury.

I'll have to start with a confession. I've never been much of a rocking stitcher. I believe that the rocking stitch was invented because if you could master it, it worked the best with the traditional thimble. The old-fashioned metal thimble, with its perfectly round opening and flat or slightly rounded tip with little pores in it, will hold a needle in place (more or less) if you use only the tip. And if you get the right rhythm going, and have lots of strength in your index finger, then you can do a pretty fair job of quilting. Providing your batting is not too resistant.

I never could get enough leverage that way, though. And the needle invariably slipped out of its little pore. I found I was more effective side-saddle, pushing the needle through the quilt with the front of my finger rather than the tip. I could get more stitches on the needle at a time and overcome resistance in the fabric. But the side of a traditional thimble was not suited to this. It won't hold a needle worth spit.

What I needed, I thought, was something with more give to it that would hold a needle tip anywhere on my

finger so I could change angles at will. After all, who wants carpal tunnel in their big knuckle? I also needed something that conformed more amicably with the shape of my finger, which is, despite my other obvious perfections, not a perfect circle. I tried several different types of fabric or goatskin thimbles. I guess the goatskin worked O.K. for the goat, but it didn't work for me.

If you think the sharp end of a number 12 between hurts, you should try the dull end! After my second tetanus shot I started shopping around again for something that would meet my particular finicky needs and I discovered a wonderful product called the Coin Thimble. This product, made by Clover, is a leather thimble with a round metal "coin" embedded in it on the front of the fingertip. The coin has little dimples or pores in it, just like a traditional thimble.

This thimble must have been invented by another side-quilter, I thought. Clever, these side-quilters. And I began to use it as my regular quilting companion. If I couldn't find it in my quilting bag when I got out the big whitework quilt I've been working on for the last ten years, I'd get cranky. A man's gotta have the right tools. It would invariably show up, and I perforated that sucker until the coin finally slid out. I guess it was all the times I poked the needle into the area around the edge of the coin, where the leather overlapped it. That was the place on the coin thimble that held the needle best. The actual coin had about the same slippage as your average traditional thimble, but leather with metal behind it was the best. After the coin slipped out, I put it back in and even though my wife bought me a new coin thimble for Christmas or something, I still use the old one. It's sort of like an old fielder's glove -- familiar and comfortable.

Recently I was introduced to something new, called My Favorite Thimble. At first glance it didn't look much different from a traditional thimble, except that it was bright blue. And if you picked it up, you found it was rubbery. Rubbery but firm at the same time. And the opening on it was not perfectly round, but oval, sort of



like the shape of my finger. Made of metal but coated inside and out with a layer of rubber, My Favorite Thimble had possibilities. I dragged out my whitework quilt again, threaded some betweens, and slipped the bright blue bubble on my index finger. The oval shape was far more comfortable than the round thimble, though not quite as comfortable as the leather of the coin thimble. But where it was really remarkable was in its hold on the needle. Whether on the tip or on the side, the rubber held the needle firmly while I poked it through the sandwich. With this little gizmo, even a clutz like me might be able to master the rocking stitch! It costs six bucks (ten for a fancy one) and the rubber is self-healing, but if it wears off they'll re-rubberize it for you for a small fee.

Finally, I thought, somebody has figured out the thimble. Hard enough to protect the finger tip, pliable enough to hold the needle. And ergonomically oval. What a deal.

SHE SAID:

We're frequently reminded not to sweat the small stuff.

However, small stuff can make a big difference when we're talking thimbles, especially if you don't have one. And if you do have one, it needs to be the right one to fit both the task at hand and the finger on the hand. First, let me admit that although I love quilt-making, the hand quilting process is a little slow for my basic personality. I like rotary cutting and machine piecing and sincerely believe that the best quilt is a finished quilt. However, there are times when I do settle down long enough to explore and enjoy the finer points (no pun intended) of hand sewing and quilting. Then I need a thimble.

I'm fickle about thimbles, I confess. I have a tattered goatskin model by Elaine Consodine of Portage, Wisconsin, that has stayed with me for the four-years-and-counting traveling battle I'm having with a queen-sized cathedral windows quilt. And although I plan to ignore the comment about it "working O.K. for the goat,"

I have to admit that it's so comfortable that I often forget I have it on. I use it for most of my hand-sewing tasks, including the aforementioned quilt and applique.

Not that it doesn't have some problems. First, forget leverage if you're trying to hand quilt. You need metal for that unless you're Xena or Hercules. Second, its neutral coloration makes it difficult to locate, especially since I usually store it in a ziplock full of muslin squares. I've wasted many potential stitching minutes rubbing around in my tote bag trying to find the thing. Plus, sometimes it gets downright hot on your finger. Since I'm a top rocker, not a side rocker, the coin thimble has not had much appeal, not to mention the basic bulk of those jobs. They look orthopedic to me, kind of like a finger brace. And we must remember that it is better to look good than to feel good, especially at 9 p.m. in your own bedroom. Remember the small stuff part.

To deal with my weak finger issues for the rocking stitch, I have used a JHB Quilter's Thimble, which has leather sides and a metal top. For me, this has been a serviceable combination. I can have something that doesn't fall off my finger (metal ones always seem to slip), offers a metal top for leverage and won't totally ruin my fingernail. However, it's no beauty either, but it does the job.

It was with some interest that I tried My Favorite Thimble. The first thing I liked about it was the color. The bright blue is pretty (of course, I have a decorated model) and it stands out among the muslin squares. I also liked the rubberized exterior because it seemed to hold the needle better than the metal-only versions, and it made me almost enjoy doing the rocking stitch. Slippage is minimized, and it gives you good control of the needle action. As for comfort, it's pretty good, not as natural as my goatskin pal, but acceptable. Since it has a hard top, I'm as yet uncertain if it will work long-term with my fingernails. Right now my thimble finger nail is broken, so that's not a problem. But nails grow and aren't always compatible with thimbles. However, since Rob has dragged out his whitework quilt and allows me to take a stitch or two on it every so often, I plan to use My Favorite Thimble. It looks good, and it just feels right. What a deal.



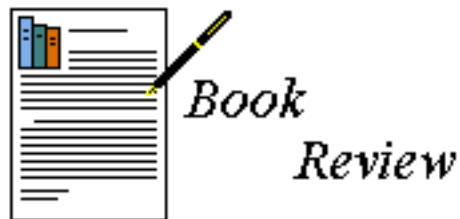
BOOK REVIEW: BURNS IN EARNEST

By Lynn Holland

I owe it all to Eleanor Burns. If I hadn't bought the June 1986 copy of *Family Circle* which promised me I could "finish a quilt in 8 hours," I would not be quilting. I had made a quilt before, cutting out zillions of individual blue squares, somehow sewing them and sandwiching the whole affair together with a sheet for backing and extra loft batting to hide my lumpy bed-making skills. After that, it would be ten years before I would try again. Too many little pieces to cut and too much time to finish. But now -- gratification in one day flat! There she was leading a gymnasium full of sewers in the start-to-finish of a quilt in one marathon session. Everyone was smiling and at the end of the day everyone had a finished quilt. This had to be my kind of quilting.

Using a 3-1/2-inch piece of cardboard for my strip guide, a piece of flexible plastic for a mat, and a tiny Olfa cutter, I began my adventure. Although it took me more than a day, I did finish my quilt, and could hardly

my first swap attempts. With Eleanor Burns, anything



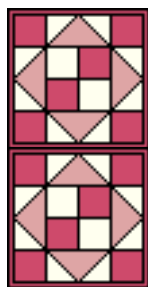
was possible. Best of all, our **QIAD** projects were always completed. Eleanor was there to guide me, remind me, give me the needed measurements more than one time and always make me feel that I could do it.

As the years passed, the patterns became more sophisticated and the books matured too. The earliest books looked as though they were typed by Eleanor herself, or at least by a close family friend. The print and hand-drawn illustrations were one color and featured monochromatic pictures of the Burns family. Then, in the early '90s, there was *Burgoyne Surrounded* and *Radiant Star*. The books, still in one color, had more detailed illustrations, more pictures and a cleaner typeface.

Upon occasion, I watched Burns' videos of quilt construction. She always seemed to take a lighthearted approach to quilting -- throwing strips over her shoulder, sweeping scraps aside with humorous commentary, measuring, cutting -- this was meant to be fun, not frustrating. Sometimes she was downright silly, but she was never stilted or overly serious about this quilting thing. I always felt better with Eleanor along on my quilting attempts.

Imagine my surprise when I happened upon three of the most recent in the **Quilt in a Day** series -- *Jewel Box*, *Nana's Garden* and *Triple Irish Chain*. These **QIAD** books are in full color with many photographs to explain the process. The quilt construction is described in a variety of formats -- including a scrap variation for all three. Only *Jewel Box* is written by Eleanor herself, but all three use the rotary-cut, strip-piecing, thorough-explanation-of-each-step method that **QIAD** has made famous.

All three new quilts are beautiful, but they seem to be meant for those of us who have already made a quilt



Everyone was smiling and at the end of the day everyone had a finished quilt. This had to be my kind of quilting.

wait to start another. I graduated to *Eleanor's Log Cabin in a Day*, this time using a custom-cut piece of Plexiglas they made for me at no charge at the hardware store. I moved on to *Irish Chain*. As my skills improved, Eleanor was right there with me to give me the encouragement and guidance I needed. She encouraged me to undertake more complex patterns. When my children needed a birthday or graduation present for a special friend, I taught them to rotary cut, sew strips and tie. Little by little, as my fear of large UFOs diminished, I even participated in an on-line Quilter's Almanac swap, one of

or two (although *Nana's Quilt* is listed as a beginner quilt.) Missing are the reminders to sew accurate seams and sew 15 stitches to the inch that appeared at random through the early instruction books. The low-tech appearance of the older books seemed somehow less threatening and more do-able than the slicker, newer releases. *Triple Irish Chain* has color-coded instructions, one for each of three choices- Yankee Chain, Scrap Chain and Three-Colored Chain. The new formats still offer step by step instructions, well-spaced and clearly labeled for each different size. It is hard to get confused with a **QIAD** book. The old **QIAD** releases are my friends, and these new books are their citified relatives. Which is not a bad thing. I have been getting prepared for this move over the last dozen years. I have armed myself with large rotary cutters, huge self-healing mats, walking feet and multiple gridded rulers. I have the confidence to vary from some of the step-by-step instructions and use a method I prefer.

But one thing has not changed. In the introduction of each book authored by Eleanor, there is a photo. It is Ms. Burns herself, everyone's quilting guru, beaming out at all of us, even if our seams don't match perfectly.

Eleanor Burns' books are available from the Planet Patchwork bookstore. Here are a few links:

Recycled Treasures from Grandma's Attic (Quilt in a Day) <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=0922705429/planetpatchworkA/>

Radiant Star Quilt <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=0922705208/planetpatchworkA/>

Quilter's Almanac <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=0922705348/planetpatchworkA/>



MY FAVORITE THIMBLE

Combining the best features of metal and leather thimbles, **My Favorite Thimble's** tough, colorful, rubbery surface grips the needle for wonderful stitch control, while the metal base guarantees that you never have to worry about sticking your finger. This thimble is a breeze to pick up or put down when you need to switch to another task.

New for Spring! - **My Favorite Thimble** now comes in two styles. You can choose between the standard royal blue, and my new embellished version on which I have added colorful free-form designs. Both styles work equally well, the embellished one just puts a smile on your face.

To order, send \$6.00 for the standard or \$10.00 for the embellished thimble along with your choice of size to: Chris Hanner & Company 3687 Coldwater Lane Snellville, GA 30039 E-mail: hanner@mindspring.com

SILVER DOLLAR SHEEP STATION

The **MINI DUST-IT**. Genuine sheepskin duster on a 6" stick that is perfect for picking up dust and lint from your sewing machine and serger. Soft, beautiful sheepskin won't scratch polished surfaces. Picks up the lint and tiny threads; doesn't spread them around. Prevents lint build-up. Inexpensive way to protect expensive sewing machines and sergers. Fun and handy to use. Also works great on the computer.

Price: \$3.50 each including mailing.

To order send check to Silver Dollar Sheep Station, 5020 Winding Way, Sacramento, CA 95841. 800-887-8742. E-mail: Sheep50@aol.com.

SPECIAL LIMITED TIME OFFER: Because we manufacture the Mini Dust-it to a very high standard, we currently have a supply of slightly imperfects. They may be thinner and not as pretty or have some other defect, but they still work great! And best of all we offer these to you for just \$1, including postage. You can order them at the address above and enjoy this wonderful product at a bargain price!

SOFTWARE REVIEW:

TWO FOUNDATION PIECING PROGRAMS

Foundation Factory

Quilt-Pro Systems

On CD-ROM, For Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 500+ Blocks \$29.95

Sew Precise!

The Electric Quilt Company

On CD-ROM, for Windows 95 Only 1100+ Blocks \$29.95

Given the current wild popularity of foundation paper piecing among quilters, it was inevitable that the clever programmers at Quilt-Pro and The Electric Quilt Company would come up with a way to computerize the process. Foundation blocks are already present in their quilt design programs, but these two CD-ROMs take the trend a step further to give us dedicated programs containing hundreds of blocks ready for sizing and printing, along with help files and tutorials for novice paper piecers.

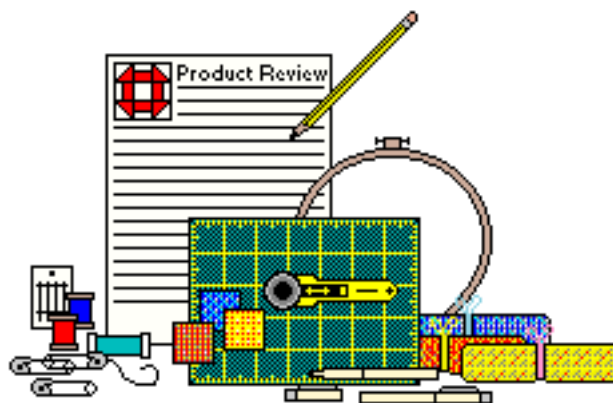
Quilt-Pro was the first out of the starting gate with Foundation Factory, which appeared last year. The program requires Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, and installs easily and quickly from the CD-ROM. The entire program installed to a hard drive requires slightly more than ten megabytes of space, but in consideration of those who may have older computers with small drives, the installation routine provides the user the choice of a partial installation with the program running off the CD-ROM. I installed the program on three different computers -- a Pentium 166, a 486 laptop, and my old clunker 486-66 desktop -- and had no trouble at all. You are also given a choice at installation to install the blocks into your Quilt-Pro block directory (if you own the program) and/or to load a Quilt-Pro demo program.

When you open the program (it doesn't place a shortcut on your desktop, so you have to do that manually), Foundation Factory presents a clean interface made up of 35 category buttons near the top of the screen, a box below that for viewing up to 10 blocks at a time and on the left margin a column with three buttons: Print, Help, and Sewing Info.

It's a simple and logical enough screen, but I have two arguments with it. The first is that there is no way to customize it by resizing its elements. The second is that there seems to be a bit of wasted space, with an empty bar along the top and a good bit of empty space on the left side. With a little better planning either the category buttons or the quilt blocks (or both) could have been a little bigger without overcrowding.

The categories of blocks (there are more than 500 blocks in all) are relatively conventional, arranged alphabetically >from Airplanes to Twists. There is an alphabet set, and nice selections of such old chestnuts as Log Cabins and Pineapples. Shoo-fly, Ohio Star, Monkey Wrench and other favorites are contained in the logically named "Traditional Blocks" category, and there is a good collection of cats, other animals, baskets, fans, etc. Also included is a collection of 28 paper-pieicable borders.

Each block is displayed in about a 1-inch thumbnail with the block's popular name and filename below it. You select a block either by highlighting it with a left-mouse-click and pressing the "Print" button, or double-clicking the block, and another screen comes up that contains a view of the paper pattern, a color rendering of the finished block (both about two inches square)



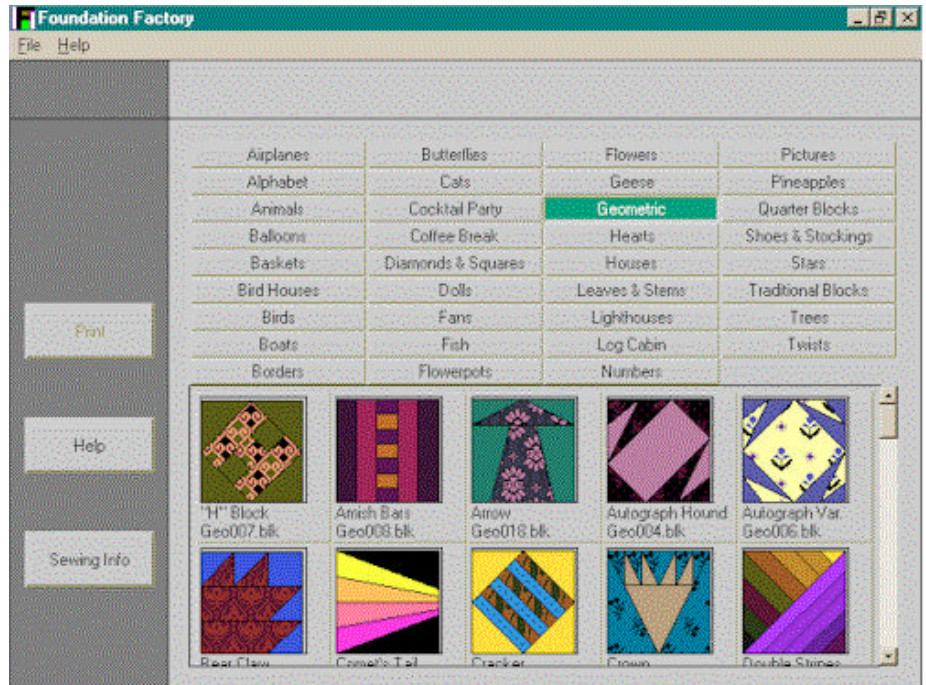
along with a menu of options for printing. These include boxes for selecting the block size you wish, the page margins, and checkboxes for mirroring the block (for iron-ons), printing in grayscale, drawing dashed lines, etc. Also from this nicely-designed page you can select English or metric measurements, change your printer settings, and go to the program's "Sewing Instructions."

Pressing the "Sewing Instructions" button takes you to the program's built-in browser, a stripped down, customized interface for reading the hypertext files that walk you through the foundation piecing process. You can customize this interface by substituting your favorite browser, but whichever you use the web-style help files are quite nice and certainly in tune with the current trend toward a single, browser-like interface with our computers.

From this view there is a contents bar that takes you with one click to a variety of different types of help, including overall Contents, Help Index, Block Index, How Do I?, Sewing Instructions, and FAQs. This button bar is configurable as well, if you want to put some particular page in the help files on it.

In their help files the folks at Quilt-Pro assume no prior knowledge of foundation piecing, and very clearly and meticulously walk the user through the definition of the technique, the different parts of the block patterns, and the exact instructions on sewing. There are discussions of the best types of paper to use, the pros and cons of using muslin foundations, and many other issues. After the introduction there is a step-by-step tutorial that goes through the steps in sewing a block, with very good illustrations and with tips on common mistakes and how to correct them. At the end of the tutorial there is further information on making quilts from your blocks and on using these blocks in the Quilt-Pro program to design quilts.

Since the primary purpose of these programs is to create accurate printed patterns, I tested Foundation Factory's ability to print accurate patterns in various sizes and on different printers. Theoretically, the program will print blocks infinitely large in size, but of course it's not often anyone wants a foundation block larger than about six or eight inches. The program defaults on most blocks to a four-inch block, and I printed four-inch, six-inch, and 14-inch patterns on both a Hewlett-Packard laser printer and an Epson Inkjet. On a four-inch pineapple block, the pattern was quite exact at 4 inches. A six-inch pineapple block was approximately 1/16 of an inch shy of the full six inches. On a two-part cat block, the pat-



Foundation Factory from Quilt-Pro Systems.

terns for the two pieces of a six-inch block when added together came a full 1/8 of an inch shy of the requisite length. While this may not seem like much, over 8 blocks this can make a quilt an inch off. It appears the inaccuracies may increase as block size increases, so it's probably a good idea to measure your patterns before you use them to know exactly what you're dealing with. Blocks can be sized in the program in increments of 1/4 of an inch.

Quilt-Pro has recently lowered the price on Foundation Factory from \$39.95 to \$29.95, and is also promising a Macintosh edition. In addition, a "Designer Edition" containing 300 blocks from Carol Doak's books, will be available on May 27. It is also priced at \$29.95.

Sew Precise! is the very recent (April 1998) entry of The Electric Quilt Company in this software category. Being second has its disadvantages, but it also has compensations. Whatever Electric Quilt may have lost in early market share, they have used the time to develop an excellent program and they appear to have improved in many ways on Quilt-Pro's version of this product.

The first and most obvious improvement is that Sew Precise! has more than twice as many blocks in its library, at 1100-plus. The blocks are contained in two collections, "Old Favorites" and "New Inspirations." The first of course contains most of the traditional blocks, including log cabins, pineapples, diamonds in squares,

and a variety of stars. The second collection focuses less on pure geometric blocks and more on representational blocks of everything from trains to garden tools, along with a variety of holiday and horticultural subjects.

The main screen contains a "button" bar across the top using representations of real (sewing) buttons labeled "Go Online," "Print," "How To" and "Help." On the left margin is a conventional directory tree containing the two major collections along with subcategories of blocks. These can be expanded and contracted, and the tree is used to select the screen full of blocks you wish to appear in the box on the right two-thirds of the screen. One nice aspect of this main screen, besides its efficient use of space, is the fact that you can customize it as you wish. You can move the center bar to the right or left, and can completely eliminate the directory tree if you wish to look at a full screen of blocks.

In addition you can right-click on the block window and be given an array of choices to customize that. You can show two, three, or four rows of blocks (with the blocks adjusting in size accordingly), can choose to see all the blocks as line drawings, in grayscale, or in full color, and can turn on or off a "Tooltip" feature which displays the name of the block when you move the cursor over it.

Sew Precise!'s help and sewing instructions are written in a more conventional Windows Help style rather than in a mini-browser, but this is not a drawback. The elementary instructions on foundation piecing and the tips and tricks are very well-composed and should help both the novice and experienced piecer in learning and improving their techniques. As in Foundation Factory, there is a separate section on sewing together multi-part blocks.

I performed the same printing tests on Sew Precise! and the accuracy of the printed foundation was better than I found in Foundation Factory. Both four-inch and six-inch blocks, including multi-part blocks, were exactly the right measurements.

You can also import the blocks from Sew Precise! into your Electric Quilt design program, but this is not



Sew Precise by the Electric Quilt Company.

nearly as easy to do as it is in Foundation Factory. The program provides detailed instructions, but due to the peculiarities of EQ3, which is a DOS-based program, and its system of projects, using these blocks in electronic quilt design requires a few workarounds. Experienced EQ users should have few problems, however, and for newcomers the instructions are quite detailed.

Other things that are not as easy in this program include the choice of English or metric measurements. The desired measurement in Sew Precise! must be selected at installation and cannot easily be changed later. You also cannot pull up the block print screen by double-clicking on a block. Instead you must select one by clicking on it and then click on the print button at the top of the screen. The default block "frame," which shows which block you've selected, is white and is hard to see, but you can change it to a more prominent color if you wish from the right-click selection box.

The print block screen shows only one rendering of the block in either line, grayscale, or color, depending on your selection of block display type in the main window. There is a very good preview capability, however, which shows quite clearly what you will get on the printed page.

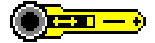
So which one of these programs should you buy? They are priced identically and each offers strong features for foundation piecers. Their interfaces are easy to

use and their help files are thorough. The blocks in them are sufficiently different that you could buy both with very little duplication.

Which way you go may depend on which quilt design software you currently own. Compatibility with either Quilt-Pro or Electric Quilt is an important consideration for value-added to the program. If you have an older computer on which you are still using Windows

3.1, you will have to select Foundation Factory, as Sew Precise! works only with Windows 95.

If you aren't already committed to a quilt design program, and have Windows 95, the edge probably goes to Sew Precise! It has the largest block libraries and a nicer overall feel, plus more accuracy in the patterns it produces.



BOOKBRIEF:

THE ULTIMATE BOOK OF QUILT LABELS

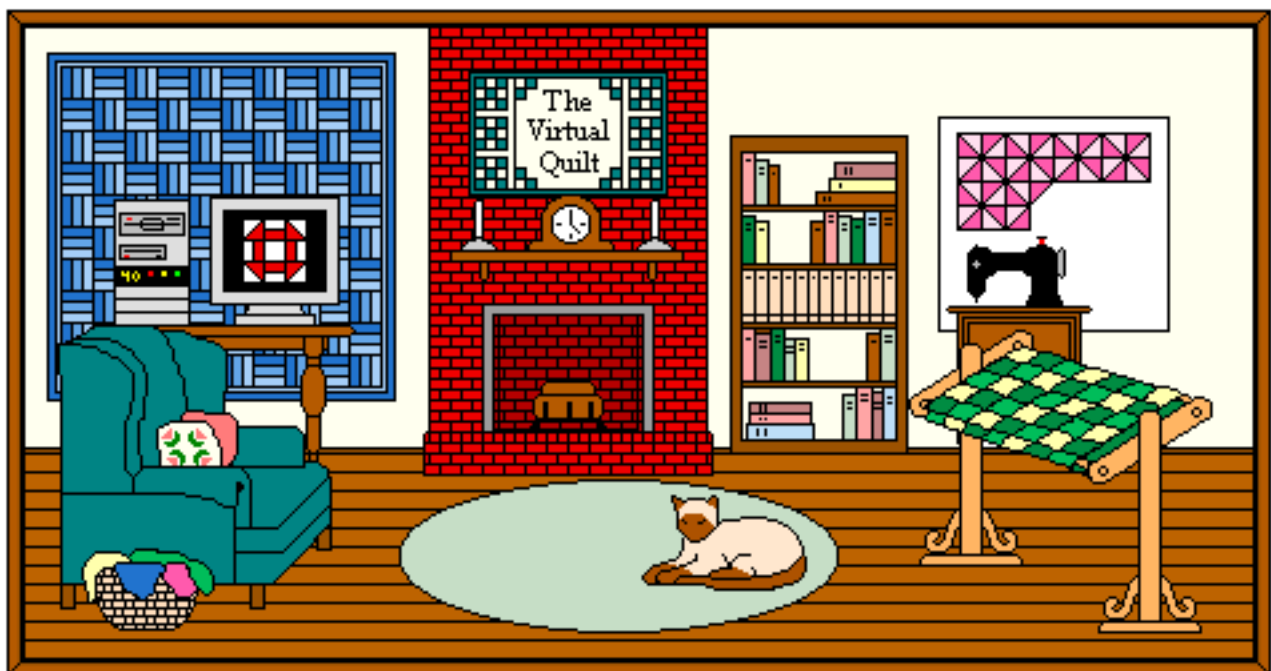
By Margo Clabo, That Patchwork Place, 1998, 64 pages, \$12.95

It's the little things that make the difference, even when it's the label on the back of a sizeable quilt. For those of us who tend to turn to the Pigma Pen and plain white muslin when that part arrives after we have spent hours and hours toiling on a project, help is here. Margo Clabo has created the Ultimate Book of Quilt Labels, and has packed it full of inspiration, technical advice and great ideas. She covers the gamut of label types, methods, and materials, offers lots of great suggestions within these categories, and even gives information on how to use your washing machine as a light table!

Although this book isn't a "trace and use" label resource, Clabo does direct us to some excellent sources for those, as well as offer a fairly comprehensive list of who to turn to should we wish more in depth information on each label type and/or need to order supplies. The full color "gallery" has great examples of quilts with creative labeling and was my favorite part. (Don't miss her 18 year old son's car quilt). Additionally, she points us to various web sites of interest to the quilter and crafter. All told, a very well done reference.

Click below to order this book at a discount through the Planet Patchwork Quilters' Bookstore.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=1564771466/planetpatchworkA/>



QUILT SHOW REVIEW:

FULL DECK ART QUILTS

The Full Deck Art Quilts have now been on the road in the U.S. for three years, and recently departed Atlanta where Lynn and I got the opportunity to see them on their last day of display at the Spruill Gallery. It was worth the wait.

These quilts were the brain child of Sue Pierce, who conceived of a set of quilts representing a full deck of 52 cards, plus two jokers. She contacted some of the nation's top quilt artists and enlisted their participation in the project. The requirements were that the quilts measure 18 X 28 inches (the same proportions as standard playing cards), must have rounded edges, and must be quilts -- i.e. have the three layers traditionally associated with the craft.

Pierce was able to get the participation of such quilting "stars" as Yvonne Porcella and Caryl Bryer Fallert, as well as many others, and there were no artistic limitations put on the artists. Their interpretations of the cards could be literal or completely abstract. Many quilters created visual puns on such things as baseball diamonds, digging spades, and clubs for bashing, and the overall effect is stunningly diverse yet unified by the overall theme and uniform size.

What struck me first about them was their diminutive size. They are true mini-quilts, and are actually quite delicate in appearance. The second thing about them was the extreme variety in style and approach. There was the representational "Jack of Diamonds," by Karen Berkenfield, which realistically portrayed Jackie Robinson -- suitable for any boy's room. And

there was the lacy openwork rendition of the Ten of Clubs by M. Joan Lintault, which played on images of clover.

Porcella and Fallert were recognizable by their distinct styles, but their quilts were not the most interesting. More original was one of the jokers by husband and wife quilters James Acord and Susan Shie, which used Native American imagery and such materials as leather and satin.

The quilts were very nicely hung in a small gallery in a northern suburb of Atlanta, and on this last day were being viewed by numerous quilt aficionados. No photography was allowed in the gallery, but there is a catalogue of the show as well as a deck of real playing cards showing these quilts.

The Full Deck Art Quilts exhibit was first displayed at the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian in 1995 and has been traveling since leaving there. The Smithsonian Magazine did an article on them in March 1995 issue, and there is a brief online version of the article at their website at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian/issues95/mar95/playcard.html>

Unfortunately there are very few images of the quilts there, and those that are there are either damaged or don't load. The site has obviously been neglected. There are also some images of the playing card renditions and a write-up about the quilts at <http://gunther.simplenet.com/cards/jun97/quilt.htm>

The quilts will be displayed at the Lied Discovery Children's Museum in Las Vegas from August 1 through September 13.

The catalogue is available at the Planet Patchwork bookstore. The cards are available from Schoolhouse Enterprises.

Catalogue: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=087654300X/planetpatchworkA/>

Cards: <http://quilt.com/gg>



THE BLOCK BOOK

The BLOCK BOOK

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SCHOOLHOUSE ENTERPRISES

Gridded Geese(c) is a unique paper foundation method for mass-producing Flying Geese units up to 24 at once (no kidding!). Schoolhouse Enterprises, inventors and manufacturers of this revolutionary product, offers both an on-line (<http://quilt.com/gg>) and printed version of their catalog.

They also search for items for quilters (and friends of quilters) which are unique and often overlooked by other catalogs you might connect with Their newest catalog offers such interesting items as Photos-to-Fabric(tm) photo transfer paper, Danforth Pewter jewelry and buttons, and the Ott Light... all at discounted prices! And while you're visiting their web site, be sure to check out their on-line catalog for their Monthly \$special\$!! (Hot Tip: Also check the [Planet Patchwork Mystery Quilt](#) page for another special!)

If you're not able to access their web page, just e-mail Schoolhouse Enterprises (gridgees@algorithms.com) with your "snail mail" (post office) address for your FREE CATALOG and Sample of Gridded Geese(c)!; (Sorry, but Samples are only available in the printed catalogs.)



HICKORY HILL ANTIQUE QUILTS

P. O. Box 273, Esperance NY 12066

ANTIQUÉ QUILT & TEXTILE CONVENTION. May 21-23, 1998. Held in Lowell, MA, the birthplace of the American Textile Revolution. Features private tours of museums and conservation centers as well as lectures by noted curators, authors, appraisers and conservationists. For more information, write Hickory Hill Antique Quilts, Box 273, Esperance NY 12066 or see <http://www.HickoryHillQuilts.com/lowell.htm>

PERFECT SQUARE

Perfect Square's mother is pregnant and about to have a new product. Perfect Triangle is due any day now. Perfect Triangle is also a REUSABLE iron-on design but it will make quarter square triangles instead of half-square triangles.

Perfect Square is growing up now and has gotten a job at a creative quilt pattern company and is doing quite well. In fact, patterns are being written exclusively for Perfect Square. For more details, see the Perfect Square web site at

<http://www.webworldinc.com/perfectsquare>

ARTFABR!K

ARTFABR!K now carries a Color Card for their extraordinary hand-dyed perle cotton threads available in sizes 3, 5, 8 and the finest, size 12. Please send \$7 plus \$1 for shipping to ARTFABR!K, Laura Wasilowski, 324 Vincent Place, Elgin, IL 60123. E-mail artfab@suba.com or see our web site at

<http://www.qcx.com/fabrik/artfab.html>

JAYDEE DESIGNS

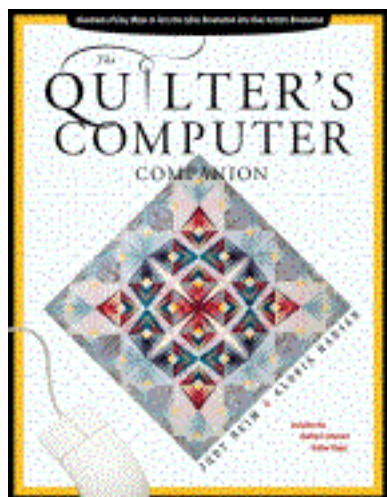
Beautiful hand Dyed Fabric perfect for piecing, applique and pictorial quilts. Colors range from a sunrise spectrum of mauves, pinks, and golds to deep purples, blues and teals. Available in the following convenient packages:

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E-mail: unique@alaska.net



Now available at Planet Patchwork!

The Quilter's Computer Companion, Judy Heim's second volume of computer advice tailored for crafters, has been described as "an excellent and indispensable book!"

Savvy, sassy, and amazingly comprehensive, this is the indispensable book for computing quilters. When you aren't learning something fascinating and useful, you're rolling on the floor laughing!

Now the *QCC* is available from the [Planet Patchwork general store](#) at a discount. We've taken **five dollars** off the cover price to make it even more attractive to you. Get your copy now before they're gone!

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, NEWS, IDEAS, BRICKBATS?

Like any news publication, TVQ is always hungry for information about new developments in the area we are trying to cover. If you have an idea for a story, or want to tell the world about something you are doing which relates to computers and quilting, we'd like to hear about it.

We'd like news of new classes starting up to teach quilt design on computers, or new approaches to that teaching. New products, maillists, World Wide Web pages, etc., are all fair game, and we'd appreciate any tips you can provide. Send your tips by e-mail to rholland@atlanta.com.

If you have a comment about an article, a complaint or a correction, we're glad to hear that, too, and may publish some comments as letters to the editor. Again, these may be sent to rholland@atlanta.com.



The Virtual Quilt

A Newsletter for
Computing Quilters

Editor and Publisher: Robert Holland, Decatur, GA

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If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter (the ASCII version) in your e-mail about every 6 weeks for the next year, all it requires is a small contribution of \$5.00!

That buys you 8 issues in which you will find more in-depth reviews of quilt design software, more profiles of quilters, as well as profiles of online quilting communities. These features will be interspersed with news of developments in the quickly changing and expanding world of online quilting.

TVQ is also available to subscribers on the World Wide Web. The graphically enhanced web version can be seen at <http://planetpatchwork.com/tvqmain/>. Future issues will also be converted into Adobe Acrobat format.

To subscribe, fill out the form on this page and send it with a check or money order for \$5.00 made out to Robert Holland, to 140 Ridley Circle, Decatur, GA 30030-1117. Be sure to fill out the form completely, including your e-mail and street addresses so if there is a problem with your subscription (like bounced messages)

I can get in touch with you. An alternative e-mail address, if you have one, is also helpful. You will receive an e-mail acknowledgment of your subscription when it is received.

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