

The Virtual Quilt

A Newsletter for Online Quilters

Issue 28 • November 1998



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Get inside the head of Bethany S. Reynolds, author of the best-selling quilt book *Magic Stack-n-Whack Quilts*.

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SOFTWARE REVIEW: SEW PRECISE! WITH SHIRLEY LIBY

A few issues ago in [TVQ #24](#), we reviewed the two major foundation piecing programs on the market, **Foundation Factory** and **Sew Precise!** These useful programs are gold mines for paper piecing enthusiasts, combining in one affordable package a large library of foundation piecing blocks and lots of advice useful to beginners and veterans alike.

Following up on the success of these programs, both Quilt-Pro and The Electric Quilt Company have published additional collections of block designs from well-known designers Carol Doak and Shirley Liby.

EQ was kind enough to share with us a review copy of *Sew Precise with Shirley Liby*, which contains 600 new blocks by Liby, who has published at least nine different books of paper piecing patterns as well as books on such diverse topics as bargello and color wash quilts.

I was frankly a little skeptical of the issuance of another paper piecing CD, priced the same as the first one (\$29.95) but with only a little more than half the number of designs as the first *Sew Precise*. I mean, how many paper-piecing patterns do quilters need?

You quickly learn in dealing with this topic that the appetite for new foundation patterns is virtually insatiable. What I also learned after playing with this new CD for a while is that it contains much more than a bunch of new patterns.

Most of Shirley's patterns contained on this CD are realistic renderings of such things as cats, dogs, birds, fish, boats, trains, cars and trucks, and other common objects. There are a few geometrics, but not many. There is both an upper case and lower case alphabet, and interesting renderings of a variety of shoes and hats. The collection of ribbons and bows is also very interesting and beautiful.

What makes all of these blocks come to life, however, is the design advice and sample quilts that Shirley

provides to accompany them. For virtually every category of block there is in the "How To" section a page or two of design ideas and samples that show you how the blocks can be used creatively to make charming quilts.

For example, here are Shirley's comments on a section of patterns in the "Castles" category:

"These patterns don't look very interesting individually. But, put them together and they can become a beautiful fairy tale castle, a magnificent cathedral or a country chapel.

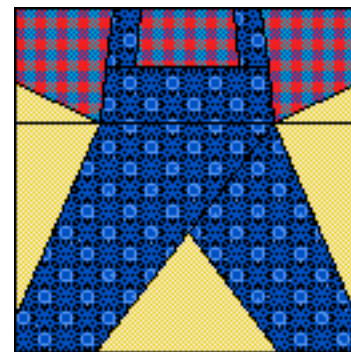
"Collect shades of gray and fabrics that look like stone or bricks to get ready for this challenge.

"The blocks are sized proportionately. So print the ones you want to use all in the same block size. Then cut away the pattern parts that are not pieced. You'll then have the patterns for the 'building blocks' of your castle or scene."

This narrative is followed by five different sample castles and other medieval buildings.

Shirley is equally creative with designs using geometric blocks. In the "Geometrics" section she shares a number of creative ways in which to use such old chestnuts as Sunshine and Shadow and Pieced Fan blocks. I was particularly interested in her "Christmas Cactus" design made with three blocks, and she has some very interesting log cabin variations using an asymmetrical block that is included in the collection. Liby also provides some border designs, using her ribbons and bows collection.

For beginners, the CD includes Shirley's detailed instructions on ex-



actly how to do foundation piecing. These are step-by-step and very detailed, but do not include any illustrations. Fortunately the instructions in the original Sew Precise! with lots of illustrations are also included here if you're a real novice.

After discovering all these wonderful new features and ideas in this new collection of Sew Precise! blocks, I'm convinced that most owners of the first CD will want to supplement their collection. For sheer convenience and the size of the block library, this collection at \$29.95 is a bargain, particularly when you compare it to the cost

of foundation piecing books. And it makes less clutter in your sewing room!

(Sew Precise with Shirley Liby and other EQ products are available from the Schoolhouse Enterprises at Planet Patchwork store at:

<http://planetpatchwork.com/store/index.cfm?DID-21>

Shipping on EQ products is free now through Christmas!!



SCHOOLHOUSE ENTERPRISES **IN ASSOCIATION WITH PLANET PATCHWORK**

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://www.planetpatchwork.com/store/index.cfm?DID=21>)

and printed version of their catalog.

The folks at Schoolhouse Enterprises and Planet Patchwork search for items for quilters (and friends of quilters) which are unique and often overlooked by other catalogs you might connect with. Check out their on-line catalog, which offers such interesting items as Photo-to-Fabric(tm) photo transfer paper, Ott Lights, and Planet Patchwork t-shirts, sweats, and tote bags... all at discounted prices! And while you're visiting, be sure to check out the current Monthly \$pecial!!

...And in case you haven't heard, Schoolhouse Enterprises is now even better! They now offer an on-line shopping cart service in conjunction with Planet Patchwork. You can safely order online through Planet Patchwork's secure server with your credit card!

If you're not able to access the web page, just e-mail Schoolhouse Enterprises (<mailto: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.)



BOUNTIFUL PRESS

"Breaking Traditions" Cathedral Windows Quick Method Quilt book was created to cut the level of difficulty and time required by the traditional method of making this beloved quilt. Full color cover, clear directions, measurement charts and many illustrations guide new and seasoned quilters to make a durable masterpiece entirely by sewing machine. U.S. residents can own this one-of-a-kind quilt book for only \$8.95 each plus postage and handling (\$1.95 for one copy, \$0.45 for each additional). Send check or money order to:

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THE POP CULTURE GIFT GUIDE

<http://www.stomptokyo.com/popculture/>



It's the season for giving, and while you may know what YOU want, it's hard to figure out what THEY want!

Stop struggling! The **Pop Culture Gift Guide** features a wide range of unique gifts from the catalogs of **Amazon Books** and **Reel Movies**, the Internet's most trusted retailers of books, music, and movies. More than just a collection of links, though, the Guide is split into categories that will help you determine the right selection of gifts for your family and friends, and has detailed descriptions of each item.

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Don't forget to visit our **Truly Unusual** section, where we collect the strange and fascinating items that are perfect for that "hard to shop for" person on your list. We'll be adding more categories all through the remainder of November.

The perfect gift is waiting for you at the Pop Culture Gift Guide. Get online -- and start giving!

<http://www.stomptokyo.com/popculture/>



THE TYRANNY OF THE BLOCK

By Catherine Jones

A quilt is both more and less than the sum of its unassembled blocks. More, because you can sleep under it or hang it on the wall and call it art. Less, because, once the blocks get put together, some of the life goes out of them. They may interact visually to make a complex whole, but they no longer invite rearrangement, no longer function as an item of barter between quilters, no longer evoke so insistently their individual qualities and names.

A sense of drama and luck (sometimes bad luck) runs through the names of traditional quilt blocks. Wheel of Fortune, Steps to the Altar, Time and Tide, Storm at Sea, Drunkard's Path, Road to Oklahoma, Monkey Wrench, Road to California, Broken Dishes, Tangled Lines, Courthouse Steps, Crown of Thorns, Joseph's Coat: phrases like these beg to be fitted together into some ballad of fate and survival. But the physical blocks, once stitched in place, cease in some way to exist as blocks; they lose their verbal and historical associations and become mere fragments of a larger work. A tension exists between blocks per se and blocks as components of a quilt.

There are partisans of the block and partisans of the quilt. And also those who flit between the two camps, seeing quilts sometimes as aggregations of blocks, as expressions of the whole story-trading, block-swapping, advice-giving, cozy, semi-communal quilting subculture, and sometimes as detached works of art, as bed-sized paintings that happen (usually) to be made out of blocks. While a fascination with blocks -- with categorizing them, researching their history, devising, piecing, and trading them -- may go hand in hand with the urge to design whole quilts, there's no necessary connection between the two.

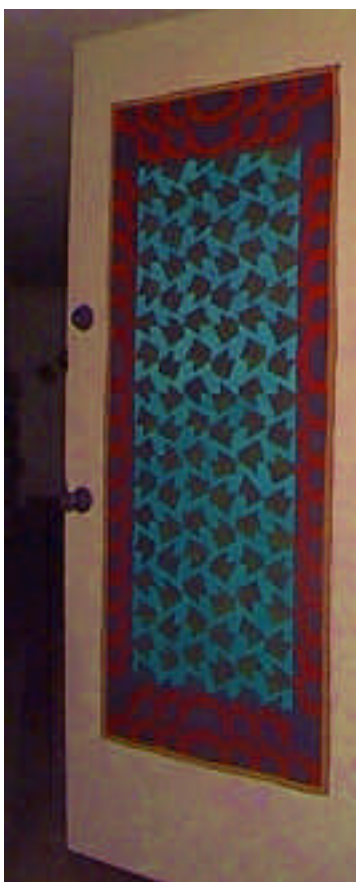
Maybe this is the place to admit that I've always felt like something of a gate-crasher in the world of block-based quilting. Not because I prefer, in general, the whole-cloth or free-form art quilt. Or because I don't value the stories and poetry of blocks. I'm not a barbarian who wants to burn the museums, lest the achievements of long-dead quilters inhibit creative effort today. (Painters have suggested, not always in jest, setting fire to the Louvre.) But I come to quilts with a certain exploitative gleam in the eye. I'd like to see what else could be done with them.

Restrictions can energize an art; people may work harder and more inventively when faced with an intractable medium or a rigid set of conventions. For this reason, among others, I'm not in any hurry to abandon straight seams or repeating rectangular blocks. But within these restrictions I'd like to do some exploring with a speed, ruthlessness, and freedom from tradition not encouraged by pencil-and-paper techniques or even by today's quilting software.

Except for their history, blocks in themselves don't interest me nearly so much as the way they interact, once placed together. Unfortunately, from my point of view, most methods of quilt design focus more on the isolated block than on the whole quilt. You pick a few blocks from somewhere or painstakingly draw them, arrange them in some layout (with or without a computer), and hope, blindly, for the best. If the overall effect falls short of what's wanted, you tinker with the result and try again. A slow, maybe comforting, procedure, but not the

only one possible.

In an age when a Pentium computer can cost less than a sewing machine, there's no technical reason for quilting software to limit itself to this approach. At the very least a computer program can randomly generate a blizzard of new block designs, arrange these into quilts,



Front door quilt, computer-generated design painted in oil.

and flash the results at a human viewer for rating; this person's responses can then feed back into the program to shape future rounds of machine-generated ideas. Even if a computer's suggestions prove unappealing they have at least some shock value. A painter trying to figure out what's wrong with a composition will turn the canvas sideways or upside down. Seen from this novel angle, flaws become more obvious and therefore easier to fix. In the same way, a computer's funny attempts at quilt



Traditional quilt design on computer-made (virtual) pot

design can nudge a weary human into doing something new.

Why do I feel I've committed some violation even to talk about this? Because, I suppose, there's no guarantee that whoever programs the computer will have any *a priori* interest either in cloth or in the history, lore and domestic roots of quilts. I guess there's a question of legitimacy here. Whenever an art form invented by one group gets taken up and elaborated by another, questions arise about who owns what and whether changes of tools and context are producing exciting or merely monstrous results. In fact, these questions come up -- and provoke fierce debate -- even when very close links exist between new-style and old-style variants of an art.

Consider, for example, painted pottery in the vari-

ous Native American pueblo traditions. Is it OK to copy traditional designs in modern commercially prepared paints? To put them on mass-produced slip-cast ware? What about blending old and new motifs? Or reviving extinct ones found on ancient clay shards? What about people of mixed or unrelated ancestry working with Native American imagery? In the quilting world such questions have appeared so far mostly in muted form, often in connection with the somewhat arbitrary division between "traditional" and "art" quilts. (I use those terms warily, knowing that they carry a political charge and defy easy definition.) So far non-quilters haven't done enough with quilts to set off any great disputes over who's an outsider or who owns what part of the quilting heritage.

But this could change. There's so much going on in quilts visually and, in an obscure way, mathematically, that the field seems ripe for the picking by art-oriented computer science enthusiasts. That this hasn't yet happened may be partly due to the social discomfort that goes with trying to function in the odd place where art, computers, and quilts come together. The three communities -- of artists, quilters, and programmers -- have, as far as I can see, different norms and values; it's hard to construct an identity that moves smoothly from one of these worlds to another. I know something about this; I've come to belong in some way to all three groups without proper credentials in any of them. Maybe the chief benefit of this uncomfortable position -- apart from the chance to coax some reluctant computer into designing a plausible quilt -- is the light it sheds on issues of legitimacy and border zones between the different subcultures.

I got to this place in an unexpected way. I bought a perfectly serviceable piece of quilting software and then, for reasons I'll get to in a moment, became so exasperated with the quilting-software industry (if that's the word for a tiny collection of friendly small businesses) that I decided to take up programming computers myself. Not for a living and not necessarily forever. I was too old and too committed to a low-budget art-making lifestyle even to think of professional programming. I couldn't find the time to spend whole years of my life working 60 or 80 hours a week on somebody else's ideas.

That doesn't mean, of course, that it didn't intrigue me to imagine having a skill known sometimes to command astounding amounts of money. It's startling to turn from the art and quilt magazines, with their listings of

juried shows where the exhibitor pays a fee, to the back pages of something like *Dr. Dobb's Journal*, full of employee recruitment ads pleading for programmers. I wondered, idly, how painting or quilting might change if conducted under the influence of venture capital.

Learning to program was hard; in fact, it was grueling. I set out like some madman hoping to climb Mount Everest barefoot. My whole preparation consisted of one class in a language called FORTRAN taken twenty-odd years earlier and a brief recreational fling in 1985 with another language called TurboPascal. (Programmers will understand the skimpiness of this background.) Shutting yourself up at home alone with a pile of books, a computer, and a burning desire to fabricate a new kind of quilt-design program written in C++ for Windows 95 -- this may be a cheap and focused way to learn programming or a high-risk radical cure for pre-menopausal blues, but I wouldn't lightly recommend it to anyone. I only made it through because I was so annoyed -- annoyed at the quilting software suppliers, annoyed at the image of quilting as a harmless feminine pastime, and annoyed at myself for having a bunch of ideas about quilts that I couldn't seem to express without waving my hands in the air.

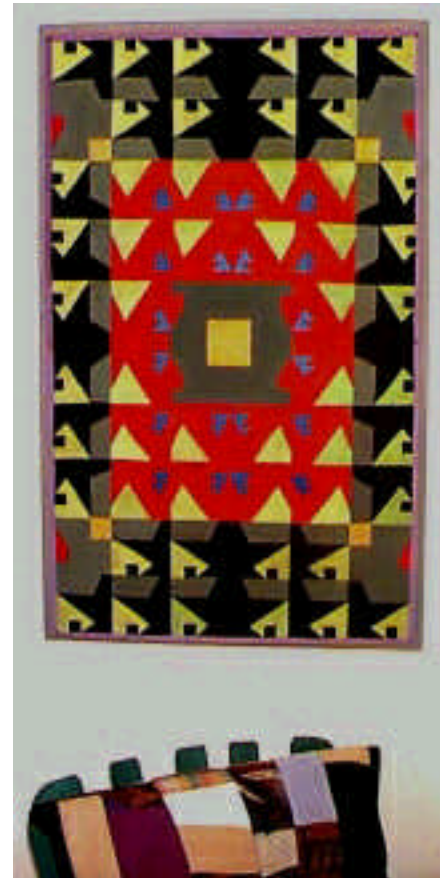
In retrospect I'd say I was suffering from what I now call the tyranny of the block. By this I mean that the quilt block, with all its historical associations and individuality and preciousness, occupies a very privileged place in the way we think about quilts and the way commercial software encourages us to design them. Blocks are a kind of collector's item. People accumulate stashes of block designs, which they pore over, savor, and organize; people collect blocks the way they collect fabric. Quilting software comes with big (and delightful) libraries of fabrics and blocks; it presents to the user a vision of quilt design as shopping on an unusually large budget. You pick up a few blocks and fabrics, customize them a bit and pull together a new look. Fun. Easy (once you master the quirks of whatever software you're using). And -- unless you actually make the quilt and use new fabric -- wonderfully light on the pocketbook. Recreational quilt design as shopping without guilt!

But some ancient Puritan or Freudian reality principle rises up in me to protest. Quilt design is work, and work can't be that easy. For one thing, the hard part of quilt design -- the part where we really could use some help from computers -- isn't the shopping or the poring over catalogs of blocks. It's stimulating, refining, and

wooing the intuition so that we can conjure up out of countless possibilities those shapes and colors will meld together to make a satisfying quilt. For another thing, it's ridiculous to hope for anything like a comprehensive or well-rounded inventory of blocks. The numbers involved are just too vast. How many different blocks can you devise using a basic nine-patch (3x3) grid, no

extra vertices, and at most three fabrics? I've no idea, but a quick calculation shows there to be at least a billion. (For more on this, see "Simple Nine Patches" on [page 7](#)). For better or worse, quilt design involves us in a brush with the infinite. That, among other things, is what makes it an art rather than a shopping expedition.

Maybe I should close, before I get too pompous, with the incident that -- more than anything else -- set me off on my programming quest.



Painting of computer-generated design with real patchwork pillow below

The company that sold me my quilting software sent me a flyer or newsletter with testimonials from a few satisfied customers. One of these customers mentioned losing some weight; engrossed in designing quilts, she'd skipped a meal or two. I found her comment endearing, but it also bothered me. It reminded me of those ethnic jokes you can get away with telling only if you belong to group in question. She could laugh about losing weight, but I didn't want to hear that from a software company. I wanted to be told their tools would make me more powerful, more capable of doing great things. Quilt design, as I see it, is worthwhile work. It's only incidentally -- and not very reliably -- about staying out of the

refrigerator.

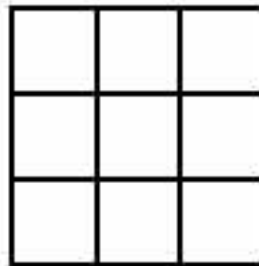
Recently I came across a comment that may be, in the computer-programming world, the equivalent of quilters' weight-loss jokes. It appeared in an essay by Eric Raymond titled "How to Become a Hacker." (He uses the term "hacker" in the positive sense to denote a public-spirited person who writes and shares useful and ingenious computer code.) "If you're attracted to hacking because you don't have a life," Raymond says, referring what he calls the Hacker/Nerd Connection, "that's

OK too -- at least you won't have trouble concentrating." You can take this comment a couple of ways. As a rueful admission by a programmer that his kind sometimes "don't have a life". Or as an assertion, masked by comedy, of the value of what they do. I'd like to hear more assertions like that by artists or makers of quilts. Maybe someone will say one day that being too thin or too fat is OK if, for some reason, it helps you make a good quilt. That kind of confidence will probably go hand in hand with overcoming the tyranny of the block.

SIMPLE NINE PATCHES: THE FIRST BILLION OR SO

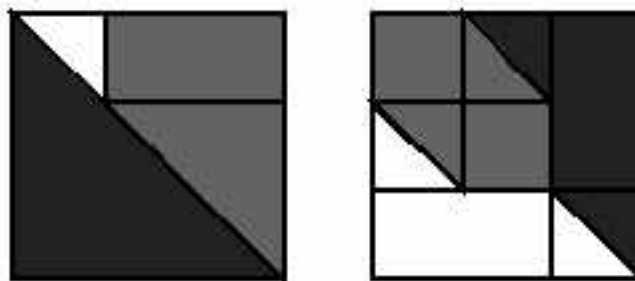
Suppose you want to design a patchwork block on a 3x3 grid using only straight lines, no extra vertices, and at most three fabrics. How many possibilities are there within these severe restrictions? Whatever the total number may be, it's not hard to come up with at least a billion.

The proof goes as follows:



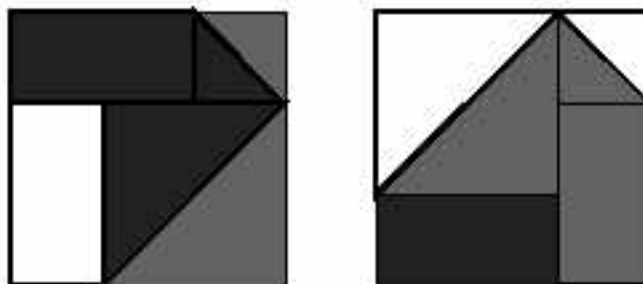
Basic
nine-patch grid

1. Consider first the nine component squares of the 3x3 grid. Each of these can be left whole and filled with any of the three fabrics (3 possibilities), divided by a right-slanting diagonal into two triangles filled with distinct fabrics (6 possibilities -- 3 fabric choices for the first triangle and 2 remaining choices for the second triangle), or divided by a left-slanting diagonal and similarly filled (another 6 possibilities). In other words, there are $3 + 6 + 6 = 15$ ways to assign fabrics to each of the nine component squares. The total number of block designs produced in this way is therefore 15 to the 9th power -- something in excess of 38 billion.



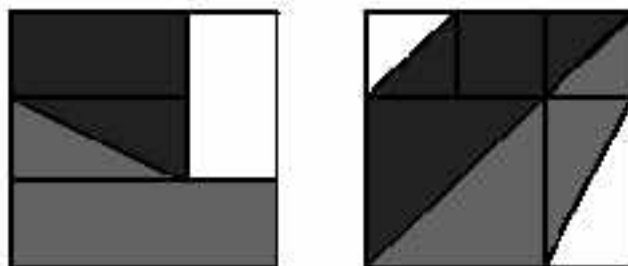
Examples of the first 38 billion

2. Of course, these designs aren't totally distinct. If A and B are two designs in the series, it may be possible to obtain B from A by applying a sequence of flips and rotations to A or by permuting its fabrics. In fact, each block may appear in our grand series in as many as (but not more than) 48 guises. Flipping and rotating a block yields up to 8 variations (fewer if the block contains internal symmetries), and reassigning the fabrics produces up to 6 versions (fewer if not all fabrics are used) of each variation. To ensure that we don't count twice what may be the essentially the same design, we'll want to divide our 38 billion plus examples by 48.



Designs that look different, but aren't, really

3. No need to worry, however. There are plenty more designs left in the simple tic-tac-toe grid. We turn next to those designs obtained by picking two adjacent squares out of the grid, dividing this 1x2 rectangle with a diagonal, filling the resulting triangles with distinct fabrics, and then assigning fabrics to the remaining 7 squares of the grid as in paragraph #1 above. It's not too hard to see that there are 12 ways of picking two adjacent squares out of a tic-tac-toe grid, 12 ways of dividing and assigning distinct fabrics to the 1x2 rectangle, and (as before) 15 ways of assigning fabrics to each of the 7 remaining squares. Thus there are $12 \times 12 \times (15 \text{ to the } 7\text{th power})$ -- something in excess of 24 billion -- designs produced by this second raid on the great storehouse of nine patches.



Examples of the next 24 billion

4. If we add this 24 billion to the original 38 billion and divide the total by 48 we come out, obviously, with a billion and plenty to spare.

If only it were so easy to figure out which of the billion blocks to use where!

Catherine Jones is a painter, quilter, programmer and iconoclast living in Berkeley, California. Some of her other essays can be found at

<http://planetpatchwork.com/vectors.htm>

She can be reached at cathjone@jps.net



THE QUILTBROKER

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THE TRAVELING QUILTER: QUILT SHOPS IN OHIO, KENTUCKY & TENNESSEE

By Lynn Holland

Our latest trip found us going in search of new and exciting quilt stuff, this time traveling north on I-75 out of Atlanta toward Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio. We had been yearning to visit the fabled Quilt Box in Dry Ridge, Kentucky (between Lexington and Cincinnati), ever since we had seen it featured in the *Quilt Sampler* magazine several years ago. After looking at the map, we decided to check out the Cincinnati quilt scene first and catch QB on our way back. Our first stop was at Creative Cottage, set in a charming area that has many nice shops in close proximity. (Lunch alert -- there are nice places to eat, too). Looking deceptively small from the outside, this shop is a double delight - the first floor is dedicated to quilting and the lower level houses cross-stitch!

Having recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, **Creative Cottage** is a very comprehensive source for the quilter and needleperson (6934 Miami Ave., Madeira, OH 45243, Tel. 513-271-2028). There is an emphasis on crazy quilting with some nice fancy fabric packets for sale. I was particularly taken with a crazy quilt jacket on display at the shop, and I still think of it often. The store has lots of batiks, a ton of doll patterns, and lots of tools and accessories for the quilt maker. The store sponsors a weekly charity quilt-in, with the products going to the local women and children's shelter. Last year, Creative Cottage donated over 300 quilts. The cross-stitch floor downstairs is an excellent source of supplies and patterns. I saw many unusual patterns and there are framed samples everywhere. Creative Cottage offers quilting and needlework classes in addition to a very friendly and helpful staff. Owner Marie Tsacalis truly loves the business and is at the shop most days.

With a name like **Ohio Star**, we had to

check out the next place on our list. Of course, we got minorly lost, but wound up turning around in a Skyline chili spot just in time for lunch. After lunch, there were more surprises -- Ohio Star was in the midst of closing/reopening, due to a change of ownership, and had just become (like that very week) the **Victorian Quilt shop**



St. Theresa Textile Trove is in a funky part of town in Cincinnati, but is one of the most interesting fabric stores we've ever visited.

(8556 Beechmont Ave., Cincinnati, OH, Tel. 513-474-9335). The clientele was offering quiet commentary on the politics of the quilt biz while we were there, but we

fix of cable TV. But after a quick diet coke and a minute to rest, Rob and I set out on foot to travel the five or six blocks to **St. Theresa's Textile Trove** (1329 Main St., Cincinnati, OH 45210, Tel. 513-333-0399).



Quilt Box owner Natalie Lahner enthusiastically participates in the management of the shop.

had the good fortune to meet the owner, who seemed enthusiastic about her new undertaking. Many features of the previous business were still in evidence. We particularly liked the large cubbies in the sizeable classrooms where students could leave stuff in between classes and not have to drag it back and forth each week. The samples hanging in the store were plentiful and impressive - I used one of their ideas when selecting the background for my jewel box quilt. True to the new name, Owner was wearing a lovely crazy quilt vest. I'm looking forward to visiting again when Victorian Quilt has had a chance to develop more fully its own personality.

After going to two quilt shops we were pretty tired and headed back toward our hotel, which was right downtown. The children were ready for their afternoon

Located in Over-the-Rhine, an area of storefront churches, failed restaurants, struggling galleries and multiple religious charities, St. Theresa's borders on a religious experience itself. The store is small and dark, but stuffed so full of gorgeous fabric, trinkets and embellishments that I went into textile overload. The stock is displayed in traditional, old-style dry goods fashion, with bolts wedged on shelves and ancient old display cases and counters holding more fabulous finds than your wildest imagination dare wish for. There are baskets full of beads, buttons, charms - you name it and if you're willing to dig, you'll probably find it. The fabric stock ranges from the standard to the sublime and exotic -- including some cut velvet that retailed for \$92 a yard. St. Theresa's is one of the most unusual shops in my



The grounds at The Quilt Box are so inviting, our 16-year-old actually got out of the car! Benjamin and Pamela fed the geese with food provided inside the shop.

memory -- so don't be wary of the odd location. If you're in Cincinnati -- put it at the top of your list.

Knoxville, TN, is about halfway between Atlanta and Lexington, where our son goes to college, and we had previously visited the off-the-beaten-path shop **Quilt Craft**, near there, opened by the current owner and her mother (Quilt Craft, 2315 Kimberlin Hgts. Dr, Knoxville, TN Tel. 423-573-0769). Located in the basement apartment of the family home, Quilt Craft was a "Mom and Sis" store until the death of the owner's mother. Since then, the daughter has run the store single-handedly. Quilt Craft makes the most of the basement apartment space, even displaying fat quarters atop



Lynn, meanwhile, took a shine to Tigger, who lives mostly in the shop.

the kitchenette stove. Quilt Craft owns the house next door, which is called Grandmother's Gallery. This is used as a gallery for quilt shows and to house visiting teachers. It would probably be a fabulous getaway place for a small group of retreating quilters!

Quilt Craft is clearly a labor of love. Its small but very carefully selected fabric collection, notions and quilt-related goodies reflect the family devotion to the art of quilting. It's definitely worth the drive down to the beautiful mountain country residential area where it's located.

Nearby, in toney Oak Ridge, is **Quilting Corner**, which we had tried unsuccessfully to visit several times. We had called over Labor Day weekend, but the owner was uncertain about being open and we decided not to gamble. This time we arrived at the shop a few minutes before the stated opening time of 10:00 a.m., but there was no sign of life. We pressed our noses against the glass to admire the antique chairs and the antique quilts in them, along with a great selection of the latest books on an old farmhouse table. Although we stayed around for a few minutes, checking out the arts center next door and the artisan's mall around the corner, at ten-thirty we decided to move on. The presence of the Soup Kitchen restaurant next door persuaded us to try to make one

more attempt on our return trip to Atlanta.

We had framed this trip around our burning desire to visit **The Quilt Box** in Dry Ridge, Kentucky, which is right off I-75 less than an hour south of Cincinnati (N. Hwy 467, B=PO Box 9, Dry Ridge, KY 41035, 606-824-4007). Although we really don't select our children's colleges based on proximity to quilt stores, it didn't hurt that our most recent freshman had chosen a college in Lexington, Kentucky. Lexington itself has the wonderful Quilter's Square, which offers fabulous fabrics both for quilts and fine handsewn garment enthusiasts. Quilters Square has a very long wall of wonderful wearable and doll patterns, an extensive book collection, and a very amiable staff.

But back to the main attraction. There are not enough words to laud the Quilt Box. To give you just a smidgen of appreciation for the place, I will tell you that my high school age son, usually disdainful and sullen when it comes to our quilt shop visits, willingly *got out of the car* when we stopped here.

The reason is, the Quilt Box is not just a quilt shop, it's a phenomenon. The first thing you need to know about it is that it's out in the country. Although the outlet malls have encroached on the Dry Ridge area, the exit for the Quilt Box (I-75 exit 159) is truly rural. Aside from a

couple of interstate gas stations and a couple of local restaurants, there's nothing there. We stopped at one of the stations and called the shop to get directions, which led us back across the freeway and three miles down a gravel country road to the Walnut Springs Farm where

the place. Outside, the clear owner, is a large peacock who was anxious on our visit to show off his shimmering tail.

The Quilt Box has lots of help, including Natalie, who was working the register when we were there. Live



The Quilt Box has three large rooms downstairs filled with fabric, notions, and patterns.

the shop is located.

Owner Natalie Lahner and her husband opened the shop fifteen years ago when they decided to distance themselves from the Cincinnati race and move out to the country. The shop is in a charming cottage, but the first thing you notice is the wide expanse of countryside across the lane, complete with a lake (and some ducks and geese to feed) and a five-hole pitch-and-putt golf course. There's more than one way to get a husband to drive with his wife down to the Quilt Box! Our teen-aged son found plenty to do feeding the ducks and skipping stones to keep him occupied while we were inside.

Inside the shop is roomy and crammed from floor to ceiling with bolts of fabric, notions, and books. Natalie's fabric tastes run mostly to the traditional (although the range of choices is mind-boggling). Arranged by color groups in several rooms, the bolts are accented by a variety of shop samples of dolls, quilts, and small projects. Raggedy Ann was posed fetchingly on a step ladder while we were there. Another denizen of the shop is Tigger, an big male orange tabby who thinks he owns

plants and flowers grace the counters, and the light from a large bay window makes the shop pleasant and easy to shop in. Fat quarters are charmingly displayed in an antique letter box and small scraps in a basket on the floor. Fabric and quilting tool prices run about average for a quilt shop. The shop also offers special accommodations for groups who want to visit, including catered box lunches. If the group is in a large tour bus, they will shuttle the group down from the main road.

We stayed at The Quilt Box for nearly two hours before we reluctantly

headed back south toward home. Before we left, we paid a dollar (in addition to our many other purchases) to receive "The Quilt Box News," a quarterly 16-page tabloid-style newsletter published by the store. The newsletter shows the same creativity as the store, with free patterns, pictures and stories about customers and staff, and the resident animals. The latest one has a picture of "Cackles," one of their four chickens, will "will climb right up into your lap when feeding." There is also a schedule of about 30 different classes each quarter. It is through this newsletter that I continue to maintain a fondness and feeling of closeness to this store more than 400 miles from my home. But I plan to visit again in November, having the excuse of Parents' Weekend at my son's college.

The next day on our way home, we decided we had the time to make one more attempt to visit the **Quilting Corner** in Oak Ridge (37 E. Tennessee Ave., Oak Ridge, TN 37830, Tel. 423-483-7778. It was later in the day, the shop was open and it turned out it was worth all the effort. Huge crocks house fat quarters, a farmhouse table

displays a great collection of books, a giant basket contains small fabric snips of quilter's candy. The store has a good assortment of patterns, wonderful Balis and batiks. Several beautiful Featherweights were for sale and Longabarger Baskets are displayed. There's a whole wall of mini-quilts/wall hangings, and the store has lovely old quilts and Santas ensconced in antique cabinets. Classes are offered, and the day we were there, a customer was debating if she could take classes on two con-

secutive days without making her family feel totally abandoned. I didn't pick up a copy of the newsletter because it was marked \$1, which seemed a bit steep after the Quilt Box had offered to mail a year's worth of theirs to me for the same price.

We had lunch at the Soup Kitchen, and drove happily home.



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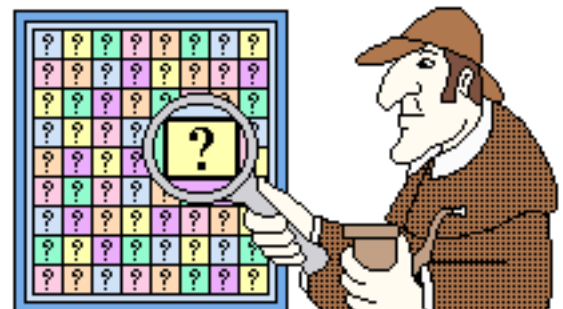
Norma can direct you to quilt shops in the area, plus the natural wonders located on the Olympic Peninsula. She can also plan a personal retreat for you and three quilting friends, or cross stitch buddies, or rubber stampers! You name it.

You are invited to visit the website for Greenhaven Enterprises, Quilt Retreats on the Olympic Peninsula, where you can check out Norma's quilts, learn more about Sequim, and of course, see Oliver.

You may email Norma at normah@olypen.com or call 360-681-0364 for more information.

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The Feedsack Club is delighted to announce that it will once again hold a conference concurrently with the Quilters Heritage Celebration in Lancaster PA on April 8 - 10 1999.

The conference continues to grow in size each year and has moved to the Holiday Inn at 521 Greenfield Rd, Lancaster PA, just down the street from the Quilters Heritage Celebration and across from the Tourist Bureau. The additional room at the new location means that we can offer even MORE exhibits, lectures and demonstrations as well as our Antique Quilt Show and Feedsack Memorabilia display.

Barb Garrett, a local quilt historian, will reprise her excellent lecture on the History of Quilting as Told Through Doll Quilts, with more than 50 doll quilts on display. Other lectures and classes are planned, including new products demonstrations - come and learn about Gridded Geese & Thangles. Events include the Show & Share, Raffles, a quilt contest, an auction, and, of course, vendors! Throughout the convention, look for buying, selling and trading of feedsacks and other fun stuff as well as door prizes. Quilt appraisals by AQS certified appraiser Deborah Roberts will also be available by appointment. For more information, E-mail baglady111@aol.com.

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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.

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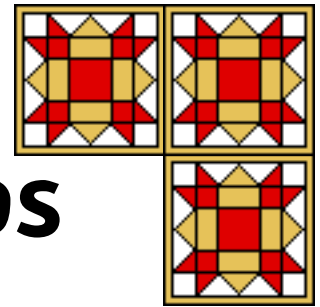
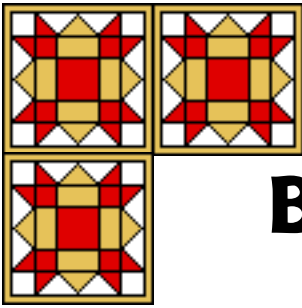
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QUILTER PROFILE

BETHANY S. REYNOLDS

Bethany S. Reynolds' new book from American Quilters' Society, "Magic Stack-n-Whack Quilts," has been a hot item on the quilting best-seller lists. At one point earlier this year, the book ranked as the third best selling title in [Amazon Books'](#) immense inventory. That's quite an accomplishment for any book, but particularly one for a niche market. The book continues to rank in Amazon's top 2,000 best sellers.

The premise of the book is that kaleidoscope quilts, infamous for their difficulty and the precision required, can be made by faster and easier methods than traditional template piecing. Bethany developed a technique for rotary cutting stacks of fabric in a certain way to create stunning designs almost magically.

How did this amazing phenomenon come to be? Bethany says it was because she was all wet: "Don't laugh . . . I come up with most of my creative ideas and solutions in the shower! Once the initial idea of stacking repeats and cutting all the necessary pieces had been worked out, the task was to come up with good designs to use with the technique. I eliminated a lot of possible designs because I felt the blocks were too tedious to piece, or would take so many identical repeats that the fabric requirements would be huge. The other important challenge was figuring yardages and

cutting directions, since fabric repeat lengths vary so much. It's no coincidence that each design in the book has a certain number of blocks; it was important to make sure quilters would get enough blocks out of the stack for the project, regardless of their fabric choice."

Bethany's exploration of the mysteries of kaleidoscopes began with a general interest in pattern and design. "I love pattern and graphic design, whether in new quilts or antique ones.

Long before I tried quilting, I did some silk screening and block printing - anything to put a pattern in repeat! Fortunately, quilting is less messy. And of course I get inspiration from fabrics. Certain fabrics make me want to race to my sewing room!

"I got started quilting because I had a fabric store and wanted to offer classes. There is a quilting tradition in my family, too. I have a '30s quilt made by my father's grandmother, and several nineteenth century quilts and tops from my mother's side. My prize possession is

a doll quilt made by my great-grandmother in the 1870's, with big childish quilt stitches, but pieced with some of the tiniest scraps I've seen."

The designs of Bethany's quilts are not limited to kaleidoscopes. "I like a lot of contrast in my work," she says. "Sometimes that means light/dark contrast, other



Detail of "Some Heads Are Gonna Roll" ©1995 Bethany S. Reynolds. Centers don't quite match? Here's one solution!

times it's color contrast, but one way or another, it has to have some 'punch' to make me happy! I make many types of quilts besides Stack-n-Whack designs, including paper pieced and conventionally pieced designs and ma-



"Lonja the Sea Monster," 1998 Based on a drawing by son Sam Reynolds, age 6.

chine applique. Using a variety of techniques and designs helps keep my creative spirit fresh. Often what I learn will carry over to the next project, even if the style or technique is very different.

"When it comes to techniques, I'm mostly self-taught. I've taken classes with many teachers, and learned something from each one - about teaching as well as quilting. Dot Krueger of Plymouth, MA gets a big 'thanks' for getting me started doing free motion quilting."

Asked about computers, Bethany says she uses hers in her design work, but doesn't use a quilt design pro-

gram. "I use my Mac for all my design work. I work in Macromedia FreeHand. It's a very powerful graphics and layout program. It would be overkill for a lot of quilters, and it doesn't have the special features some of the quilt software has, like figuring yardage. But I'm able to do very detailed illustrations for my patterns and books, and can combine the text and graphics more easily than I could with the quilt programs."

As for the internet, Bethany is also active there. "I subscribe to QuiltBee, and check regularly at a lot of quilt sites. Keeping in touch with other quilters on-line has been a lot of fun and very helpful to me. I often test new projects using on-line 'quilt lab rats.' The Internet is revolutionizing quilting - not to mention human communications!" Bethany has recently established her own website at the World Wide Quilting Page, at

<http://ttsw.com/Artists/BethanyReynolds/BethanyReynolds.html>

You can see more pictures of her quilts and read about the various workshops she teaches.

For future endeavors, Bethany has a few things in mind: "I'm currently working on a new book for AQS, though it probably won't be released until Spring 2000. It features LeMoyné Star variations with interchangeable settings - sort of a 'Chinese take-out' approach. Some of the designs involve paper piecing, and there are no set-in seams in sight! I'm teaching workshops in these designs now, and they've been very well received by quilters who love this traditional block, but not the traditional way of piecing it! And yes, there will probably be a sequel to 'Magic Stack-n-Whack' down the road. I'm storing up design ideas for that!"

You can read a review of Bethany's "Magic Stack-n-Whack Quilts" at

<http://planetpatchwork.com/bookbriefs3.htm>

and you can purchase a copy at a 20% discount through the Planet Patchwork Quilters' Bookstore at:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1574327046/planetpatchworkA/>



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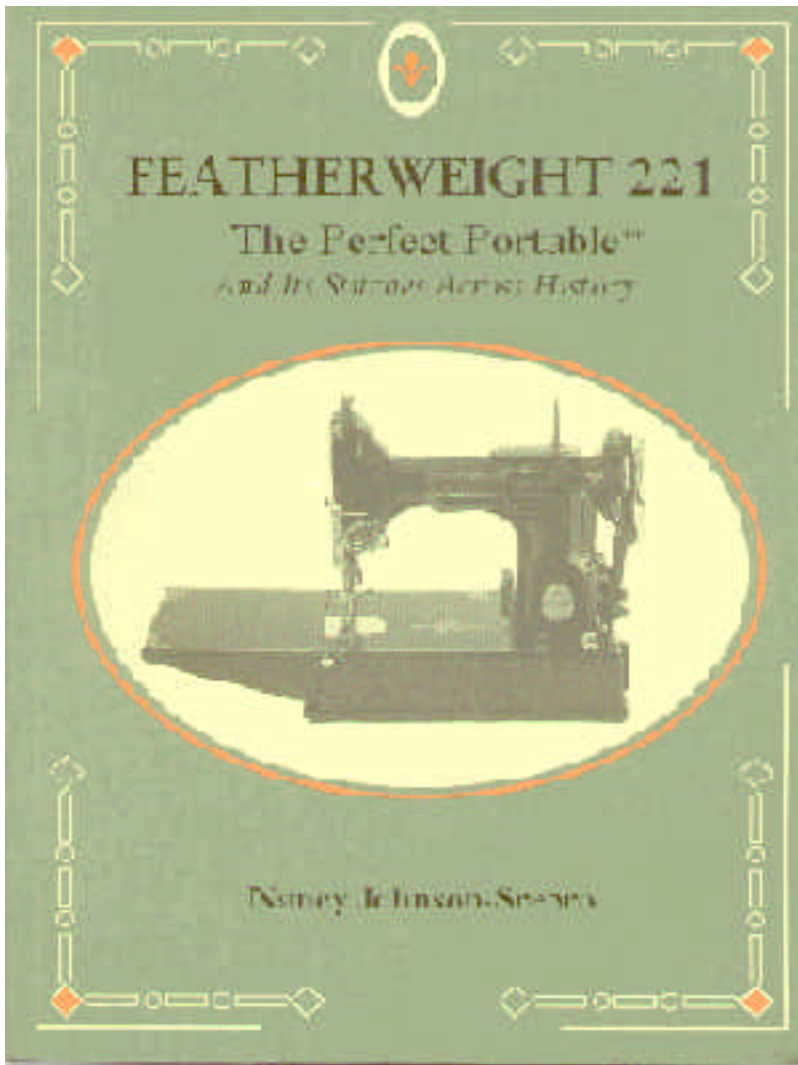
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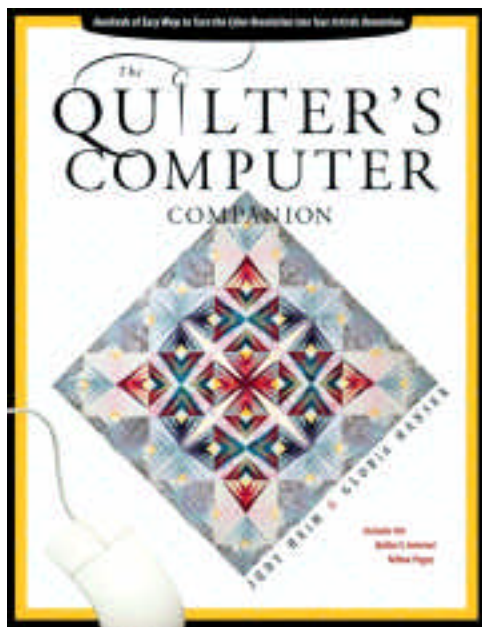
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The Virtual Quilt

A Newsletter for
Computing Quilters

Editor and Publisher: Robert Holland, Decatur, GA

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