

My Quilting Journey

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I grew up learning many fiber arts - knitting, crocheting, sewing, embroidery - that were mostly self taught. When I joined the church, my crafting was put to the side except for the occasional crocheted baby blanket. I'd stash my project under the MFT van seat and manage to complete a few rows at a time or late at night.

It was after I was married that my quilting journey began with a casual comment by my sister-in-law Barb. She has several quilts in her home and, one day, she mentioned that she had always wanted a schoolhouse quilt made with only two colors, red and white.

In my mind, I thought, "What could be so hard? It's been years but I know how to sew. Choose a pattern, cut out the fabric, and sew the pieces together. Yes, it would take some time but, a piece of cake, I can do it and surprise my sister-in-law." I asked Barb, "What size?" (More about that later.)

I bought some material to practice and, after several attempts, my roof peaks and chimneys would not align. I learned that quilting can be unforgiving; accurately cut pieces and perfect ¼-inch seams are a must. "Measure twice, cut once" - Any jeweler, carpenter, or knowledgeable quilter will tell you that! With tears of frustration, I shoved my pieces in a drawer.

Was it one year later? Five years? I don't recall, but when Barb was turning 60, I wanted a special present for her. I dug out the schoolhouse project and asked my spiritual daughter, Laura Esquilin, for quilting lessons. I also asked my husband and brother-in-law if they could recall what size quilt Barb wanted. The consensus was queen-size, about 7 by 8 feet. That meant 42 pieced schoolhouse squares, or blocks as they're called, plus border stripes. While working full-time. (Big breath.) Okay.

After much sewing, ripping, and sewing, I made headway, some blocks more perfect than others. I did not redo as many seams as Laura would have recommended, but gradually, it took shape, though it got harder and harder to push the material through my tiny machine. My husband and daughter were amazingly supportive because I totally dominated our dining room table, the only work surface in our small apartment. Material billowed all over the floor, fabric strips covered a side table, and the ironing board was always up. The family was relegated to eat and study in the living room for months.

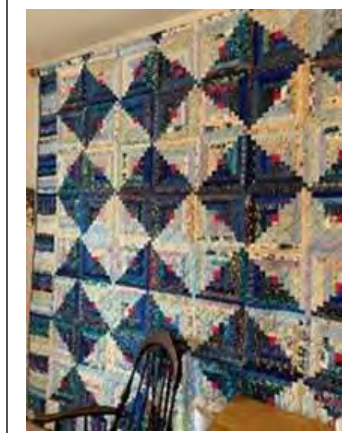
When it came time to actually quilt it, that is, to decoratively stitch together the top, batting and back, I gave up and used a professional. When she took a look at my project, she was shocked: "This is your first quilt?!"



Here is the quilt right after I presented it to Barb. Later, I asked her, "By the way, what size quilt did you want?" "A wall hanging." Agh! I could have made a decorative quilt with four blocks of schoolhouses instead of 42!

Oh well, I learned a lot and fell in love with the craft. The quilt now hangs in her hallway.

Did I learn from my mistakes and tackle only small projects to develop my quilting skills? No. My next project was a log cabin quilt with more than 2,100 pieces.



I had lived with this mistake for several years. Finally, this winter, with help from my sister-in-law, we removed all the striped border and undid the mismatched row. I patiently reassembled and rebound the quilt. It looks so much better, don't you think?

From the removed striped border, I made pillow shams for a custom headboard.



Over the years, I have made gifts for others, trying out new patterns on quilts. And yes, I now make smaller projects, such as small wall hangings, tablecloths or runners, lap quilts, and pillows. I've dabbled in applique, too.

A fun part of this hobby is having John choose fabrics with me. He loves working with color, I value his opinion, and we have fun doing the planning and shopping. This has become a wonderful, shared activity for us. We also enjoy attending quilt shows, enjoying the feast of colors and creativity and doing our own Williams' critiques. I am grateful for John's support and enjoyment of my crafting.

A hobby or hobbies are a great way to calm the spirit, relieve stress, and meet people. When I am crafting, John says that our home feels like home.

Here is my most recent project, a patchwork quilt with stars and a patchwork pillow from the scraps.



And, throughout the last two years of COVID, I made and donated more than 200 masks. (May they soon be a relic of the past!)



Gotta go now - my latest project is calling to me. God bless you and your families!