

Breitbarth, Linda - September, 2006

Linda Breitbarth

Quiltmaker Story

San Francisco, CA

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1. & 2. . I was born and raised in San Francisco. I have a graduate business degree, (an MBA in Finance) and have worked in both the for profit financial sector and in the non profit sector in a health and human services agency. Most recently, I took time out of paid work to care for my parents. Now that both my parents have died, I expect to return to paid employment soon.

3. I have always lived in San Francisco with the exception being when I lived at school in Los Angeles or the East Bay. I am sure San Francisco has had the major impact on my life. I am a fog child. I am used to interacting with a variety of people. I have always had the advantage of being able to see many art exhibits. The ability to see visual art has had an impact on my quilting. The physical beauty of Northern California has also influenced me. The Pacific Ocean, the trees of the Sierras, the mountains of the Sierras and San Francisco Bay have given me an eye for simple, elemental beauty.

4. Listening to my great Aunt Helen (she was my maternal grandfather's sister) talk about family history. She told me that my great-great grandmother had established one of the first women owned businesses in San Francisco. My great-great grandmother had opened a dressmaking shop to support herself and her family while her husband, my great-great grandfather was off at the gold fields. She gave me a sense of who I was in relation to who had come before. She greatly valued learning and education. She was also a fine seamstress with a great talent for sewing. Spending time with Aunt Helen greatly influenced my life.

5. My earliest memories of quilts came from staying overnight with my maternal grandmother. The bed, on which I slept, my mother's childhood bed, had a quilt on it that my great-grandmother (my grandfather and my Aunt Helen's mother) had made for my mother. My great grandmother was a quilter and like her mother and daughter was a fine seamstress. After my Aunt Helen died, (I was about 17) my mother inherited a floral appliqué quilt that my great-great grandmother had made. My mother had also inherited a brown/red patchwork quilt made by my maternal grandmother's grandmother soon after she had crossed the plains in a covered wagon to California. I loved all of the family quilts. I loved them so much that I decided to take an introductory quilt class just before the founding of the San Francisco Guild. I invited my mother, Millie Breitbarth to come along. We took that first class together. She went on to make many beautiful quilts. My

mother has had a great influence on my quilting. She died last year. I miss her tremendously.

6. I made my first quilt soon after the founding of the San Francisco Guild. Up until that quilt, I had only done small pieces such as potholder and squares.

7. I love and admire all quilts. I personally favor piecing over appliqué. My mother and I had a joke. I was the piecer and she was the appliquer.

8. Yes I have. Quilts and quilt making have sustained me through this last year of tremendous grief after my mother's death. Having her quilts helps me to know that she will always be with me. Working on a quilt that she and I designed for my nephew (her grandson) has helped me to work through some of my grief. I don't know how I would have been able to get through this very difficult period of my life if it weren't for quilts, quilting friends and quilting.

9. I don't remember how many quilts I have made. I have personally kept a few. Most have been given away to family for special events. Mom and I worked together on many family baby quilts.

10. I have never sold any of my quilts. I have worked on Guild outreach charitable quilt projects.

11. Yes, my environment is filled with quilts. Other than family quilts, I don't collect quilts that others have made. I have participated in block and fabric exchanges in the past although I have not done so very recently.

12. I, like all quilters, love fabric. I both buy fabric for a particular project and also just buy fabric because I like it.

13. Yes. I have participated in making the Guild's raffle quilt and have participated in making a quilt with a group from the Guild for the St. Anthony Foundation.

14. I have taken many quilt making classes. One teacher who influenced me greatly was Mary Whitehead. Mary told all her students that they could make a quilt. It didn't matter if you thought quilt making was beyond your ability. She told you that you could do it. I always think of Mary when I run into a difficult problem with one of my quilts. I hear Mary telling me, "Linda, you can do this." Caroline Lieberman is another teacher who has been a constant in my life, teaching me the basics, over and over.

15. I have been a volunteer teacher of children's quilt classes at the Tenderloin Recreation Center.

16. I have entered quilts I have made at the Guild Quilt Show. The quilt that I worked on in the small group is on permanent display at a St. Anthony Foundation residence for women.

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17. The only ribbons my quilts have won are for participating in the Guild Show.
18. I don't have any other recognition to share.
19. I have not written any articles or books on quilting.
20. Continue to do what you love. Follow the passion of quilting. Quilting will bring you joy and sustain you through the difficult periods of your life. It will also enrich your life through wonderful friendships.