

Cleary, Peggy

Peggy Cleary
Quiltmaker's Story
San Francisco, CA.
received July 17, 2009 via email



Quiltmaking skipped a generation in my family. When I was growing up (I was born in 1951), we had two quilts, one made by each of my grandmothers. The one made by my paternal grandmother was the “fancy” one, because it was made with all new, solid colored fabric, quilted with feathers, and had lots of white spaces. The one made by my maternal grandmother was all prints, made of scraps from aprons and dresses, and quilted $\frac{1}{4}$ inch inside the edges of each piece. Instead of blocks, it was an overall pattern of squares and 8 pointed stars. I loved to lie under that one and gaze at all the different designs. Alas, it wore out and my mother discarded it.

I started to learn to sew at age 6. My mother sewed almost all my and my sister's clothes, and did many other crafts as well, but never was interested in quilting. When I was in high school, a couple of years after the death of my mom's aunt Grace, we were invited to visit her son and take home some keepsakes Grace had left behind. Apparently Aunt Grace quilted avidly herself and hosted quilting bees at her home. We girls each received a twin sized 30's quilt. There were quite a few unfinished tops, and we were encouraged to take them, but we didn't yet have a quilter in the family (although I was interested), so Mom insisted we leave them. (I just hope a quilter picked them up at the Goodwill.)

Fast forward 15-plus years, and I am working at Children's Hospital on Sacramento street. Wow—San Francisco Fabrics is only a dozen blocks away! I've taken various classes there, and saw that they also had quilting classes. I enrolled in a Log Cabin Quilt In A Day class with Caroline Lieberman, and I was hooked. Before long I had made three Log Cabin baby quilts. After having my 2 daughters, Susan Atkielski, a Quilt Guild member, invited me to join Sonja Lee Barrington's community college quilting class, and took me to a guild meeting.

I entered my first quilt show the following year. Susan introduced me to the Santa Clara County Fair, where I won a ribbon for appliqué. I was on a roll. From 1991 onward, I

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attended every QuiltAway retreat and entered something in every SFQG show. At first, all my pieces were hand quilted, though later I did more machine quilting. I find hand quilting relaxing, but machine quilting sure is faster.

After I'd been trained as a leader trainer by the girl scout council in the late 90s, Katrina Lamken, Susan Schwarting and others talked me into teaching quilting classes at Gretchen Nelson's shop, Black Cat Quilts, which I enjoyed very much. I've also taught at Bolt's End Fabrics in Castro Valley, and at Girl Scout Training conferences, and done quilting projects with children in school classrooms, scout troops, and the San Francisco Girls Chorus.

My most recent projects have been queen sized wedding quilts for my nephew (2008) and niece (2009) in Wisconsin. They are the largest quilts I've ever made, and it was a challenge quilting them on my home machine, but I do prefer to do the whole project myself from start to finish. Perhaps I will get long arm lessons from Karen Reiter.

I have enjoyed all my time in the Guild. (I think I joined in 1992). It has been amazing to meet and listen to so many nationally and internationally known quilters and authors, and I have made many good friends. The speakers, the teachers, and the friends have all been sources of inspiration, and it's been fun to embroider show ribbons, take down quilts after a show, etc.

My head is full of plans for upcoming projects. Two baby quilts are due soon, and I have quite a few projects started in classes that I'd like to finish.

I do have a room of my own to quilt in, but it's very crowded! I use a Bernina 930 machine (1984), though I also have my mother's 1952 Necchi, a BabyLock serger, and a treadle machine.

Both of my daughters have been bitten by the quilting bug, so it's not skipping a generation this time. Each of them is making a twin bed quilt this year (2009), though they are very different from each other: one is a pieced tessellating pinwheel and the other is a picnic, embellished with crocheted three dimensional food! My husband doesn't come to quilt shows or fabric stores, but he enjoys sleeping under the final product.

rec'd 7/17/2009