



From: "Mary Fischer" <mfischer@fishberywhimsies.com>

To: <wongyen@comcast.net>

Subject: Finally, you get my quilting autobiography

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I've been moving the note about sending this info to you for long enough – Mary Fischer-Boyd, Daly City, California, 2005

- 1. Tell us a little about yourself, work and family** – My father (Edwin Fischer) was an officer in the US Air Force and very interested in mathematics, his father was a commercial artist, my mother (Cecilia Fischer) was a musician and there are a lot of teachers on both sides of the family. Both grew up in Illinois. Appreciation of the arts, education and a do-it-yourself mindset were some of the “themes” I grew up with. My dad once made a working television from a mail order kit and there is a prevailing belief that most things are possible with the right tools and instructions. My mother played several instruments and taught music privately and at a community college. I have one brother who does programming work for the city of Modesto.
- 2. Describe your work experiences** - I've done clerical office support work for many years (file clerk, data entry, accounts payable, secretary, supervisor) and graduated to computer support (hardware, software, servers, phones, network) for a large corporation.
- 3. Where have you lived and has it influenced your life?** – Since my dad was in the Air Force we moved around a bit. I've lived in Texas, Michigan, Guam (1975-76) and we settled in Atwater in the central valley of California in 1976.
- 4. What other events have influenced the direction of your life.** – My mother died when I was in my early 20's. I learned to not take anyone or anything for granted and try very hard to appreciate the people in my life while they are around.
- 5. Describe your earliest memories of quilts and /or quiltmaking, other sewing or needlework experiences, person or people who have influenced your quilting.** – I remember visiting my mother's parents in their Illinois farmhouse and there was a double-wedding ring quilt on the bed I slept on (found out the pattern name much later) and I'm told there were several women on both sides of my family that were obsessed with sewing and handwork. We had crocheted doilies from “Aunt Netty” scattered about our house and I have some embroidered dish towels on them made by another relative. I don't remember when exactly I started sewing but do know I'd always liked doing crafty things. I remember doing the Girl Scouts Brownie cross stitch sampler in 1975. My mother made most of my and my brothers clothes when we were small using a Singer featherweight (which I still have) and I learned to machine sew on that in 1976. We lived in Guam at that time and I started with doll clothes. My first piece of clothing was this really hideous Muumuu style dress made from a blue and white large floral print. It

had lace on it too! My mother got a Singer Futura II in the late 70's and eventually turned over all her sewing stuff to me as I was making clothes and dolls by that time (high school). In 1983, I visited a great aunt, Elizabeth Warren in Ithaca, New York and she was taking apart a bunch of fabric squares in order to put them in a more pleasing pattern. I was very interested in what she was doing and she gave me one of her 3 quilting books, 101 Patchwork Patterns by Ruby McKim, which I still have. I gave making my first quilt a try in 1988 from a book and then local community college was offering some quilting classes at night from a very nice woman from Michigan. I don't recall her name but she was an excellent teacher. She showed us a variety of techniques and how to draft patterns properly. I then started looking for more quilting classes and went to the West Coast Quilters Conference for several years. I took a class from Sharee Dawn Roberts on machine appliqué and learned a lot about texture from her. I moved to San Francisco in 1989 and joined the San Francisco Quilts guild shortly thereafter and found a hotbed of activity. Another group I was lucky enough to join was started by Joyce Gross and meets in the Point Bonita YMCA camp in the Marin headlands for a week every year. Some of the people who have influenced me there were Ann Merrill, Doreen Speckman and Barbara Brackman. Barbara and her interest in historical quilts have led me in directions I never would have explored on my own. I also like to crochet and explore other types of needlework such as embroidery and lace making.

6. **When did you make your first quilt - .** In 1988, I had my first real job and was living in Clovis, California and I decided I was going to make a pillow from one of the patterns in the book she had given me, the King's Crown block. I made patterns from cardboard and drew on the fabric and cut the pieces out. This seemed kind of small so I made a few more blocks then made some filler blocks as this really neat design started emerging. I did this all by hand and sewed it during my work breaks. Well Ruby's book was written for a much more experienced quilter than I was and I ended up making up my own techniques and while the design of this quilt was pleasing the technique was rather rough.
7. **Describe your favorite quilts, the type of patterns and designs you use, any special techniques. why and who the quilts were made for.** I like quilts with lots of different types of fabrics in them and usually tend to use very classic and geometric block patterns though I do like to appliqué also. I've made a lot of different types of quilts. One of the things I like about quilt making is that there are so many techniques and styles one can try out. I usually machine piece and quilt my quilts and make most of them because I'm interested in the fabric, the pattern, color or some idea is buzzing around my head. Most of my quilts are made for my own enjoyment and I have a difficult time parting with them if I'm not making them for a specific person.
8. **Have you ever used quilting to help you through a difficult time in your life?** Not really.
9. **Throughout your quilting experience, how many quilts have you made? To you make quilts for others, family, or to celebrate events?** I took an inventory of all the quilts in my house this year and I've made at least 100. I've made quilts for most of my family and some of my friends. I mostly make them for me.
10. **Do you donate or sell your quilts?** I have made quilts for various charities and have just now offered a few of my quilts for sale.

Fischer-Boy

11. **Is your home decorated with quilts? Do you receive or collect quilts that others have made? Do you share blocks? Exchange fabric?** My house is pretty much a quilt show. I've run out of wall space for more and now rotate them. I have a few quilts made by other people given to me as gifts. I used to exchange blocks and fabric with others but found I wasn't pursuing my own work as much so I don't do that as often anymore.
12. **Do you select fabric for a particular project or because you like it?** I usually buy fabrics because I like them but occasionally will buy a fabric to fit a project if I don't have anything on hand that will work.
13. **Have you participated in group quilt making activities?** I've made a few quilts with groups but really prefer making my own. I do belong to a small sewing group and we meet quarterly and sometimes make the same type of thing.
14. **Have you taken quilt making classes? From who? What techniques did you learn?** I've taken a variety of quilting classes since I started quilting and most lean towards technique classes now. See question 5 a little more detail.
15. **Do you teach quilt related classes? Where?** I've done a few demonstrations but haven't taught any quilting classes.
16. **Do you enter quilts you have made in quilt shows or display them in public i.e. guilds, museum, galleries, fairs, public buildings?** I've entered quilts in several guild shows (SFQG and the Marin show) and have had a few displayed in the Pacific International Quilt Festival.
17. **What specific ribbons, awards or prizes have your quilts earned?** I've won a few ribbons from the San Francisco Quilters guild shows: 1998 - 1st place Traditional, Medium, "Doggy Mountain"; 2001 - 1st place medium traditional machine quilted, "Point Bonita Star"; 2001 - 3rd place hand appliqué, "Happy Birds"; 2003 - 2nd place traditional small machine quilted, "Bettina's Revenge".
18. **What other public recognition have you received for your quilt making?**
None really.
19. **Have you written articles, patterns or books related to quilting?** No, I just offer my opinion to others when asked!

[[Back](#)]