

Meet Sharon Hale

by Sue Willows-Rasnikov

The profile this month is on Sharon Hale. In 1972, her daughters bought Sharon a Singer sewing machine to congratulate their mom for graduating community college. Little did they know that their mom would be hooked on quilting after her first sampler quilt class with Bonnie Anderson.

When Sharon says, "I work so I can support my quilt habit," she's speaking of the fabrics and battings for the dozens of quilts she makes and gives away annually. Sharon reached her goal of making and giving away 2000 quilts years ago. She's almost completed another thousand quilts which have homes in hospitals, community centers, and schools. Her minister calls it "Sharon's quilt ministry," and it has opened cultural doors in Kenya, Italy, and throughout the United States, as well as won her the award for The Woman of the Year in Pacifica. Sharon sews in the back of her classroom at El Camino High School in South San Francisco. The administration hired her to teach Special Education students, and the students believe they are learning math, science, and government in her class. She does all that, but what she also teaches is self-confidence, responsibility, self-reliance, creativity, stress management, learning strategies, metacognition, social skills, and compassion. And she does all this on a 54 inch by 54 inch quilting frame that she shares with students in the back of her classroom. Not all of her students are eager to attend high school. She often has to "go out looking for my kids" to bring them back to school. She has gang members who would rather be on the streets, students living with their families in cars, students born with fetal-alcohol syndrome, some with a severe learning or emotional disability. So what do all these students have in common? They all learn to adjust, adapt, and understand life while making a quilt for someone else.

Sharon completed her Teaching Credential at San Francisco State University when she was forty years



old. She has been involved with service projects through most of her life. She knows the more she gives, the more she gets. Thus she teaches her students to get the most out of life by giving. When it comes to giving, Sharon has a huge heart. Last year alone Sharon made more than 85 quilts for our Community Outreach Program. Her "quilt ministry" includes teaching and coordinating elementary school children to sew their own quilts. In fact, every elementary school in South City has one of her community quilts hanging on a wall. She helps boy scouts, girl scouts, and basketball teams earn money by having the children sell raffle tickets to a quilt she has made for them. Faculty and staff all look forward to their own quilt from her. While listening to books-on-tape, Sharon makes quilts for an exchange project in Italy as well as for our San Francisco community. Her donations extend to the Navaho Reservation in Utah, Baptist Missions in Japan, summer church camp projects, and the cancer ward in Seton Hospice.

Quilting has taught her much about cultures, people and history. She knows not to quilt or knit white sweaters for Kenya (they think of white as shrouds for the dead). History prepared her for having one of her own quilts buried with a friend in Oregon (pioneers used to cut off a piece of the quilt and bury it along the Oregon Trail). And Sharon knows that "going back to the quilting frame to tie knots" or to "pull the batting apart" will ease the violent temper of a student who says to her, "Why do you still like me? I don't even like myself." Quilting has been a cornerstone of her life.

Sharon and her husband, Alan, have been married for 46 years, have five children of their own and have been foster parents to many. She's been a member of San Francisco Quilter's Guild for ten years and has been passing on the quilting secrets for decades.



Sharon F. Hale, the Quilt Lady, passes



April 17, 1938 to February 1, 2008

On Feb. 1, Sharon Hale, Pacifica's favorite quilt lady passed away at her home in Pacifica. Her family had been caring for her during her last two months of hospice care. Sharon fought a long battle with colon cancer. Sharon was born in Seattle and moved to Pacifica in 1952.

Sharon decorated our world with over 4,000 quilts, hundreds of baby blankets, and thousands of other items she made with love. From babies to athletes, homeless people to newlyweds, Mom would brighten their world with a gift she made especially for them. Rarely would Sharon have been seen in public without some kind of knitting or quilting project!

Sharon retired in 2003 after teaching at El Camino High School for 20 years. Prior to that she taught at Baden, Pacific Manor, Oceana, Sharp Park, and Oddstad Schools. She was amazing in her ability to motivate her students. She touched the lives of so many students, parents, and peers.

Community service had always been a priority in her life and she was actively involved with Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, the American Legion, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Mizpah Fellowship, San Francisco Quilt Guild Community Outreach, Lucille Packard Children's Hospital, and so many more. Over the years, Sharon had been presented many awards in recognition of her compassion and service.

Sharon was the beloved wife of Allan. They have been married for an incredible 52 years, after marrying in their teens. They met at Jefferson High School. She is survived by her sister, Carol Sublett of Davis. Al and Sharon have five children: John Hale, Jeanne (Jim) Matysiak, Janice (Chuck) Key, Nancy (John) Bishop, and Rich (Christine) Hale. She also leaves behind thirteen grandchildren: Ashley Matysiak, Anthony Cefalu, Nicole Cefalu, Kendra Key, Colette Matysiak, Sean Hale, Shannon Cefalu, Christopher Hale, Tim Hale, Sabrina Hale, Jenna Hale, Kelli Bishop, and Jaklyn Bishop. We can't begin to count how many others have called this wonderful woman Mom or Grams.

A private family burial will be held followed by a public memorial service to be held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Saturday, March 8, at 2 p.m. The family asks that in lieu of flowers that donations be given to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 1125 Terra Nova Blvd., Pacifica, CA 94044 or Mizpah Fellowship, 752 Serena Drive, Pacifica, CA 94044.