



MARY WHITEHEAD

Mary was certainly known as the most prolific quilting teacher in the San Francisco Bay area. Before she passed away in 1997, she had taught quilting for over twenty five years – sometimes offering six to nine classes each week in Burlingame, Redwood City, Menlo Park, Moffit Field, Fort Mason Art Center. She was known to finish piecing an entire quilt top with each class session. She was a favorite teacher who could teach quilting to anyone. Her favorite phrase of encouragement to beginners was, "It's so easy!"

She was a self-described "traditional quilter with a contemporary edge." She had been quilting for over fifty years and encouraged her students to achieve success by completing their projects. She offered her own innovations and short-cuts and stressed basic skills instead of pushing perfection. As a student's expertise increased, more emphasis was placed on the quality of workmanship, attention to detail, and overall artistic merit.

Mary designed a new quilt for each class she taught. She self-published several booklets on her approach to drafting the "*Mariner's Compass*" pattern and the *Gordian Knot*. She had a special interest in machine piecing, based on mathematical relationships. Her methods for fast piecing reduced the amount of time necessary to complete traditional quilt patterns. She also encouraged the use of diagonal block settings and provided simple formulas which determined the number of blocks needed to fill any given space.

To see the progression of her work, it began with a "Sampler Quilt." From there, she continued with a variety of approaches: "Medallion Sampler," "Sampler in Stripes," "Modular Quilt," "Combining Blocks to form an Overall Mosaic" and originally designed blocks based on the traditional look. Mary was continually inspired by the simple beauty of traditional quilt patterns that link her to her American heritage. She often delved into the history of known blocks, block names and designs. Mary was among the nominees of the First Annual Teacher of the Year award given by *The Professional Quilter* magazine in 1985.

[Information from SFQG "Teaching, Learning & Beyond," July 26-27, 1986 Quilt Show Program. Showcase Teacher. SFQG "With Love and Friendship," November 14-15, 1998 Quilt Show Program. Special Tribute to Mary Whitehead]

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