

Laureen Neilly Quiltmaker Story

Laureen Neilly

Quiltmaker's Story

Quilters' Cable June, 2007, SFQG President's Message



I joined the San Francisco Quilters' Guild shortly after my youngest son, Joe, started kindergarten at Clarendon Elementary School. Now he's graduating from high school and is heading off to college this August. I ask myself, "Where did the time go?" and then realize that I can mark the time not only by Joe's many school events, field trips, Little League games, photos, birthdays, and other proud moments but also by my own growth as a quilt maker.

My quilt making experience began in the early 90's. At the time, I was married and living in Seattle. The winter nights were very dark and very LONG. One of my friends from San Francisco was pregnant, so I thought it might be a good moment to teach myself how to make a quilt. However, I liked the result so much that my friend and her baby never received that quilt. In fact, it (the quilt, not the baby ...) hangs in my foyer as a reminder of how little I knew! My family returned to San Francisco in 1992, and Joe's older brother, Jimmy was accepted at Clarendon. It was during that first year at Clarendon that I was fortunate enough to meet Karen Reiter. At the time, Karen, who also had a child at the school, was organizing a group of women to sew and create a raffle quilt - one of the many efforts developed by the parent body to raise money for art, music, physical education and classroom supplies. Not only was Karen a terrific quilt instructor and creative mind, but she also encouraged me to join a "great group of (mostly) women who meet monthly at a church in the Mission and who do outstanding work." I was shy, and it took a while to be convinced. When I finally decided to attend a Guild meeting, I understood the good works Karen was describing. And there has been no looking back.

I have learned so much over the years as a direct result of my membership in this Guild. It is through the Guild that I first entered one of my quilts for display in our "Prisms of Time 2001 biennial show. I remember feeling quite intimidated ... but also excited and even a bit courageous knowing something I created was open for critique by virtual strangers! That was (and remains) a wonderful experience. It is also through the Guild that I was introduced to P&B Textiles and soon thereafter started creating quilts and quilt patterns for their new lines of fabric. The Northern California Quilt Council is another organization I discovered by way of our monthly meetings. The NCQC's course on judging quilts is recognized nationally, and in 2001, I decided to attend. Since certification, I have served as judge or judge's assistant at several quilt shows in northern California. I am

Laureen Neilly Quiltmaker Story

also proud and honored to have received ribbons at our show and at Marin over the years. "Reconciliation," a quilt I created, based closely on a Kaffe Fassett pattern, won Best of Show in 2003 and subsequently appeared in Quilters Newsletter and was juried into the Houston International Quilt Festival later in the same year. What a thrill! But the greatest challenge and honor (with the steepest learning curve!) has been the opportunity to serve as President of SFQG. Lots of change. Lots of growth. All good.

So, to Joe I say, "Spread your wings, son. It has been truly awesome to watch you grow and mature over the years. May your time at college be - like my experience at the San Francisco Quilters' Guild has been - full of inspiration, honor, challenge, hard work and supportive kindred spirits."

Laureen.