

Remember Me....Stories about MN Quilters by Pat Cox and Martha Eaves



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At age seven I began hounding my mom to teach me to sew. She and my maternal grandmother kept telling me I was too young. After all, they had spent many frustrating hours trying to teach me embroidery which were only tearful for me. The summer after I turned ten, I must have really been a pest because one day my mom took me to the fabric store and had me pick out fabric for a box pleated skirt. When we got home, she gave me verbal instructions how to start measuring and matching. Much to her surprise and horror, I was done with the box pleats, had sewn them down and was ready for a zipper and waist band. I proudly wore that skirt the rest of the summer. It was the first time I was allowed at the sewing machine and I was hooked!

Years later, after sewing many garments, toys, accessory bags and, well, you name it I sewed it, I became friends with two women who quilted. My grand-mother made utilitarian tied quilts, and with my love of sewing it never occurred to me to ask her to teach me. The more I marveled at the

exquisite machine-pieced hand-quilted quilts of my two friends, the more I wanted to try. I felt I would never be able to make such beautiful things.

One day in February, 1998, I expressed my admiration of my local friend's most recent project as we were having coffee together. I'd recently bought a quilt book and would sit for hours looking at the quilts and brought it along to show her. She asked which quilt I thought I would make if I were to make one. I had an immediate answer. She stood up, went to her quilting room, fetched her rotary cutter, a 6" x 24" ruler and her cutting mat. She told me to grab my purse and we drove to the fabric store where she proceeded to explain the fundamentals of light, medium and dark fabric choices for a quilt and told me to start grabbing fabrics I liked. Fabric in hand, we sped to my house. Upon arriving she said, "I'll cut and iron, you sew the way I tell you to." In no time flat I had all the four patches made for my first quilt! She explained a scant 1/4" seam, how to chain piece, what to do to join them to the spacing blocks, showed me how to use the rotary cutter and ruler with the mat, and eventually she had to leave to make supper for her family. I kept piecing. I told her I wanted the quilt larger than the pattern for my king sized bed, and she explained adding borders and sashing. Two weeks later I completed my very first quilt, start to finish! She walked me through how to layer and pin-baste and tried teaching me hand quilting. All the embroidery frustration returned and I became so frustrated that I ripped the quilt off the frame and figured out how to roll it up and machine quilted it! I read the directions on how to cut binding, attached it and signed my work! It was two weeks from start to finish! The following week I'd picked out another quilt from the book, had received my own rotary cutter, ruler and mat for my birthday and had started my second quilt which my son still uses today.

The experience changed me. I was refocused finding my therapy, my passion and an expanded creative outlet for my life. My love of quilting has taken me to other states, propelled me to meet wonderful people and provided a sense of fulfillment and joy from the satisfaction of not just one aspect but the entire process of quiltmaking. I have made and given so many quilts as gifts I've lost count, but I do have the photos and small bits written to organize someday into a coherent history and, really, a timeline of my life.

My first quilt is semi-retired now but was on my bed for 15 years. That first experience expanded my horizons to the love of appliqué and I even tolerate having to do embroidery to enhance a project. My husband and I anticipate traveling by motorhome for several years in our retirement. We know the make and model we want. He's already planned where my sewing machine will be located!