



## Seven Quilt Tops

Timeless Stitches — Quilt Capital of Kansas

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I remember both my grandmothers reminding my sister and me of the old custom that a girl had to piece seven quilt tops before she could marry. Then when the young lady became engaged, family and friends would hold a quilting bee or two or three and hand quilt those quilt tops. And presto! —the new bride would have seven quilts to take to her new home. Notice that the custom did not specify exactly who was to bind those seven quilts! My mother's mother had roots in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, so I suspect that was where the telling of that old custom originated.

Now my sister did make herself one wedding quilt after she became engaged. The pattern was Ozark Star with most of the pieces coming from Mom's scrap bag. I don't remember if it was finished by the wedding, but if not, soon after. When I married, I was in graduate school at Oregon State University. There was no time for quilting included in that program of study, so my sister offered to help me out. She offered to make the quilt for me and had it finished soon after the wedding. It was another Ozark Star pieced from scraps left from making family clothing. I used that quilt for several years, but when I noticed the colors starting to fade after numerous washings, I folded it and placed it on a shelf in the closet.

The Double Wedding Ring is a popular pattern for wedding quilts. My daughter had a family friend dye fabric so that she had two sets of color gradations for the arcs that represented the intertwining rings. She presented it to her new husband at their wedding reception. I've known several people who have made Double Wedding Ring quilts to give to their daughters or granddaughters.

Another wedding quilt project could be an autograph quilt. A section of each block is a piece of white or off-white fabric where wedding guests can sign their names or write short messages. I made one of these last year for my granddaughter



and her husband. I have had customers bring in signed pieces of fabric and noticed that sometimes the writing went clear to the edge of the piece of fabric so that some of the message or signature was lost when the pieces were sewn together. That prompted me to sew the blocks together before I handed them to wedding guests to sign. It is important to use a permanent fabric pen for all the writing. If you iron a piece of freezer paper to the back of the piece intended for the signature, the paper will stabilize the fabric, so it is easier to write on. I used my embroidery machine to create a center medallion that recorded their names and date of the wedding and to make some “filler blocks” and corner blocks that depicted sunflowers, the flower she chose for the wedding flowers.

I tried to have the quilt be a surprise, but if I make one for another wedding, I will ask for the bride’s input and allow her to know what I am doing. As you all know, it is impossible for some people to keep a secret, so why endure the stress of trying to make a surprise? I asked Lacey if she was surprised, and she said, “I figured out that you were up to something, but I didn’t know what.”