



Time Flies When You Are Having Fun

Timeless Stitches – Quilt Capital of Kansas

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It's hard to believe that it has been 61 years since I made my first quilt. Of course, I had been involved in making other quilts for the family, but my involvement had been limited. My grandmother believed that it was good luck for the owner of the quilt if as many quilters as possible contributed their stitching to the quilting of the quilt. So to make Grandma Susie happy, I would dutifully quilt a small section of each quilt that someone in the family happened to be making.

Back to that first quilt. I was preparing to go off to college. I needed some kind of blanket or quilt to keep me warm at night. My aunt had recently finished a Sunbonnet Sue quilt and had a few blocks left over. She gave them to me and I used them for my pattern. I traced the shapes of the applique pieces and then made templates from empty cereal or tissue boxes. (No such thing as template plastic in those days.) She had used sugar sacks for the background, so Grandma Rosa raided her collection of sugar sacks that had been unsewn, washed, and pressed. I cut the applique pieces from scraps of dresses we had made making sure to include several of the dresses that were mine or that I had made in 4-H. The next step was to press ¼" under on all the edges that would show. I pinned the pieces in place by laying a background piece on top of a finished block and matching the applique pieces up to the pieces on the block below.

School was scheduled to start in two or three months. No time to waste getting those applique pieces sewn down. My sister had recently purchased a new sewing machine with a zig-zag stitch! I used it and had those blocks sewn in record time. Then it was time to put in sashing and arrange the blocks. There were no rotary cutters or 12 ½" rulers for me to use to trim the blocks to a uniform size and using scissors to do that could be tricky at best. So I sorted the blocks by size. Blocks that were the same width went in the same columns; blocks that were the same height went in the same rows. Total dimensions probably did not vary more than a half inch, but I couldn't have crooked rows. I used a solid yellow for the sashing, border, and binding. Mom suggested that I put cotton flannel in the middle instead of batting, so I zig-zagged several pieces together, layered the quilt and stitched (quilted) it together on my sister's machine using a zigzag pattern the width of the sashing down and across each sashing. That quilt has lived a long and happy life. My children all wanted it on their bed.

Another family quilt that shows how quilting times have changed was made in 1976. My younger sister was graduating from K-State and Mom, my other sister and I decided to make a bicentennial quilt for her graduation. We chose a Lone Star pattern and red, white, and blue fabrics. Again, the templates were made from thin cardboard and the diamond-shaped pieces were cut individually. A picture of the finished quilt

appeared in one of Enola Gish's newspaper columns.

I have made several Lone Star quilts since by making strip sets and cutting them on a 45 degree angle to make a strip of diamond shapes already sewn together. Success for that technique requires rotary cutting equipment that was not available in 1976. There have been countless new products for quilting in the last 30 or 40 years, but the rotary cutter is probably the tool that has had the most impact on quilting in my lifetime.