

## The Thought & the Situation:

For my wife Pam's birthday a few years ago our five daughters and I dreamt up a special event. Our hope was to surprise their mother Pam sometime between Mother's Day in May and Pam's birthday in July. Selecting the day in the late-Spring early-Summer would be our best bet as two of them are teachers, three were students at the time. The girls hadn't been all together in years and then only at Christmas.

The two oldest Jess and Jen were living and teaching in Colorado, Jamie was attending Massage Therapy school in Denver, Cassie working and attending the University of Montana in Bozeman and Bethany was working and attending the University of Wyoming-Casper. Bringing us all together was going to be a logistical challenge - the nightmarish kind!

Pam was working and teaching at our local Prism Quilt store in Casper Mon-Thu and 1/2 day Friday. For that reason the selected date would best be a Friday allowing for a weekend slumber party.

## The Plan & the Event

The girls got together and coordinated a day in June when they could all have time away from their families and work and when they knew Pam was working a 1/2 day shift. They would arrive separately, fifteen minutes apart at the Prism Quilt store while Pam was working. She'd be surprised enough at that but then each would ask her to help pick out a yard or two of fabric. As each selection and cutting came to an end the next sister would saunter in the front door unannounced and the process would repeat itself. By daughter #2 Pam was a little overwhelmed as she hadn't seen them for months, but the hug-fest was really being poured on by #3 and then #4 and finally total breakdown by #5. That was it, the hug-fest turned into a tear-fest and then a blab-fest. As this was going on each daughter presented Pam with a coupon they'd been given for a free "Burrito Pillow Case" sewing lesson to be taught by their mom that afternoon after lunch.

The classroom at Prism Quilts is in the basement of the store. It was furnished with tables, chairs, a cutting table, irons, scissors, closets & cubbies, etc...everything necessary to teach a class and store projects with the exception of sewing machines. That's where I came in.

Years prior and with the help of the "Blackside" Guru in the US, Darla Trenner I was able to locate and purchase five Singer Featherweight "Blackside" machines, one for each of our daughters. My tenacity was tested but I persevered! It took a few years but I finally had the Blacksides all together, tested, oiled and lubed and polished up and yes, secretly staged in the closets & cubbies in the classroom down below!

While the girls had Pam's attention upstairs I slipped in the front door and down into the basement. Their laughter upstairs masked my setup of machines downstairs. I then signaled Bethany our youngest and she suggested to the group, "Let's get started!" Downstairs they went. To everybody's surprise the classroom was setup with name cards placed in front of the individually selected "Blackside" machines. The three oldest daughters were gifted Pre-War Blacksides Featherweights and our two youngest Post-War models. The girls each had with them their chosen fabric and thread to match. The cutting, measuring, sewing, and machine operating lessons were about to begin.

At this point it's fair to say that maybe two of the five girls had previously taken any interest in sewing. Pam would be teaching Pre-schoolers to 1st grade level students in their 20-40's!

Normally she would teach the "Burrito Pillow" class as a bonus/ extra class after that day's quilting class was closing and it would take 20-30 minutes max for a classroom full of students start to finish. Today would be a little longer, closer to 4-5 hours! Imagine five daughters and a mother each with a years worth of stories to tell, ok maybe 6 hours before picking up and heading to the house.

That evening was filled with hot tea and chocolate, sister chatter, the modeling of their nightgowns, unfinished laughs, remembered moments, and their new Burrito Pillow cases. It was late before beds and quilts were chosen.

After a weekend together our daughters left their mom and I. Each destined for their homes and families toting fresh memories, semi sewing skills, and their "Blacksides." Someday, they'll all be back.

The "Blacksides" variation of the Singer 221 has a special place in the timeline of the Featherweight. Due to the onset of World War II and the War Powers Act, Singer was limited in the use of Chromium used to plate faceplates, handwheel rims, and other newly manufactured parts. They had many models of sewing machines in production in 1941 and before they changed over to War production of handguns, bayonets, bomb sights, etc they completed orders of machines but with the use of Black Chromium plated parts where the stock of those parts was in short supply. This led to the "Blacksides" specialty machines being assembled with some parts now plated in the Black Chromium. They were made in two Production runs; before the War beginning July 1, 1941 and just after the War on Sept. 19, 1945 when sewing machine production began again.

True "Blacksides" Featherweights all have three Black Chromium parts in common ie, the scrolled faceplate, the handwheel, and the stitch length indicator. Other parts and attachments appear at random within and after the "Blacksides" production runs up into the early 50's.

Production runs for this special variation were;

Pre War II - AG000001 - AG018250	July 1, 1941	18,250 (beginning about midway into this run)
Post War II - AG526101 - AG546100	Sept 19, 1945	20,000

Pictured are our daughters "Blacksides"

Jess	AG010339 - July 1st, 1941 (black presser bar lever)
Jen	AG013124 - July 1st, 1941
Jamie	AG017049 - July 1st, 1941
Cassie	AG526370 - Sept 19, 1945
Bethany	AG541869 - Sept 19, 1945

\* I want to again thank *Darla Trenner* for all her invaluable research regarding the Blacksides, the Crinkles, and the Singer Medical Suturing Instruments but far more important her friendship and guidance!



