

Newsletters in February 2014

Sky designs

February 13, 2014

Happy Valentines Day everyone.



Roses are Red

Violets are Blue (Not)

It's fabric I want

So love me true.

Ok, so maybe I should stick to quilting. Have I ever told you about the time that my Nurse Practitioner daughter sat me down for a serious discussion of whether my quilting obsession was getting out of hand? *Perhaps my life needed a bit more balance or maybe we should consider medication!* That was a long time ago. Now she would worry if I wasn't quilting 50 hours a week. Bruce says that when I need those tendon transfers on my over worked thumbs, (no sewing for 6 weeks - in splints) he will be headed out of town. Way out of town. He doesn't even want to know what I would be like to live with after a few days of no quilting. Do I really quilt 50 hours a week?. Sure do. If I'm not on the road teaching, if the grands are not here, and the sky has not fallen, you will find me in my studio e-mailing with students, thinking up new projects, or working on my newest quilt. *High Country Colors is finished! This one is about 400 hundred hours of joy.*

Vagabond teacher.

Thank you Fraser Valley Quilters in Canada, who gave me such a warm welcome and laughed and cried in my lectures. Gifted appliquers who stole my heart when they turned in 32 Preemie Quilts in one month. Walking into the NICU when my preemie grand daughter was born was one of my proudest moments as a quilter: every single isolette had its own little quilt. Visiting the Camano Island Quilters was like going home. They are just down the way and I have known many of them for years. They asked me to teach way before I ever knew what I was doing.

Next month I will be off to Huntsville, Alabama, and then to Monterey, California, for Empty Spools. **I have one spot left at Empty Spools.** <http://www.emptyspoolsseminars.com> Right on the ocean with beautiful work rooms, great food and great fun. My workshop is landscapes, but so far I have gotten penguins, elephants, and lots of animal photos from my students. Those new to appliqué work with patterns and

those with more experience work from pre-approved photos. You still have time to ask for that special Valentines present. *Come play with us.*

My serendipitous trip down to Road 2 California was thrilling. These feet didn't touch down the whole time I was there. The quilts were amazing. So much diversity both in style and technique. Those Modern quilts are taking huge prize monies. If your are drawn to them, the time is NOW. One of my students from Road last year brought her completed Dancing Cranes for me to see. She did an outstanding job. I got to meet a daughter and Mother-in-law team who are joining us at Empty Spools. That's pretty cool.

Ribbons and Things: I was beyond thrilled when Road 2 CA called after I got home. Jingle Bells won Viewer's Choice at Road (along with Director's Choice). There is no better award than that. I got to pal around with Beth Nufer (a past student from Empty Spools) who won first place Innovative. Quilted by Clem Buzick. See their dazzling quilt below left. Congratulations to all the winners. Judging would have been so hard this year.



AQS Phoenix - My More than a Memory won 2nd place Wall quilt. This quilt has my young self reading under a tree. Never in her wildest imagination would she have guessed what has happened in my life since I became a quilter. She knew I would be a nurse, but it is so unimaginable that this extremely shy, introverted child would become a teacher and public speaker. It seems a dream to me even now.

[Steam a Seam Update.](#)

Bruce just got off the phone with them again. They are very excited about their new product but will not give us a time estimate. He asked if 6 months was a reasonable guess and they responded, "We certainly hope so". Thank you Anne for bringing this link to all of us who love this product. Here is the latest official update from the Warm Company. <http://warmcompany.com/sas-update.html>

[Design ideas for Skies](#) (for larger pictures click to my web page gallery)

<http://www.kathymcneilquilts.com/gallery/2/>



Pieced diamonds or squares on point work wonderfully to create movement in your composition. Our eyes are drawn to the strong visual lines created by piecing. Including diagonal lines has long been a trick used by many artists to create movement. If your scene could use some drama, or the sky takes up a good third or more of the composition, consider piecing. From experience, I can tell you to audition your pieces first. Make yourself a paper grid to pin them to. Overlap them slightly as you will be cutting them out with a seam allowance. Vary the value from horizon line to the top. Start lighter and gradually add darker and darker values. It is a great opportunity to add in some sun rise or sun set colors too. Small scale prints and fuzzy batiks work best. Use your fabric paint crayons across two different prints to blend them together if they catch your eye too much. Is there water in your scene? Make sure to alter the value of that - lighter to darker as you come forward. Sew the rows together piece by piece. Now add two rows together. Then two pairs to make four. Add the units of four strips to each other until the sky grid is covered. Allow for squaring and borders. Do not start sewing rows from one side to the other!! Ironing them really stretches and skews out of shape if you do that.

New Quilt/ painted sky - "High Country Colors"

I am often frustrated with the almost cartoon look of commercially printed sky fabrics. Sometimes I flip them to the wrong side to fuzz them out a bit. That doesn't always work though. This high mountain meadow scene needed a deep blue lake. In most cases, the water is simply a mirror for what is happening in the sky. The sky needed to be a nice calm, matching blue.

It was just easier to paint it. To do that buy some PFD white fabric. (Prepared For Dying fabric). Beg your husband to make you a rectangular frame from 3/4 by 1 inch strips of wood. Staple your fabric along the top edge and then stretch (just till flat) and staple along the bottom and sides. Paint using your favorite fabric paints. For bigger projects I like to use Jacquard Textile sky blue paint. You can dilute it with water for a lighter color. This paint already has fabric medium in it, so it will be soft when you are done.

Available at <https://www.dharmatrading.com>



Thank you for your e-mails and for keeping in touch. I hope you all have a wonderful Valentines Day weekend. hugs, Kathy