

The walls in her home shimmer with the setting sunlight reflecting off of the glass guarding the family photos. Quilts do not adorn the entryway, or the hallway. Quilts do not muffle the noise from overhead military helicopters, from cars roaring by going somewhere important.

Quilts are not a part of her lifestyle. Quilts are not a part of her décor.

The homeowner has resided in the house, which she and her husband built, for the past 13 years. Warmth of family photos depicting ancestors of yesteryear announce happy times in a photo of a long ago house built with a winding staircase leading up, up to the second floor. "This is the 'mansion' that my husband's great grandparents built when they moved from the little house on the property," she told us. My husband and I peer into each treasure. We ooh and aah as if we are looking at a homemade quilt. The stairway in the black and white photo oozes with tales as we each squint eyes in search of a wisp of happy times. Wooden steps crumbling like an avalanche on snowcapped mountains stop time. The photo captures life, long after the ancestors leave. "That photo was taken at least 10 years ago," the home owner explained. "The entire stairs must be down by now. We haven't seen it since."

We then moved onto the photos of their great grandparents, grandparents and then their parents. Each photo is encased in a frame or in a shadow box. Two or three shadow boxes embrace pocket watches, a pearl necklace, and buttons plus a couple of two inch dolls dressed in period clothing of the time, early 1900's. Warm memories are wrapped up in wood and glass cool to the touch.

Family photos and family items in the personalized shadow boxes are her quilts. They keep her warm with memories of her childhood, and with what might have been with the ancestors' lives. They are her and her husband's treasures, quilts of another design, of another fabric. These keepsakes take the place of a quilt. The Photo Wall is a focal point in the main living room, just off the kitchen. Happy thoughts start each day as they walk by their photos of the past while getting ready for work, gardening or a lazy spring morning in the present.

Cotton is not our only fabric. Memories are a fabric, too, unfolding heartbeats of another time. Those memories also are security blankets harbored in family photos, and cherished in worn out cowboy hats hanging on a wall, and in necklaces of a time gone by, each smothered in love featured inside a homemade capsule.

The keepsakes which reside in their picture frames and in their shadow boxes are quilts, too; made from a strong type of fabric, a fiber which strengthens the house that they built.

Lana Russ

