

“What’s the problem?” her sister asks. “Oh, these straight pins won’t go into the material to hold the hem,” her sister answers. The two sisters are attending a quilt retreat in Spokane. One of the sisters drove over from Helena, Mt. to have quilting time with the Spokane Sister. The Helena Sister is planning on making six sets of four fabric napkins for her extended family. It is not going well when she tries to stick the pin in the fabric to hold the hem.

As the Spokane sister takes a pin and tries to do the same “pinning action” there is no action. “Well, how old are these pins” she asks her sister.”

She hems and haws as she looks down at the troubling pin. “I think I had them for Home Economic Sewing Class in high school,” she murmurs.

“What? That was 40 years ago,” yells her sibling while smiling. Then she wonders if they now have a point to them. Do unused pins go bad? The Helena sister does not quilt. She is a hand knitter. She likes to knit scarfs, socks, afghans with her size 8, 10, and on up wooden needles. Points on these needles do not get dull.

The sisters work it out using donated new needles of every size from nearby quilters. That is what quilters do; we share, and laugh, and we giggle. Each sharing a warm and friendly feeling. The sisters have a good time completing the fabric napkins; and the trip to a shop garners a new cache of straight pins which will probably sit for the next 20 or so years unless a family member has a need for them.

According to *Thread* magazine there are endless varieties of straight pins. And there are five components: head, point, thickness, length, and content. Who knew?

Our pincushions could hold a pointless number of stabbers. Like pearlized plastic, plastic flower-head, ball-shaped plastic, glass (yellow and blue), and metal (brass and silver. Remember, plastic melts when a hot iron is pressing the fabric. If that happens throw it out. And if a pin is bent, dull, rusted throw it out, too. An empty medicine plastic container is good prison to corral them before tossing them in the trash.

There is an abundance of information in the magazine to pin in your memory bank. The sharpness, the length of the weapon, the type of use, whether the pin

is for appliques, or for quilt pieces which uses a 1 ½ to a 2-inch size pin. When in doubt: use the thinnest pin available in your pin stash.

Usually, the best pin on the market is the one which catches your “eye.” Eye candy satisfies the need to purchase. Those bright, colorful colors are calling us. Right? Well, the pin we probably need is the one with the eye that thread can feed through, and one with the sharpness that commands fabric to behave. Now we have the making of a useful pin.

Like children playing the long-ago birthday game of “Pin the Tail on the Donkey” quilt sisters all around play together to “Pin the Fabric Piece” in the right place. Each of us quilting sisters see that by sticking together we are winners even if our eyes are closed.

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