

The canary sings happily matching the tapping of grandma's knitting needles.

A grandmother of three sits in her favorite soft easy chair everyday knitting scarves, sweater, tam hats with the canary in the cage nearby. She is content and happy. She is residing with her daughter and son-in-law in a Montana blue sky setting. Her Ireland childhood is a faraway memory.

Like quilters, Grandma Swan likes making gifts. She is a "gifted" lady creating knitted artwork as well as wearable art. In the late 1950s her handiwork was laced with love and intention. Her color choices of yarn were soft yellows and warm browns. Sometimes cool greens and blues showed up in her bundles of garments. A favorite raspberry red jewel tone swirled into a sweater in no time.

I was a friend of one of her grandchildren. "My grandma wants us to go to town," says my friend, Kathy (Katrina). "She needs yarn for a new sweater that she wants to knit."

So, the two of us, friends for three years so far, walk the five blocks to the yarn shop. With money in hand Kathy leads me to the cabinet housing the kind of yarn Grandma Swan requests. "What colors do you like? She says this as she touches and moves skeins (did not know what a skein was in 1957).

Never before this day had I looked at the color of anything. Color was just there. There was no difference between teal and green, between blue of the sky and blue of the lake. "Well," I replied. "This is nice. It is kind of blue and green. What do you think? What color did your grandma want you to buy?"

Kathy did not answer. She just picked up three or four skeins of, what is now the color Teal, and paid the lady at the counter.

We walk a block to the soda shop. "Grandma gave us money for a treat," she says as she puts a dollar on the counter. We drink our pop as we swivel on the movable stools and chat about current Johnny Mathis records we like.

Summertime on a Montana morning was carefree when we were ten. Grandma Swan was a bit older. I thought that she was ancient. Large veins graced her nimble hands as she knitted, cast on, purl one, knit two. Scarves lengthened, sweaters grew and tam hats piled up. One sweater, though, the teal one, was graciously presented to me for my birthday.

Grandma Swan's gift was surprising and heartwarming. With that sweater gift she gave me awareness of colors surrounding me. She also taught me to share our gifts given to us at birth, whether we are quilters or knitters.

She comes to mind while my sewing machine whirs and I create gifts hoping to hear the birds sing.

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