

Attending quilting retreats is fun; packing for them is a test in solving a mathematical equation.

If a quilter plans to stay 4 ½ days at a retreat center how many projects should be packed? And what if said quilter gets finished with those projects and there is nothing else to sew? And then there is the problem of forgetting the sewing machine.

Sewing quilt projects at home is so different than sewing projects away from home. At retreat, there is only one sewing machine. For many quilters there are two or three machines at home to choose from for the project. Some quilters have a choice of “to serge or not to serge”. An added problem is what fabric to take and how much of the audition choices should be washed, ironed and folded. Will there be room in the suitcase for clothes? What will the weather be like, hot, cold? Should I add a sweater? (I always folded at thought problems. I would subtract when I should have added multiplying my problems.)

Including a handwork project is an option and that day helped solve a problem. Those blocks that needed hand quilting saved the other quilters ears from hearing my anguish. My only sewing machine suffered in silence while it sat on the kitchen table at home. Having discovered the loss of my cute little non-computer sidekick I attempted to smile at the teasing. I did have my handwork to pass the time. A husband is handy to help pack the car and get me to the center on time but he may be difficult to live with if called upon to return to the retreat center hauling the forgotten sewing machine.

“Is it decadent having two sewing machines at retreat?” she asked while unpacking. “No,” came the reply. However, if she had two more at home gathering dust, perhaps she would have a point. Opinions were divided. (Where was she when I needed to borrow a machine? One problem would have been solved.)

Some retreats come with food to be prepared and served. Menus differ with venues. High end motels catering retreats have chefs. Retreat centers have cooks and many sewing bee retreats have quilters taking a few minutes away from their creations to cook a meal.

“Hey, cook,” says a quilter at the cabin. “The dinner is ready. The oven bell dinged.”

“Just a minute more,” comes the answer. “I need to finish this block.”

Ten minutes later the other quilters stand in line to serve themselves. Two other quilters came to the rescue. The quilter/cook was lost in her fabric. Easy to do. Quilters understand.

Along with fabric equations, there is the problem of how much food to bring to the table. Six dozen eggs for seven quilters may be too many for a 3 ½ day retreat. Six pounds of bacon though may be perfect.

Whatever the problem the equation is solved with a room of quilters, sewing machines, food and the addition of days of laughter, tears of release and a memory of shared love. Subtract the “unsewing” and we design a method of problem solving.

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