

My Quilting Bio

Martha Lisle

I was born and raised in Charlottesville, Virginia. My father taught mathematics to engineering students at the University of Virginia and my mother had also been a mathematician before she was married. In fact, she was able to step in and substitute for him whenever necessary. I attended Lane High School and then earned a B.A. in mathematics from Randolph Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg. After graduation, I married Leslie Lisle and we moved to Tallahassee, Florida for graduate school. I received an M.A. in Mathematics from Florida State University and was able to teach undergraduate classes until the birth of our oldest daughter, Lucie, in 1958. We spent a year in Marseille, France and then lived in Norfolk, Virginia for several years. I taught mathematics at Old Dominion and another daughter, Karen, was born in 1960.

In 1963, Les joined the United States Information Agency (USIA) and for the next 24 years we spent most of our time in Africa and the Middle East. His first overseas assignment took us to Ethiopia, where our son John was born. Then it was on to the Congo, Lebanon, Morocco, the Sudan and Kuwait. It was a challenge to raise a family while moving every two years, not to mention hard to pursue a career. However, once John was in kindergarten, I was able to teach at the American University of Beirut, the American School in Khartoum, and the Rabat American School.

In 1974, we returned to the United States and bought a home in Kensington, Maryland. I became a math teacher at Holton Arms School and then an Associate Professor of Mathematics at Prince George's County Community College. I had been there 14 years when I retired in 1997.

Early in my marriage, I took a sewing class to learn how to lay out a pattern. I made clothes for myself and the girls for many years, often using colorful fabrics available in the local markets. I had learned how to knit and crochet as a young woman, and I made baby blankets, hats and sweaters. Once we were permanently settled back in Kensington, I participated in a neighborhood Homemakers group which held frequent Sew & Show sessions.

My interest in quilting grew after my marriage ended and I drew closer to retirement. My first attempt was a small quilt made from a kit, and after that I began to tackle more and more ambitious quilting projects. I had been a member of Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist church for many years, and I joined the Cedar Lane Quilters. We designed and produced a beautiful handmade quilt to be raffled off for the benefit of the congregation each year.

I always enjoyed attending quilting workshops and retreats to learn new techniques and get ideas from other quilters. Most of my quilts have been pieced, with traditional patterns and mathematical designs. I joined a variety of guilds, including Mid-Appalachian Quilters, Casey Girls, Quilting Conspiracy, and NeedleChasers of Chevy Chase. Being around other quilters inspired me to keep at it and be more than just a fabric collector.

I have enjoyed designing and creating quilts for my three children and four grandchildren. One of my first large quilts was called Purple Haze and was a gift to Lucie, because purple is her favorite color. I made a quilt in black, red and white for my grandson Ben to take to college, because he was going to attend Boston University. The quilt on my own bed, called Spring Garden, was inspired by a quilt hanging on display at Capital Quilts. My last project, Pineapple Perfection, came together after a workshop on pineapple quilts.

These days it would be a challenge for me to complete a large quilt, but I am helping to embellish fidget quilts for the residents of the memory care portion of my residence. I still enjoy gathering around the table with other women to sew and talk.