

My Quilting Bio Fran Card

Pop, pop, pop—my grandmother's old treadle sewing machine filed many young hours drawing threadless designs on brown paper bags. Loved the sound. I moved on to using my mother's Singer machine for simple clothes after I learned the sewing basics from her. Mother sewed very well but left me to my own designs which as often failed as succeeded. I couldn't follow directions then either. Also sewed right through my thumb, twice.

After going to the University of Maryland majoring in History, I married and moved to Peoria. Yes, Peoria. There I sewed curtains and reupholstered chairs while working at a mail order gift catalog. Then we moved to San Juan where we lived up in the beautiful hills overlooking the coast. A wedding present of a sewing machine kept me busy making curtains, beach clothes, and my new daughter's wardrobe. No TV or radio in English so I sewed and I sewed. Stores downtown there had the most beautiful fabrics; very sophisticated linens, Thai silks, wonderful to fondle, bright rich colors. Women in San Juan sewed a lot and wore beautiful dressy clothes.

We were transferred to Montreal for three years where I was busy with now two small children but kept sewing children's things. After three years we reluctantly returned to live in Bethesda and I took classes in design and silk screen printing for a degree at at Montgomery College where they had a wonderful graphics department. My final piece for a color class was a quilt to show value and hues. After I was divorced the dean at MC sent me to the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology at Walter Reed for an internship that turned into 27 years working there ending up running the publication department. Work consisted of anything graphic from newsletters, brochures, medical books, posters for shows, and calendars. Challenging job but rewarding. I kept on doing silk screen prints on our sun porch at home, in the house I live in where I grew up and sewing household items. After finally realizing that solvents and paints were hazardous to one's health I saw some quilts in a show and decided, of course I could do that. Same textures, colors and designs as printing. My first tries, in polyester and cotton, were awful and were binned. Never to be seen again.

But I kept on sewing wearable art clothing which I found really interesting and different than clothing found in stores. When I started quilting finally my artist mother could not try to instruct me on the "right way" to do it as she had with drawing and design from my early childhood on. Great woman and artist but always right.

My neighbor and good friend took me to PM Patchwork's evening meetings—I just loved the comradeship of other quilters in the group and some members of which are in NeedleChasers today. I learned so much seeing other's work, the critiques, and from the occasional visiting lecturer.

I bore easily so traditional patterns never made me happy unless, of course, I started changing them as I went on making blocks. The repetition bored me to tears and I found out I could not follow directions very well. Still can't. When I realized I could just "sew by ear" I took off doing improv designs which made me so happy I hummed as I sewed one piece to another. I could sew to satisfy me, not anyone else. I also learned to dye fabrics and have piles of dyed, stenciled, painted fabrics to use in pieces.

Over the years I taught needlepoint classes, worked for a needlepoint store painting canvases and finishing pillows and mounted work. I worked part-time at Appalachiana in Bethesda which had one of the areas' earliest quilting stores filled with unusual and interesting fabrics and fun co-workers. A few friends and neighbors have had a Tuesday quilting meeting for many years where we trade ideas, movie reviews, grandchildren's latest photos.

When I was invited to come to Needle chasers — life changed. Such a source of inspiration and so many wonderful new friends, and some old ones! I have found NeedleChasers very important in my life and retirement activities. I enjoyed classes such as Maria Shell which made me do something differently, which turned out to be quite inspiring. Love seeing everyone's very different finished projects. My brain keeps designing new quilting ideas, more than I could ever keep up on, but I have more interest in starting than finishing. I always have at least 5 or 6 projects going at any one time. Any visit to a fabric store is difficult—I want so many different fabrics to fill a deep craving for of design and color. I thought the pandemic would give me time to finish many projects already started but I just started more.

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