

My Quilting Bio

Lisa Smith

I was born and raised in Bay Village Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland and attended Marquette University in Milwaukee where I met my husband John in 1986. After graduation, John moved to Washington, DC to attend law school, but I moved to Berea Kentucky to work as a literacy teacher through a group called The Christian Appalachian Project. It was a lay missionary organization that served the Appalachian people by teaching, home construction, running day care centers and preschools, etc. In this position, I was a teacher to residents who were homebound, whether because they had children at home, or lacked transportation, or any other reason that kept them from getting to the school. It was called "The School on Wheels." I got to drive into the hollers and meet with my students, teaching literacy and high school equivalency classes. While it was rewarding work, I missed John, and after a year, I decided to follow him to Washington. We got married in 1989, with the plan that we were going to leave the big city as soon as he graduated, and 32 years later, we are still here!!

I wasn't able to get a teaching job when I first came to DC, so I enrolled in graduate school at Georgetown University and got my master's degree in English Literature. After that, I was hired as a high school English teacher and taught for a few years before I my first daughter was born. The timing was perfect so that while I was on maternity leave, my husband's job as a patent lawyer sent us to Japan. We lived there for three wonderful years, taking every opportunity to travel though Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australia. I treasure the opportunities I enjoyed during that time!

We moved to Tokyo with one daughter, but came back with two. So I decided to stay home from teaching and raise our girls. Three years later, we adopted our third daughter from China and our family was complete. Rather than return to teaching, however, I decided to go back to school and pursue a nursing career. I worked for a time as an ICU nurse at Holy Cross Hospital, and then decided to retire from that in 2015 so I could spend more time on the things I love, including, travel, competing in triathlons, pottery, and of course quilting!

My life as a quilter has been heavily influenced by my time in Appalachia and Japan, as well as the fact that my mother was an avid seamstress. I started

quilting while on maternity leave with my oldest child. I took a hand piecing and quilting class at G Street Fabrics, using all Jinny Beyer fabrics and learning to piece, appliqué, and quilt by hand. I was instantly hooked, and quilting has been a passion for many years. While in Japan, I met weekly with a group of ladies who shared the quilting bug. We sewed together and attended quilt shows and went fabric shopping whenever possible. Anyone who has attended the Tokyo International Quilt Show knows what a treasure trove exists in Japan for quilt lovers!

In addition to quilting, I also am serious hobby potter. I specialize in wheel-thrown functional work, and I enjoy wood firing my pottery, which is traditionally an Asian firing technique. I work in both stoneware and porcelain, and if I'm not in my sewing room, chances are you'll find me in my pottery studio! I also enjoy participating in triathlons and running, although I've slowed down a bit on that. I completed in an Ironman triathlon in 2016 to celebrate turning 50! Since then, I continue to enjoy swimming, biking, and running, but my drive to compete seems to have diminished, thankfully! Once Covid is finally over, I hope to make up for lost time and start traveling again. In 2019 I spent 6 weeks traveling alone in Europe, spending part of that time taking a pottery workshop in Florence. Then, just before Covid, I returned to Japan to attend the Tokyo International Quilt show and take a quilting themed tour, which I highly recommend. It was wonderful to return to Japan, and I'm hoping that once Covid is over I can return to a love of joining my hobbies with my travels wherever possible.