

PATCHWORK AMONG FRIENDS FROM PATTERNS TO POTLUCKS

BY JUDY MARTIN



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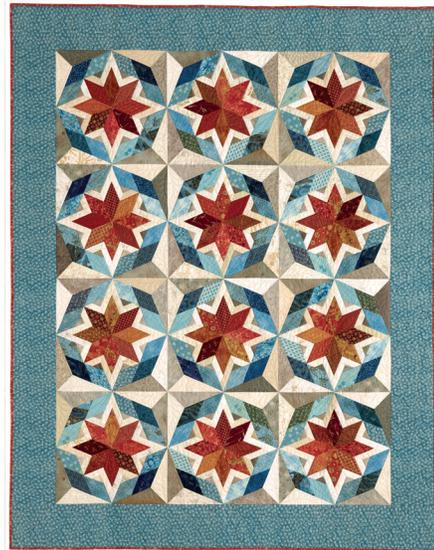
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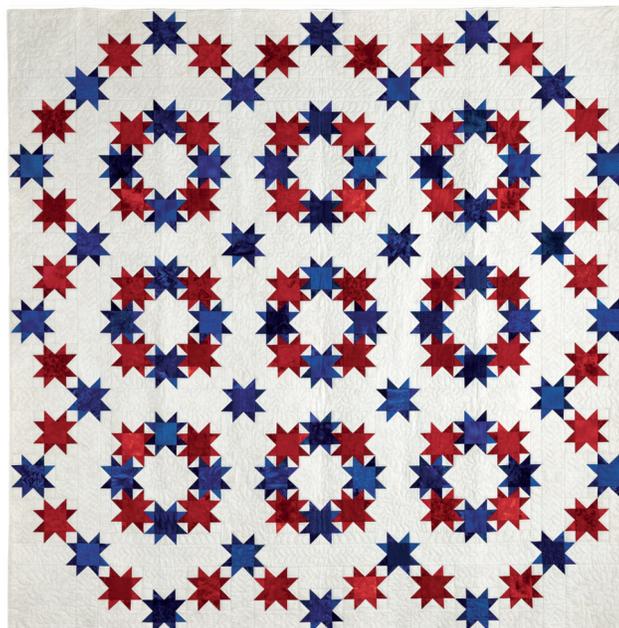
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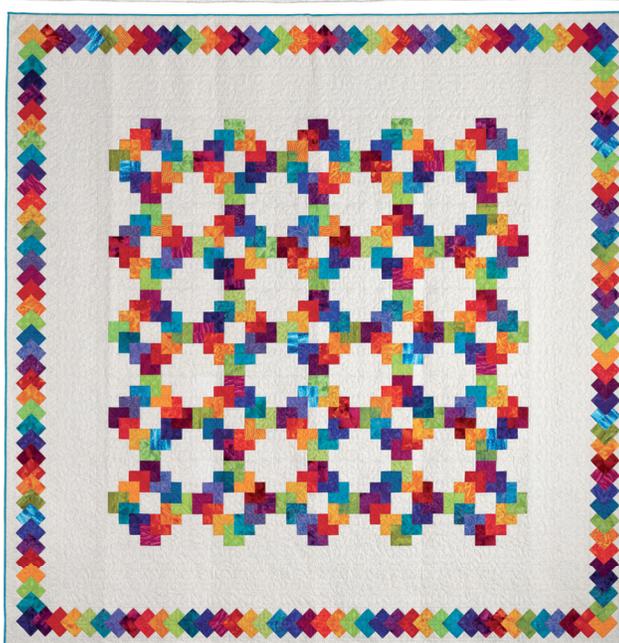


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Special thanks to Lana Corcoran, Debbi Treusch, Lee Plisch, and Jenise Antony for quilting; to Doris Hareland for piecing Rolling Hills Log Cabin and Summer Holiday; and to Tami Hemmer for piecing Boston Beauty. Thanks, as always, to Steve Bennett and Chris Hulin for proofreading.



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QUILTERS' GET-TOGETHERS

Since the days of the first quilting bee, quilting has been a social activity. Bees are less common now, though many churches and some quilt guilds still have a frame filled and ready for any who care to sit awhile and stitch in the company of friends. When most people lived in rural areas, catching up on news of one's friends was at least as important as the task of completing the quilt. When an impending wedding or the birth of a baby called for a quilt, many hands helped meet the deadline.

Quilters today still enjoy social contact with other quilters. Many attend classes or participate in a guild where they find support, expertise, encour-

agement, companionship, appreciation, and more. Others find what they seek by participating in an online forum.

If you have a specific project in mind, you may enjoy sharing the challenges and successes with others. Find like-minded individuals online or at your local guild or ask your local quilt shop for a specific class. Or take it upon yourself to initiate a class without a teacher or organize a strip exchange or fat quarter split with others who are interested in the same project.

Here are some ideas for activities that you may enjoy sharing with other quilters.

QUILT CLASSES

Quilt classes seem to provide many quilters with the same companionship and deadline that a quilting bee once did. Generally, each student works on her own quilt, and some of the work is done independently at home. An ongoing class brings people together on a regular basis, and assignments keep at least some of the students progressing apace. A class can also provide expertise, as the teacher takes on the role of experienced mentor to the students. Some quilters take classes more for the social aspect and the assignments or deadlines than for the help with skills and methods.

The quilts in this book are ideal for class projects. Several quilts, such as State Fair Star, Boston Beauty, or Morning Glory, are challenging quilts

covering new ground. A teacher can provide the expertise to bring everybody up to speed.

Some quilts in the book involve basic skills, but require perseverance due to the many patches involved. Sun Valley Log Cabin and Thanksgiving are two such examples. An ongoing class can provide the assignments, deadlines, and encouragement to keep going.

A couple of the patterns in this book are ideal for one-session classes where a small project is completed or nearly finished during the session. Thanksgiving and Rolling Hills Log Cabin are offered as table runners. A class allows the students to set aside the time to complete a small project and feel a sense of accomplishment for doing so.

ONLINE GROUPS

Far-flung groups in online forums serve much the same purpose as a class. Sometimes the "list mom" offers advice or gives assignments, and sometimes she simply establishes a place to ask questions or share experiences as each member tackles the same project. A certain amount of hand holding and encouragement is expected in

one of these forums, but it comes naturally when everyone in a forum is supportive. Someone needs to take charge at least enough to announce plans. Participants can agree on the assignments and deadlines. As each participant completes her quilt, she can share a photo online, and everyone can celebrate her achievement.

A CLASS WITHOUT A TEACHER

Assembled friends and spinoffs from a local guild can meet physically in members' homes to share the experience of making a specific project, as well. This is a good way to get to know your fellow guild members better. Several friends

can decide to do the same quilt project or they can provide each other support and encouragement as they tackle different ones. Classmates can jointly decide on assignments and deadlines. Regular meetings keep everyone on target and

allow less experienced classmates to seek assistance or advice from more experienced ones. The class can culminate in a reveal party to show off the finished quilts. If several class members have not finished in time for the reveal, you might schedule a one-month reunion to allow a second chance to complete the quilts and share them with the group. The reunion is a perfect opportunity to discuss the next project for the group to undertake.

The class without a teacher can serve much the same purpose as a class. It provides a social outlet, assignments, and deadlines that many quilters crave. In many cases, it can provide mentoring of less experienced quilt makers, as well.

However, when a project is challenging and ventures into unfamiliar territory, or when the disparity of skills in the group is great, an experienced teacher is invaluable.

REVEAL PARTIES

Show-and-tell sessions and reveal parties can provide the push needed to get a project done in a timely manner. A party is the perfect way to celebrate your accomplishment with good food and good company. Most commonly, a reveal party would be attended by others making the same project, but friends who share a deadline for diverse independent projects will enjoy them, as well. Even non-quilters can share in the fun. If you have a special friend or family member with whom you share news of your progress, by all means, include

him or her. Go out to eat at a favorite restaurant or prepare a special meal at home. Go ahead and get out the good dishes and make it an event. Display your quilt for all to see, then sit back and bask in the compliments!

If your social group is online, share a photo of your quilt as your “reveal party.” Do this on your favorite quilt forum or your own blog. If you blog, announce your deadline to help you commit to finishing your quilt on time. Share a favorite recipe, as well, for a party atmosphere.

SETTING PARTIES

Setting parties are perfect for Log Cabin projects where you can choose one of several block arrangements. Everyone loves a second opinion, and here you can get third and fourth opinions, as well.

So what constitutes a setting party? The star of the party is a set of completed blocks. A design wall is ideal for arranging the blocks, but a clean floor will do in a pinch. A digital camera will record the sets so you can preserve them, choose your favorite, and follow it when you assemble the blocks into a quilt top. Also use the camera to capture the festive atmosphere as you celebrate

completing your blocks and looking forward to the completed quilt. Put on your favorite music to keep things lively.

If everyone is making a similar quilt, only one person needs to have her blocks completed in time for the party. Be sure to take digital photos of each setting and e-mail these to the other participants so they can reconstruct their favorite set with their own blocks later. Setting parties also work among non-quilting friends. Non-quilters may have some very creative ideas for arranging blocks once they see how Log Cabin sets work.

ICE CREAM SOCIALS & POTLUCK SUPPERS

What complements a social event better than good food? Whether you are involved in a reveal party, an exchange, or other get-together, why not incorporate a potluck or an ice cream social?

When what you seek is face time with other quilters, why not invite some friends to join you for an ice cream social? If eating ice cream with all the fixins’ doesn’t float your boat, how about a chocolate-themed extravaganza where everyone brings a chocolate treat to share? Or a salad-only potluck could be just the ticket if you are not into sweets.

In this book, I offer several recipes for potluck or other party fare. You will find desserts and salads as well as entrees. These are favorites at my house that you will enjoy making for your family or taking along to a meeting and a luncheon or dinner with your friends.

If you plan to serve food at a meeting, be sure to keep warm dishes appropriately warm and cold dishes suitably cold until serving time. This is most easily accomplished if you plan to eat first and have your meeting later.

EXCHANGES

Exchanges are an excellent excuse for a get-together. You can swap blocks or split fat quarters and give half away in exchange for half of someone else's fat quarter. This adds scrap variety to your quilt, and the fabric pieces will remind you of the friends who provided them. Another possibility is to exchange strips of a width needed for a shared project. A strip exchange is especially appropriate when a pattern calls for many strips of the same width in different colors. The 1½" strips of Rolling Hills Log Cabin or the 2¼" strips of Rainbow's

End are good examples.

Though exchanges can be a fun way to add variety to your quilts and celebrate friendships, they are not for everyone. There will likely be different skill levels among participants. If you won't be happy with mixed results, don't sign up for a block exchange or a strip swap. Instead, opt for a fat quarter split. For a block or strip swap, it is helpful to agree on whether all fabric will be prewashed or all will not be. Dissenters may want to opt out or have a separate exchange.

FRIENDSHIP QUILTS

Autographs or favorite sayings can be exchanged for friendship quilts. These are often organized by family or friends for a gift quilt to commemorate an occasion, such as an anniversary or retirement. Participants may make a block or simply sign a patch of plain fabric, depending on their sewing skills. The blocks may be of each maker's unique design or all blocks may be the same pattern. Often, a unifying fabric is supplied. Friends Forever, Summer Holiday, Rainbow's End, and Thanksgiving all have center patches suitable for signing.

The organizers usually assemble the blocks into a quilt top and get the quilting done.

When many participants are non-quilters, one person often makes the blocks, incorporating patches signed by each participant. A party is the easiest and most fun way of collecting signatures. A Pigma pen is a good choice for an enduring signature. Freezer paper ironed onto the back of the patch will stabilize the fabric for ease in signing. You can also gather some or all of the signatures through the mail. Be sure to include the patch, a permanent pen, and a return envelope.

A signature quilt need not be made as a gift. You can gather signatures of friends, relatives, or even celebrities for a quilt you intend to keep yourself.

QUILTS FOR A CAUSE

Charity quilts are often made at retreats, where assembly-line work is done by a group, or individuals simply make quilts in the company of others. These are often quilts of simple designs. Rainbow's End is ideal for a quilt to be donated to a charity. Summer Holiday is a little more involved, but would make a stunning Quilt of Valor for a deserving recipient.

Raffle quilts are typically organized by a committee that provides pattern and fabric packets (and sometimes cut patches) for participants to sew at home. The committee completes the quilt when blocks are returned. A good raffle quilt has

simple blocks that make a stunning quilt. Thanksgiving is a perfect pattern for such a project. For this quilt, each packet should contain instructions and fabric for a single leaf. The leaves can be assembled into the larger blocks and pieced borders by the committee.

Occasionally, a handful of friends will get together to make a quilt to be raffled or auctioned as a fund raiser. A retreat is perfect for such a project. Some may cut and press while others sew. A challenging and exceptional quilt such as State Fair Star, Boston Beauty, or Morning Glory is a good choice in this case.

MAKE YOUR EVENT MEMORABLE BY PLAYING QUILT SHOW, THE GAME

Whether you are splitting fat quarters, setting Log Cabins, showing off your newly completed quilts, making charity quilts at a retreat, or enjoying an ice cream social, add to the fun by playing the new game designed by Judy Martin and her

husband, Steve Bennett: Quilt Show. In this game, you collect fabric to your heart's content and convert your fabric to quilt blocks and quilts. When the quilt show arrives, you had better be ready with prize-worthy quilts if you want to win the game!