

# Metro Family

Central Oklahoma's Monthly Celebration of Family

## QUILTING WITH AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE



Some say that stories of endurance through adversity are a dime a dozen. But when those stories are the very fiber of an heirloom masterpiece, the value soars. A quilt may well be priceless, but its intangible elements make it irreplaceable.

Such is the case with the quilts I treasure. When I began playing with dolls, my mother stitched me a doll quilt. The rectangular blanket reminds me of the old-fashioned handkerchiefs my Grammy

gave me. Could those quilt scraps have wiped mom's tears before they swaddled my dolls? Mom must have been very lonely after my dad died when I was barely two years old.

I took an old patchwork quilt with me when I went to college. The black and white pattern wasn't fashionable, but the quilt's provenance trumped my roommate's objections. Given to me by my step-grandmother, the quilt represented the unconditional love that Grandma Rose lavished on me when her son married my mom.

My collection also includes a quilt top in shades of goldenrod, mint, and rose. Stitched by my great-grandmother, the quilt was rejected by a relative who said, "The colors don't fit." But I can't imagine refusing a piece of handwork made by a woman who endured a difficult marriage to the town blacksmith and raised a garden that was large enough to not only feed six growing boys but also bring in profits at the farmer's market. One of those boys grew up to be my Papa, an ordained minister who preached until he was in his 80s. As far as I'm concerned, Great-Grandma Hayman put the pieces together just right.

There is a common thread that binds quilts together: it is an Attitude of Gratitude. When women took scraps from feed sacks or old calico aprons, they were thankful to be providing warmth for their family. Doubtless they were also grateful for a creative, albeit practical, outlet to express their appreciation for beauty. I, in turn, feel overwhelming thankfulness for the heritage that quilts represent—and not just my own quilts.

In her two books *Heavenly Patchwork* and *Heavenly Patchwork II*, Oklahoman Judy Howard has compiled stories that will resonate with anyone who has ever stitched, or received, a quilt. If my grandmothers were still living, I would give them Howard's books since the vignettes describe the heritage for which I am so grateful. But the books will make ideal gifts for my mother, who instilled in me a love for God and family.

It is worth noting that Judy Howard's compilation books fit into two broad categories. Both volumes appeal to Christian readers because each story features a complementary scripture reference. Both books are also self-published; some of the contributor's stories are not professionally edited. Yet most of the material is well-written, especially the closing paragraph of Jeanne Dunlap Knol's selection (page 16) in *Heavenly Patchwork*

But the most treasured [quilt] of all is the one Grandma pieced from Bull Durham tobacco sacks. After a hard day's work . . . she ripped apart each sack. Gingerly she washed the pieces, then dyed them with herbs from the garden . . . Although [the quilt] is faded now and certainly not the loveliest . . . my spirit soars as I am reminded of the countless blessings and sacred memories woven deeply into Grandma's quilts.

Oh, that each of us could have this joyful fiber sewn into our lives!

### A Perfect Gift



Judy Howard's books would make a great gift for someone who enjoys a stroll down memory lane or that hard-to-buy-for friend or relative who has given you a piece of handwork. To order, contact Judy at 405-751-3885 or visit [HeavenlyPatchwork.com](http://HeavenlyPatchwork.com). *Heavenly Patchwork* is \$12.95; *Heavenly Patchwork II*, which includes 32 colorful pages of quilts, sells for \$14.95. Some of the books' topics include:

**Protection:** Grandma's quilt coverings for windows and doors during the Dust Bowl.

**A Fierce Love:** A grandmother quilts for her grandbabies, both of whom survived because their mothers literally defied death.

**Survival:** A Civil War soldier uses a quilt as a cloak by day and a pallet by night.

**Humility:** A deliberate error (called a Devil's Eye) mars an otherwise perfect quilt.

**Healing:** Heirloom quilts retrieved, undamaged, from apartments adjacent to the Murrah Building.

Judy donates all book profits to quilting charities.



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