

June 13, 2005

My dear quilters,

Have you ever been frustrated? I have been in a perpetual state of frustration for about six weeks. The reason? I have been unable to send out mass emails to you, my group. The internet world is turning out to be suspicious of anyone who emails in bulk. There is an anti-spam law that went into effect in 2003 and we are just now feeling its effects. ISP's (internet service providers) are limiting emails to about 20-30 at a time. During my quest to get emails to you, I googled 'til I was blue in the face and got tired of being told to make my contact group of over 1,000 into smaller groups of 10 and send them between 12am and 5am.

I recently received a tip from someone that I believe is the solution: Microsoft's bCentral. We'll see how this works as the month progresses. I have 10,000 emails/month. Right now, I am seeing using about half that. This will depend on how efficient I am.

So please bear with me during our 'beta' month(s) with bCentral. And, if you don't hear from me, check out the website. That I do update.

Now for our belated May turned into June's Newsletter.

My Daily Pilgrimage to the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count Page

When I was going through my divorce over 25 years ago, one thing that drove me crazy was knowing I was one of those marriage failure statistics. Before the divorce, the marriage and divorce statistics were just that: Statistics. When I became one of those numbers, it didn't say much about me or all the hardships involved with a failed marriage.

Now fast forward to last week when I was listening to an audio book of the Canterbury Tales by Chaucer. The old English prose was difficult to follow so I started to think about pilgrimages. What are they and who makes them. [En.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org) defines a pilgrimage as a sacred or solemn journey taken by people of faith that is sacred according to their religion. Something stirred in me. I had a feeling I was making pilgrimages but to where and when?

The next morning, I sat down at Flicka (my computer) and started my daily routine. I clicked on the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count link on my homepage. As the site appeared on my screen, I found myself in a prayerful and reverential state. It was as though I was entering a church. I looked at the topic listings, the numbers, the nations represented. Each number represented a real human being with people attached to them. I finally arrived at the U.S. Fatality Table. I looked to see if there were more dead servicemembers listed. If not, I breathe a sign of relief. If there is an addition, I lament and pray for those who have lost their young warrior. This I realized was my pilgrimage.

I invite all of you to take this journey with me. I invite you to do the same to others. These statistics must be honored and not forgotten. They are more than numbers. They are our

brothers and sisters, sons and daughter, husbands and wives. If we don't take this daily pilgrimage, we will forget our wounded, our dead, and our battle fatigued troops.

QOV Fourth of July Mystery

In celebration of July 4 and our freedom, we're going to offer a QOV Fourth of July Mystery led by Judy Laquidara. Join the fun! The clues will be spread out over a month. Watch for details...coming soon.

To participate, join the QOV Mystery Quilters group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/QOV/>.

Patience with Chaplains

If there is one complaint that is number one, it's probably related to our dear chaplains. Please remember that the clinical chaplains have many duties they must attend to. They also have leaves, conferences, transfers and other administrative stuff to do. All of them have volunteered to take on the QOV project. I have explained to them re: the postcards and I think most of them have tried to comply. But, what I am seeing is that in their real world, the postcard idea is not working as envisioned.

The last thing I want to do is alienate the chaplains. I have told them there are NO strings attached with these QOVs. And, that is the case. Lt. Kralovec from Hawaii Marines wrote, *"Also, I've been getting a lot of emails from folks who have shipped the quilts. I'd like to respond to each one, but unfortunately I have very little time. Please don't think this is an indication that we don't appreciate what you are doing. Each Marine that receives a QOV will send a thank-you note. Thanks again."*

From now on, postcards are optional. If you want to include a stamped postcard, do so. But make its presence real obvious so the person opening your package will see it. If you are concerned re: your qov's arrival at the designated address, add a tracking number. Then, you will know it has arrived.

Marcia Steven's QOV Challenge

Marcia Stevens had a vision to give back. And, she gave back more than I can even begin to tell you. Her vision was to get 2,000 qovs. I calculated 1,994. But, I know that there are more that were delivered and more in the works because of her vision. I don't have adequate words to describe the heartfelt gratitude I feel for Marcia and her dedication for our wounded servicemembers. Her vision to give back is enabling our wounded to heal faster and know we care. Thank you Marcia! For more on this, please visit the website.

QOVs Going Downrange

Our QOVs are now going directly to the battlefields through various means. Hopefully by delivering them this way, more of our wounded will have QOVs awarded. BTW, "downrange" means on the battlefield.

Plans in the Works

1. We have real feelers (aka...real contacts) out there for help with shipping. One is with Fed-Ex and the other with UPS.
2. The International Quilt Festival in Houston is being coordinated by Judy Laquidara. If you have questions re: it, please contact Judy at judy@sunshinequilts.com.
3. Publicity publicity publicity. Some future projects are in the beginning stages. Once they take root, I will let you know.

New Use for QOV Pillowcase

This idea is from Barb. I think it's excellent. Anyone interested in drafting this pattern for the website?

I remember reading a post quite a while ago (by someone who visited injured soldiers at Walter Reed) on the www.adoptaplatoon.org website regarding the need for fabric bags that can hang off of crutches or walkers that hospitalized soldiers really needed for carrying their belongings to the bathroom or to therapy.

My suggestion is for a simple pattern (to be drafted by a creative sewer - maybe something could be posted in a newsletter?) for these bags. This way the cases (bags) would do double duty. They would be a great container for presenting the quilt and also serve a very needed purpose.

Maybe the pattern could be made downloadable on your website for quilt top makers to sew. For top makers that don't want to sew one, maybe there are serger people that might be interested in making some and having them available for chaplains to use.

My Helpers

I want to thank both Laurie and Judy for their involvement with QOVS. They have taken on much work with no pay. They have given me time to clean the house, feed the dogs and actually play/comfort/bounce my grandson, Jack. I know without a doubt, I would have burned out big time without this respite. They both deserve a round of applause, and if they were paid, I'd give them a raise.

QOV Stats

As of 6/13/05

Casualties-Killed in OIF-I,702

Wounded-12,855

Total Quilt-toppers-598

Total Longarmers-199

QOVS-Total 2004-348

QOVS-Jan 137

Feb-169

March-233

April-401

May-527

Total so far 2005-1,994

Grand total (plus a couple of hundred of unaccounted)-2,342 +++

Estimated Money Spent on 2,342 QOVS-\$351,300.

You ALL deserve a round of applause for your wartime efforts to cover our wounded.


Need for QOVS

Finally, don't forget that we are still at war. The fatality number keeps rising. Wounded abound. We humans are fickle by nature. Someone once told me that 10% of a group do 90% of all the work. If our servicemembers fought like this, we'd really be in trouble. Presently, we need over 400 qovs to fill our orders from the chaplains. And, more qovs WILL be needed.

I am asking all of you to keep our wounded on your and everyone's radar screen. Our QOVS DO make a difference in the healing of our wounded. Continue to demand the best for the QOVS. What really exasperates me is when people talk of supporting our military but then do nothing. Talk is REAL cheap.

Invite your friends, acquaintances to take a pilgrimage to the Iraqi Casualty Site. Look at those statistics with an open heart. If we don't do this, who will? We may be fickle, but let that be when we're buying fabric. Not when we are dealing with our wounded servicemembers who do so much and receive so little.

With much appreciation for what you have done, are doing and will do,



Catherine C. Roberts
Founder "Quilts For Soldiers"