

Greetings and Happy Holidays to All!

Hope all you procrastinators have at least bought your gifts for Christmas. I just got back from waiting in line at our local mailbox store for over 40 minutes with the other procrastinators. We all had to wait 'patiently' in addition to paying extra so our packages will arrive on time.

Many things have been happening and I would like to share them with you. They are presented as they occur to me and not in order of importance.

Business Stuff

1. QOV destinations

I am very happy to say our list of gov destinations has grown. We are now sending qovs to Walter Reed, Brooke Army in San Antonio, the Naval Hospital in San Diego, Madigan Army Medical Center (Fort Lewis in Washington State) and to several people involved with Vets. Along with these sites are people submitting individual soldier/marine names for qovs.

I know a lot of you have addresses for WR, BAMC etc. Because our list is fluid, please email me **BEFORE** sending off your qovs. My goal is to give you a choice of where and to whom you'd like to send your qov to. I do know that Walter Reed receives many quilts/afghans from around the country for their patients. The other medical centers are not so blessed.

2. Unbridled Communication

Our collective goal is making top quality QOVs. Sometimes, there is a quality question. The bottom line is this. If there is a problem, it's best to deal with it right away. Ignoring it will only make things worse. If you find yourself too timid, polite, genteel or chicken hearted, please allow me to intervene.

Examples?

From the Quilt-topper

1. Your top has been with the long-armed so long, it could be put on a milk carton for missing quilts. PLUS, she doesn't answer your many repeated emails. 2. You get your qov back and you notice the batting is poor quality. 3. You have threads to bury all over the quilt.

From the Long-armed

1. The quilt top has not arrived. Your window of quilting opportunity is quickly closing. Your attempts to contact the quilt-topper have been futile. 2. The quilt top arrives as hilly and cavernous as one could imagine. Not a flat area to it. 3. The quality

of fabric is poor and you know won't hold up under normal use. 4. Quality of seam stitching is so bad that the seams come apart as you put it on the frame.

Possible solutions.

For quilt-toppers re: your long-armed. If you don't hear from your long-armed after one month (or the agreed upon time), email/call them. Sometimes, people work best under lots of pressure. If you still don't hear from them, contact me.

In our group, we have had deaths, depression, divorce and dogs step in and play havoc with the 'one month' time period. We ALL understand this. But, none of us are mind-readers. Let the quilt-topper know. Let me know so I can get another long-armed if need be. No problem. And, you don't get demerits. Now, if you are a perennial procrastinator, let your quilt-topper know this *ahead of time* so she can start the deadline pressure about a week before it's due. (Also, please let me know so I can forewarn the quilt-topper.)

For long-armed re: your quilt-topper. If your window of opportunity has closed and you no longer can quilt the top, please let the quilt-topper and me know. I will find another long-armed. I can see that before I ask for a long-armed, I must know that the top is ready to be sent off. If the quality is not up to what you know it should be, think about **returning** the top. Talk to the quilt-topper. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, call/email me. I think this reinforces the need to try and make sure the top is HOW you want it before it is sent to you to quilt.

3. **Dial-up vs. Cable Internet**

I apologize right now to all you who are without a fast internet connection. I ran into Helen R and we were chatting about qovs and especially the pixs of the qov recipients. She told me it took FOREVER for the page to download. I should have been more aware of this. I am taking measures to assure the dial-up group will be able to access the pixs without waiting a couple of hours.

News from the Homefront

1. **Blessing of the Quilts at Walter Reed**

The following is Chaplain Kallerson's email which explains the blessing.

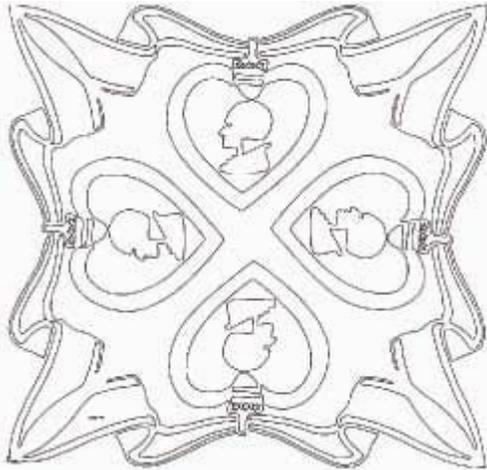
"Having a wife who is a very avid quilter and never has an empty lap, I am always looking for ways to add to the quilting ministry. At Walter Reed Army Medical Center, I started a new tradition. I was asked if I could bless a quilt before a soldier received it. So, I did. Then on Thanksgiving Day, we spread out over fifty quilts and held a small service, "The Blessing of the Quilts." That day we handed out over fifty on our wards. We average 5-8 quilts given out everyday due to our turnover of patients. The holidays were particularly heavy on us here. So, I will hold a small remembrance and blessing ceremonies as we need to before distributing the quilts we receive in the future. Hope you and quilters enjoy. Blessings, CK



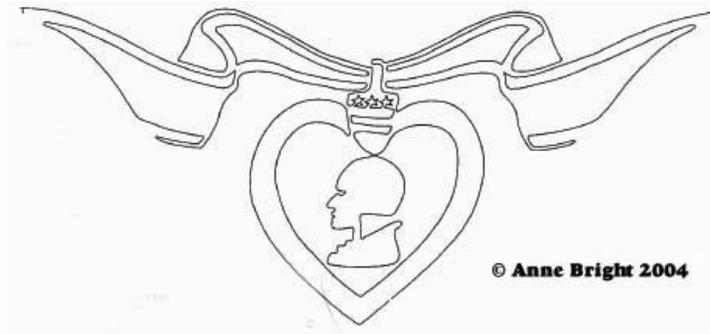
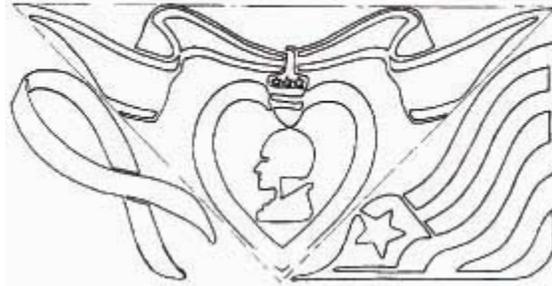
Blessing of the Quilts at Walter Reed

2. Quilts of Valor Challenge

I was contacted a month ago by Marcia Stevens who is a well-known longarm quilting teacher. She has been teaching and machine quilting for over twenty years. She wanted to do something for the troops and found our project. She was very excited because she could see 'unlimited possibilities' in respects of inspiring many quilters to make qovs. She has a newsletter **Unlimited Possibilities Newsletter** which has a large readership. She proposed a QOV Challenge with prizes provided by her contacts. I agreed to work with her on this project providing our contacts for the qov distribution. What we do will remain the same. The only difference now will be to include a stamped postcard with the qov which will then be collected and mailed to Marcia by the chaplain. This postcard will make you eligible for a drawing of one of the many prizes which will be held at the Machine Quilters Showcase (MQS) in Overland, KS on May 14, 2004. There are different categories: Single, Duo, Group and School Children. I will have more information on the website shortly with details. In the meantime, you can click over to www.houseofhanson.com for more information. Also, of particular note and interest to our machine quilters, Anne Bright has designed a wonderful purple heart quilting design for the challenge. They are pictured below. You can also see them at www.houseofhanson.com or www.annebright.com .



★ freedom isn't free ★
Thank you ★



3. Scottish fabric

About 6 weeks ago, a man from Scotland emailed me. Here is what he wrote with some editing. If you would like a piece of this fabric to include in your qov, please email me so I can give you my address. I will send you a five inch block. Please indicate which color: Red or green. Also Dr. Melrose requested that we send him pix of qovs that have the Tartan fabric incorporated into it.

First email

I live near Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. There are some 850 Scottish soldiers from The Black Watch fighting in Iraq. I could send you some Black watch tartan to incorporate in a few quilts to remind American soldiers of the men who fought side by side with them. Would you be interested and if so what type of material would you like?
Best wishes

Second email

Would you please tell me what type of fabric would suit you and your workers best, wool or cotton? It may be difficult to find Black Watch tartan in cotton. My wife pointed out that there are other Scots soldiers in Iraq so I should not be too specific in my choice of Tartan. I can buy sample swatches, 6"X9" of woollen cloth for \$11 per swatch and I would be happy to send you two or three if that's OK.

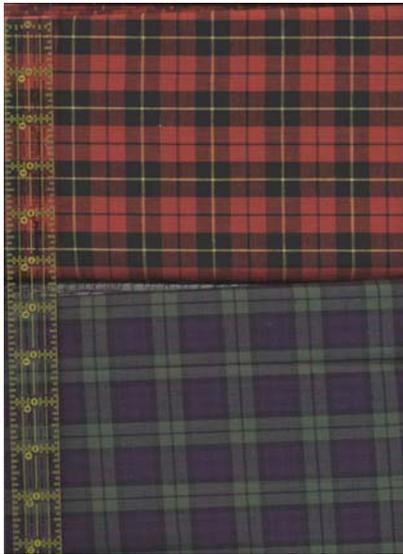
Please let me know if this will suffice.

Third Email

I am happy to tell you that the tartan material I promised you has been posted. The material was more difficult to find than I had anticipated, hence the delay. There is no shortage of tartan material in the form of kilts, scarves, skirts et cetera but to find tartan cloth is more difficult.

There are two pieces of cloth: The greenish material is Black Watch material, this is the regimental tartan of the Black Watch at present serving in Iraq. It is special to me as my mother's brother i.e. my uncle, served in the Black Watch during the first World War. Although he survived the war he was gassed and this left him with chest problems and he died a fairly young man. The second piece is the Wallace tartan, this is my wife's tartan her maiden name is Wallace. Wallace was originally from Wales (Wallensis) but he came to Southern Scotland and became a great hero. The Wallace motto is 'pro libertate' for freedom. You may have seen or heard of the film "Braveheart" this is supposed to be the life story of William Wallace but bears little resemblance to the truth. One final thing the material is cotton and I am assured that it should be suitable for you purpose.

Ron Melrose



Tartan fabric. Top is Wallace tartan and bottom is Black Watch which is the regimental tartan.

4. More than Numbers

According to my calculations, we have awarded over 181 qovs since last Nov! We heard about eight of these qovs from word of mouth or individual submissions from the website. When the names are submitted this way, we have a chance to learn more about the warrior himself. I will close with this one story. It was late in November on a Sunday. The humvee was being 'up-armored' (upgrading the humvee from no armor to armor) for the next days patrol. The four man crew left the next morning for

their mission. They struck an IED. The only soldier with grave injuries was the Sergeant. The other three were ok. By the time this young man arrived at Walter Reed, he had had one amputation. This was followed by another. When he was recovering, he asked someone to please contact the paramedic who was with him in the field in Iraq. He wanted to *apologize* for having been 'nasty' to him after his injury. He also reflected that he was glad it was he who was injured instead of his other three men. His wife and two young sons are staying in the Fisher House at Walter Reed to be with him as he recovers and then enters rehab. They are from North Carolina.

Conclusion

If any of you have any thoughts, critiques, suggestions, email/call me. I am open to change. Right, Lyn? And, finally, I can say with my whole heart that I am so appreciative for each and every one of you who has volunteered to make these quilts for all our wounded heroes. These kids are our collective babies. We are in this thing together. I believe our qovs quell those nightmarish memories our injured soldiers/marines suffer from. These qovs are sewn together with powerful prayers, love, and care times two-a-quilt-topper and a long-armor. What a glorious team we make.

Catherine

PS If any of you happen to be in Delaware, please let me know and we can visit.

If you would like off this list, just put unsubscribe in the subject line.