

## Happenings....

### Iron Quilter event

During the summer I was invited to enter my name as a candidate for the Iron Quilter Competition that was to be held in Ithaca New York on October 3, 2009. All candidates had to submit examples of their work and to state that they understood the limitations and demands of the rules. The competition is modeled after the Iron Chef competition except that the competitors have 3 hours instead of 1 to complete their task which is to make a complete quilt of a minimum size of about 1 foot square. All completed entries would be judged twice. People's choice and then Judges' panel award. Competitors are permitted to bring two pieces of fabric but all the other fabric would be placed in a table and at the start the competitors grab what they need to make a quilt. In August I received notice that I was accepted as one of four challengers. I started to plan how I was going to handle it. I had requested that challengers be allowed to bring "sous quilters" to help me just as the Iron chef contestants have sous chefs. My request was denied. I knew then I would have to be much better organized than ever.

Earlier in June I had given the first part of an art quilt class to a group in Simcoe. The course involves learning to piece fabric into a quilt in such a way that the quilt resembles an abstract expressionist painting. The fabric colours appear random and flamboyant as they are in the paintings of Jackson Pollack Riopelle and Canadian abstract painters such as the Regina Five. The course was split into two days and the second day was in September. The second part is the more difficult. In the first session students learn different techniques at shaping and piecing fabric to present the randomness of colour and tone. At the second session each student brings their blocks or even completed top and a discussion is held about design and focus of the piece, balancing colours and what embellishments would enhance or improve the quilt top. As well we discuss which quilting techniques would best unify and enhance the piecing.

I am continually amazed at how quilters can adapt to different styles. Most students in the class come from a traditional background and one always wonders if they can really think outside the proverbial box. However it soon became apparent with this group that they got it and they got it in spades. The collaborative discussions about each piece were very creative. All their talent and experience of the traditional piecing and fabric selection had been transferred into another technique. One felt as if something had been achieved.

As the same time some my other responsibilities and involvements were placing heavy demands on me and I was going to have to cancel my appearance at the Iron Quilter competition. During the discussions with the Simcoe class about final forms of the quilts it occurred to me that there was an alternative to simply cancelling Iron Quilter. I explained my predicament to the class and asked if one of them could take my place if I could negotiate sending as replacement with the organizers. It was unanimous that Susan Clark should be the one. Others agreed to accompany her for moral support, to be her cheering section and for the opportunity to buy fabric in New York.

I requested she replace me and promised I would be there next year if they would have me. I wasn't too sure if they would. Susan submitted samples of her work to the committee and they accepted. The contest was held on October 3, 2009. On October 4, I received the following e mail:

## DWAYNE!!!!

What a fantastic day. What a grueling 3 hours. They had a huge crowd that watched us working and even more people when the winners were announced. You will be proud to know that I used your techniques and made a "DW" quilt in your honour/absence. Apparently people had already pre-bid on you to win, mostly because you are a man and they were a little saddened you were being replaced and wanted to see what a man could do... The other Iron Quilters were very advanced in the "art" side of things - one actually travels the world showing her work, one had paint brushes, another had a tote stuffed with embellishments and they all seem to like the idea of using tulle (netting). I started to feel I was out of my league until they announced what the topic was: "To Curve and Not to Curve". Hello! My favourite things! There was a table to grab fabrics from - donations from guild members, cottons, silks, prints of all sorts and textures of every category.

Here's the mind blowing part! I won "People's Choice" award! And on the next breath I won the "Judges' Choice" award! I've never been so surprised in my whole life and my head is still swimming. I kind of felt bad that a Canadian was walking away with the whole kit and kaboodle but what can I say. Imagine a first-time challenge and a Canadian wins - in the U.S.!

Regards  
Susan

As I looked at the pictures and read the note I could feel the enthusiasm and sense of joy that Susan felt. There is always a certain sense of discovery that appears in these classes and that is what makes them worthwhile for me. However this time I got a lot more out of this class than I had thought.

Congratulations Susan .... A great Quilt... you make us all proud...



