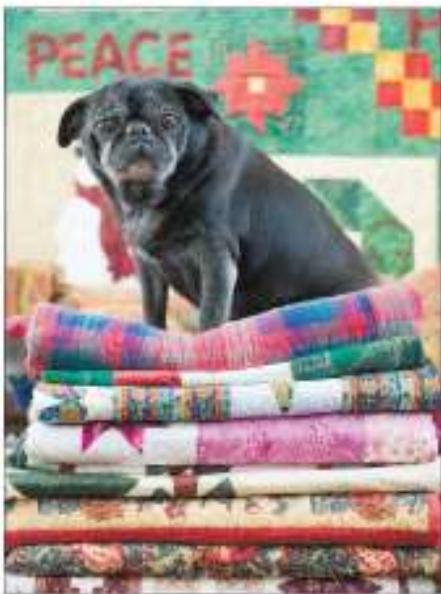


Quilting Queen

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By Marla Jo Fisher

I started quilting because I'm a cheapskate. I couldn't bear to throw away little scraps of fabric. This sadly misguided start to my story always gets a big belly laugh



from any actual quilters. See, they tend to spend money like drunken cowboys every time they get near a fabric store. Lyn Brown can relate. I went over to visit her house in Yorba Linda

to see her collection of 35 Christmas quilts, and discovered someone who's been in the throes of an obsession for a long, long time. After I adopted two little kids I no longer had a sewing room, as it was fitted up with a twin bed and enough stuffed animals to fill the San Diego Zoo.

These days, though, my kids are teenagers. My only role in their lives is to give them money, make them food and drive them places. So I decided to see if I still know how to use my sewing machine.

On my visit with Brown, she and her pug, Bee, showed me her enormous collection of Christmas quilts, which she spends a lot of time digging out every holiday season and hanging up around the house.

Santa Claus. Christmas trees, Rudolph and his reindeer posse. The Holy Family. Frosty the Snowman.

If there's a Christmas theme, Brown's got you covered. Literally. In one of her quilts.

The pride of her collection is the 20-foot-high friendship quilt that hangs over her couch this time of year, with colorful blocks made by friends and family. It even includes portraits of her three dogs: Bee, Pickles and the late Moe. It really wouldn't be Christmas without it, though her husband, Marlon, wishes it would be, since he's the one who has to get out the big ladder and hang it every year. The woman has a case of quiltmania that might be uncurable.

Brown told me she was 9 when her older sister got a sewing machine, and she was soon making Barbie clothes. The youngest of five kids, stuck with the hand-me-downs, she was soon remaking her old clothes into one-of-a-kind originals. In the 1970s, when everyone was still tuning in, turning on and dropping out, Brown took her first quilting class at age 16. She raised two kids and didn't really return to

quilting until she made one for her parents' 50th wedding anniversary in 1994. After that, she was a goner. She worked at home writing personalized romance novels and entertained herself by sewing. It was her husband who suggested that maybe, ahem, she should make some money from her obsession, to defray the wads of cash she was dropping at the fabric stores. Eventually, she ended up working as a quilting teacher for the North Orange County Community College District. Today, she runs a blog on quilting, sells her designs online and owns maybe 400 quilts, she's not exactly sure how many. In her quilting classes, she organizes quilt block swaps among her students, and plans to make an "ugly Christmas sweater" quilt this year. I asked her which of her 400 quilts she liked best. "Which of your kids is your favorite?" she retorted. Hmm. The one that cleaned up the bathroom that morning. Oh, yeah. That would be neither one.

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Lyn Brown of Yorba Linda is a registered quilter and teacher. Among her collection of 400 quilts, which rotate on display at the walls of her home, are about three dozen Christmas quilts.

