

Artists of the Month: Florida Keys Quilters: Stitching Community Together

by Karen Beal

You could not begin to count the hundreds of beautiful quilts that have passed through the skilled hands and humming machines of the Key Largo Quilters. The group officially meets on the first Saturday each month at 10am and work on their projects every Friday 9:30am-noon - both at Key Largo Library. You can stop in and watch the skill and love of color take shape. Since the 1980s that love has spilled over into community spirit as they create items for raffles, for people in need or other community groups. The Children's Shelter, Plantation Key nursing center and homeless shelters have been love-bombed by the quilters. You can find a quilted book shelf gifted at

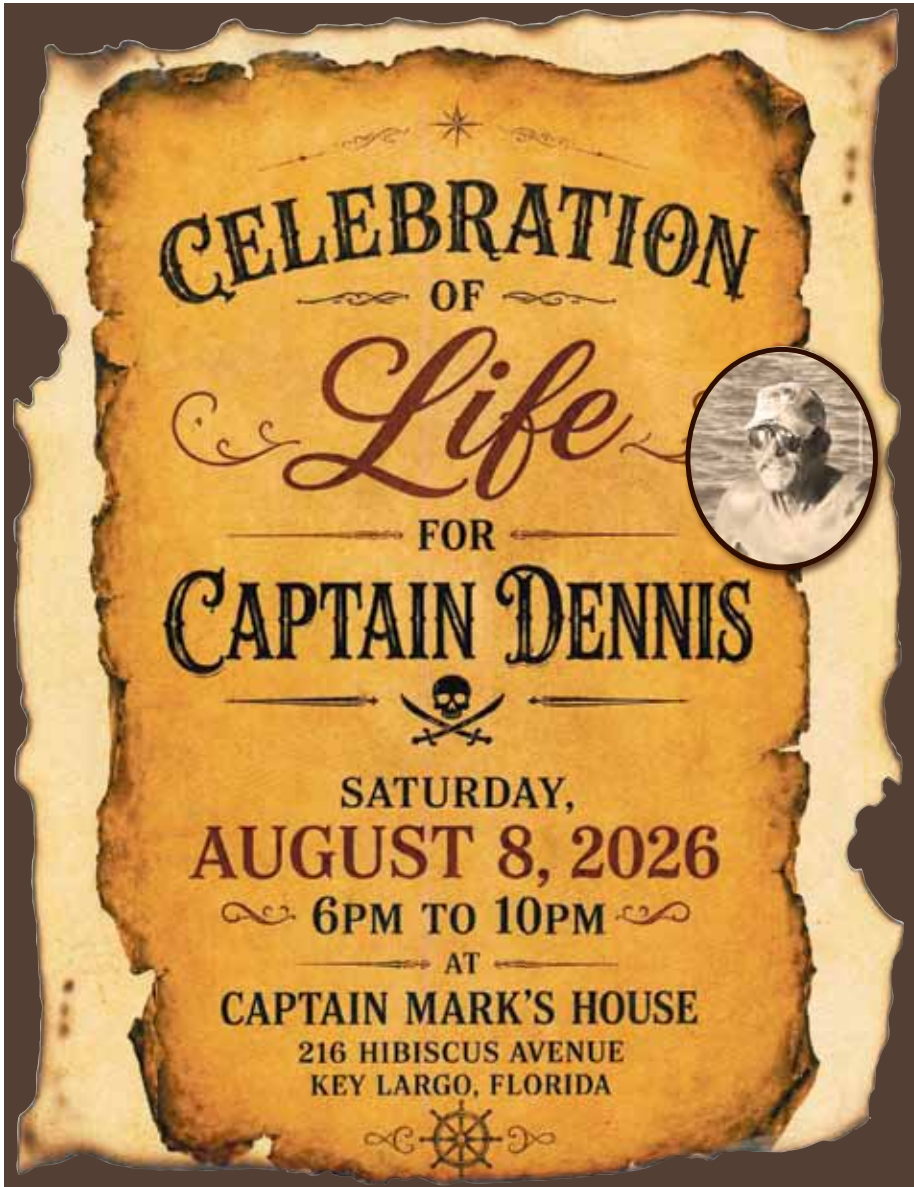
the Key Largo Library! Several members took time to share stories of why they can't stop creating this fabric art. "In my travels I try to purchase fabrics that are unique to that particular area. This has resulted in quite the collection of fabrics!" Helene Nemeth has been quilting for 47 years. Starting with her own family then making baby quilts and bibs for other new mothers. Now she sews for her grandchildren. Nemeth also teaches and coordinates programs for the group. "Seeing the creativity and combination of fabric and designs is inspirational. Each is uniquely personal. Watching the process is fascinating."



"Whimsical Hearts" - Mary Ann Sample found this Kim McClean pattern in 1995 and took 30 years to create it for herself. She loved the appliqué technique and added personal touches. The feather heart especially appealed to her.

Gwenn Maue keeps things organized for the quilters by archiving photos of their finished products and helping with promoting quilt shows.

Her admiration of her fellow quilter's skills is evident as she talks about the members. "I like the scrappy look. I built my own stash. I would go



"Affairs of the Heart " was intended to be hand appliqué, a technique that intimidated Mary AnnLindroth, especially with the many points. She improvised on the technique. This quilt placed 1st in the 2020 FKQ show and 2nd in the 2023 South Florida Quilt Expo.

Quilters Continued

to a shop in Miami that was fantastic. Finding time to do the planning and the work has never been a problem. It is therapy." Mary Ann Sample started quilting in the late 90s, inspired by her sister who did Seminole quilting. Early in her teens she made Barbie outfits and aprons for her aunties. Fabrics always intrigued her. "The camaraderie of our "Quilt Police" (well, someone has to enforce classic skills!) and the entire group has been wonderful. "

"I remember growing up with a quilt that my father's aunt had made in the 1930s. I began watching a quilting TV show that was on twice a day for half an hour. I liked the idea of cutting fabric up and sewing it back together." muses Mary Ann Lindroth. She is one of the most prolific quilter in the group. She mused that as one grows older, quilting is one social and creative thing that never



Even among the highly proficient quilters you have your rebels. Gwenn Maue loves watching the creative process and mixing with her many friends at the Friday morning workshops - but she often expresses herself with other fiber crafts.



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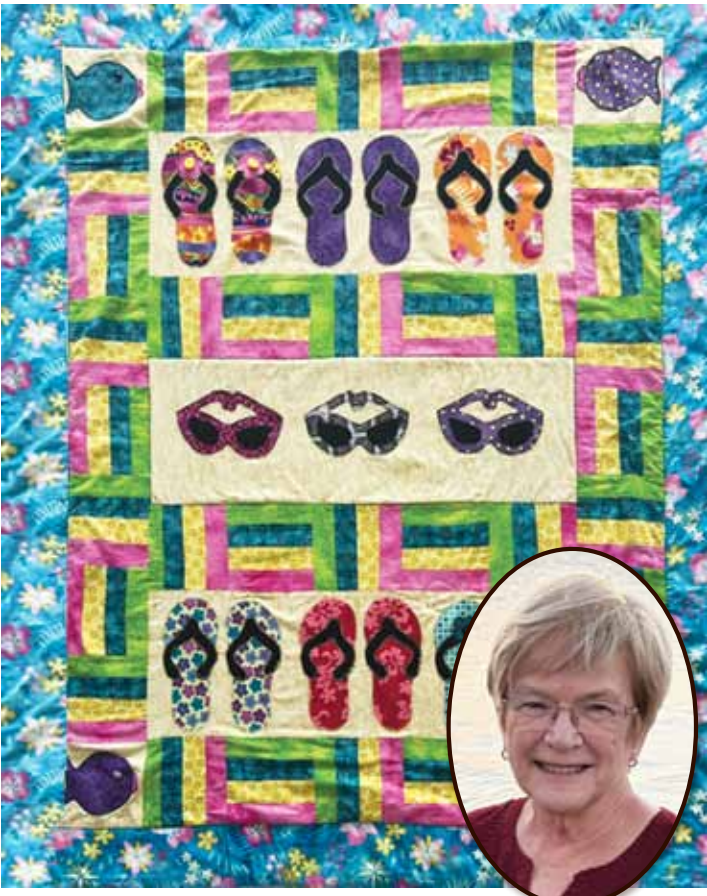
change - it just gets better. "It is the making and the coming up with my own ideas that inspire me." Gloria Barker has made many charity items including quilted backpacks for shelters. Inspired by her grandmother, she started quilting 20 years ago and belongs to 3 guilds. She honed her skills sewing clothes as a teen and then dresses for her daughter for pageants.

"I made my first quilt 50 years ago! Then another about 15 years later. About 5 years ago, after I retired I really started quilting." Sandy Robinson also made T-shirt quilts for family members - the snugly soft quilts. She especially loves seeing a beautiful quilt, then learning how to put it all together. She savors the sense of accomplishment when it is finished. Robinson makes many of the charity items.

The precision and attention to detail, while reveling in the color and feel of fabric, is a long term love affair. Each quilter stated as much in their own way. Sharing their work is just the result of that love spilling over into their world.



One of several cat-themed quilts by Gloria Barker includes a lot of handwork to embroider the details. She did most of it during COVID



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