

Marjorie Miller quilts treasured family heirlooms

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CONNEAUT LAKE — A needle, a thimble, some scraps of thread and material are all that Marjorie Miller needs to create a priceless coverlet, better known as a quilt.

"I've been quilting for as long as I can remember," said the Conneaut Lake resident who has developed skills handed down from her mother and grandmother.

Since leaving the farm 25 years ago, Marjorie has devoted many hours to crafting quilts. Her five children have each received a pair of quilts, and her 17 grandchildren each own one of their grandmother's treasured heirlooms. Next in line to receive examples of her handiwork may well be her 15 great grandchildren.

If, as the saying goes, a good quilter takes eight stitches to the inch, then Marjorie probably wouldn't qualify for the title. But

numerous awards earned in quilt shows and county fairs offer proof of her expertise.

Because of the long hours required to make a quilt, Marjorie rarely sells her finished products. Only those who are familiar with the time required would be willing to pay a fair price, she says. While her grandmother quilted for one cent a yard, Marjorie notes that today's going rate is between 32 and 40 cents a yard.

Although in years past, quilting was a necessity, "Now they'd rather buy a bedspread or a blanket," Marjorie points out. But anyone who has used a handmade quilt will attest to the superior warmth and comfort it provides.

Two time saving devices that Marjorie employs are a cutting board and a cutting wheel that were gifts from her family two years ago. Another time saver is the sewing machine that Marjorie



Marjorie admires the completed Bible History quilt, one of the most time-consuming quilts she has ever made.

employs for most of her stitching.

Among her favorite patterns are various designs of stars and the double Irish chain. Although she doesn't care to make embroidered quilts, she does admit that two of them are among her favorite creations. One is a patchwork of blue triangles in a star design. The idea for this quilt originated during one of her visits to a quilt show. Other sources of inspiration include magazines and newspapers.

Marjorie's favorite quilt is an embroidered Bible history pattern. This prestamped design was acquired from a Garden City, Missouri, radio station in 1935. The pattern was purchased for her invalid sister, who unfortunately passed away before she had time to finish it. Marjorie finally completed the family keepsake in 1973.

The blocks of the quilt include scenes from the life of Christ, as well as scenes from both the Old and New Testaments. All the embroidery work was done with a single strand of thread, and the entire quilt was set in a design of lavender squares with a quilted crown and cross.

One of Marjorie's favorite pastimes is attending monthly quilting sessions sponsored by the Women's Missionary Service Commission at the church where she is a member. Working together, eight to 10 quilters will complete a double-size spread in three to five quilting days. These quilts are usually donated to children's homes or other institutions.

The group has also sent its handiwork to a town in Ohio where



Intricate embroidery is part of the Bible History Quilt Marjorie made. The quilt shows the life history of Christ.

a sale similar to the relief sale held at the Farm Show Complex is held.

Quilters are always on the lookout for thimbles, says Marjorie, noting that her small, tapered fingers make finding suitable thimbles very difficult. Nor is paying a premium price for a thimble any guarantee that it will be durable. One such expensive thimble developed three holes by the time Marjorie had finished two quilts.

One thimble design that Marjorie found particularly fascinating was used by a Japanese neighbor who came to her to learn the craft. With its top end removed, the thimble resembled a ring. But Marjorie is quick to point out that a quilter must be accustomed to pushing the needle with the side of the finger in order to use this unique design safely.

Whatever its design, a thimble should have good indentation so that the quilter can get a firm grip on the base of the needle, says Marjorie.

Marjorie intends to take her

work with her on a vacation to Iowa later this year with her daughter. The two plan to complete a quilt during their four to six-week stay.

The veteran quilter will also be providing unique Christmas gifts in the form of her own stamped quilt patterns.

Marjorie cautions quilt lovers not to display their prized quilts in direct sunlight, as the sun will fade quilts over a period of time.

In addition to her quilting enterprises, Marjorie also enjoys crocheting. Each of her grandchildren and great grandchildren owns one or more of her crocheted items, including mittens, slippers, doilies and dresser scarfs.

Although Marjorie finds time for crocheting and gardening, a needle, some thread and scraps of material continue to be focal points in her life. And even though she has completed her goal of manufacturing quilts for each of her children and grandchildren, she intends to continue crafting family heirlooms for many years to come.



Marjorie recently completed a quilt of months which includes embroidered flowers. This quilt will be entered in a number of shows during the year.



Marjorie has four quilt tops pieced and will soon start quilting them. Some she will do herself, while others she will give to the church's women's society to quilt for a needy group.

Homestead
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