

# NO ONE EVER TOLD ME: PREPARING TO WORK WITH A LONGARM QUILTER

## ***Taken from the Lansing Area Long Armers Nov. 2006 Presentation***

*We are all at different levels, so don't be afraid to take your quilt to a professional longarm quilter. Please use these recommendations to make your quilts turn out beautifully. The better your prep work, the better the quilting job I can do for you!*

### **Fabrics and Thread**

Cotton is not the only fabric you can use in quilting. Specialty fabrics can be used.

Most bed sheets have too high a thread count to use as a backing.

Poly-cotton fabrics can pill.

Remove all selvages.

Use good quality thread. Match the colors to your fabrics.

### **Seams**

Sew seams carefully, completely, smoothly. Avoid splitting and open seams.

Remove puckered seams and pleats in your sewing.

Keep seam allowances even, as darker colors do show through lighter colored fabrics.

Be sure your stitch length is small enough to prevent your seams pulling apart.

Match the thread strength to your fabric.

Match your thread color to your fabric. Dark threads do show through light fabrics.

Clip ALL loose threads. Hanging threads can get tangled up in the machine.

Trim dog ears and threads so they don't show through your quilt top.

### **Pressing**

Press gently, so that you avoid stretching your fabrics, edges and seams.

Press seams to one side or press them open. Twisted seams make a bumpy surface.

Press your quilt top and backing.

### **Borders**

Take time with your borders, as they can make or break your quilt.

Measure in three places to get the right length; don't just add fabric to the outside edges.

Pin measured borders on evenly. Sew without stretching.

Quilt tops should be squared up.

Baste outside edges if there are lots of seams that could open up or if you have bias edges.

Wavy borders cannot be quilted away. Heavy quilting in one area is not desirable.

Avoid piecing your borders with bias seams.

### **Extras on Your Top**

Remove all sewing pins and safety pins.

Add embellishments, like rick-rack, ribbons, buttons, ties, after the quilting is finished.

Remove foundation-piecing paper.

Use very light fusibles and interfacings for appliqué work.

Remove basting threads in your top. They can become a tangled mess.

Avoid using spray adhesives and sticky fusibles.

Remove all hanging threads.

## **Batting**

I carry batting for purchase. Batting should be the same size as the backing – 6” larger than the top.

Thickness of batting affects the size of the finished top and backing.

Batting should be “tuggable”.

### **Things to Consider:**

1. Choices available: Cotton, Blend (Cotton and Polyester), Polyester, Silk, Wool, Alpaca
2. The amount of recommended stitch spacing (ranges from 2 inches to 12 inches.)
3. The type of quilting preferred (hand or machine quilting.)
4. The amount of shrinkage of the batting.
5. Finishes on the batting. (Thermal bonded, needle punched, scrim, resin bonded, etc.)

### **Terms:**

**Beard:** Migration of the fibers through the quilt top or backing. Cotton will not beard. Polyester will beard and that is why it needs to be bonded, needle punched (when used in a blend), or have a finish applied.

**Bonding:** Process used to hold batting fibers together to prevent bearding.

**Thermal Bonded:** Low melt fibers are combined with higher melt fibers, bonding the fibers together. May beard more than resin bonded batting. Makes a softer batting, but won't hold up as well in washing. Used mainly in polyester batting.

**Needle punched:** Fibers pass through a needling machine to stabilize and entangle the fibers.

**Resin Bonded:** A light resin coating or glaze is applied to both sides of the batting to add strength and prevent bearding. Good for comforters and quilts with less quilting.

**Scrim:** A very thin, sheer layer of nylon or polypropylene needle punched to one or both sides of the batting. Cotton batting with a scrim makes it possible to space quilting lines wider than normal and reduces the stretch of the batting. Batting with scrim is harder to hand quilt.

<b>Brand</b>	<b>Cotton</b>	<b>Blend (Cotton and Polyester)</b>	<b>Polyester</b>
<b>Quilter's Dream</b>	Stitch space - 8" Needle punched No scrim or resins Hand and machine	Stitch space – 12" Needle punched Scrim Machine 70/30	Stitch space – 10" Needle punched No scrim or resins No bonding
<b>Hobbs</b>	Stitch space – 4” (without scrim), 10” (with scrim) Needle punched Scrim Hand and machine	Stitch space – 4” Needle punched Resin bonded Hand and machine 80/20	Stitch space – 6” Resin bonded
<b>Warm Co.</b>	Stitch space – 4” (without scrim), 10” (with scrim) Needle punched Scrim Hand and machine	Stitch space – 4” (without scrim), 10” (with scrim) Needle punched Scrim Hand and machine Thermal bonded 50/50	Stitch space – 10” Needle punched Scrim
<b>Mountain Mist</b>	Stitch space – 2” to 3” Resin bonded	Stitch space – 3” Resin bonded 50/50	Stitch space – 5” Resin bonded Thermal bonded

**Let's compare brands (taken from Unlimited Possibilities, January, 2006 edition):**

Please see Coreen if you would like a copy of the complete chart.

## **Backing**

Best is a one-piece back. A one-seamed back is next best.

Many seams on the back can cause unwanted bulk.

If you piece a back, use wide seams and press open to distribute the bulk. Then tear off the selvages in the seams.

Use good quality muslin or other quilting fabric for your back.

Sheets are not good –often the thread count is too high causing skipped stitches and poly-cotton can stretch and pill.

Make backs 6” longer and 6” wider than the top so there is room to pin the backing to the frame and to clamp the sides of the backing.

Be sure back is squared up! Unsquare backs can sag or bag or pucker!

Please let me know if you plan to roll backing to the front as binding.

## **Working with Your Quilter**

I can provide you with an approximate finish date.

You can choose the type of quilting and thread that you would like used on your quilt.

Rush jobs will cost an extra \$20.

Please give me credit for the quilting when displaying your quilt in a show.

## **Things That Affect Pricing**

The type of quilting you request will affect the time and effort required.

I charge based on complexity of quilting.

- A) Pantograms and various meanders can be simple or complex.
- B) Custom quilting which can include the following:
  - 1. Individual block designs
  - 2. Custom Border Treatments
  - 3. Stitch-in-the-ditch
  - 4. Anything that can take additional time
- C) Specialty threads
- D) Changes of threads.
- E) Repairs that need to be done take time.