

Barbara Olson - CQG #044, 066, 155 (see also Shimmering Triangles #082, & Selvages #148)

Barb has always 'dabbled' in art, and created with "my hands", encouraged by her mother who was an accomplished sewer. At a young age Barb outfitted her paper dolls. In her teens she made sock puppets. In Home-Economics classes she loved making bell-bottom pants and started a wee business splitting blue jeans and adding a decorative triangle to make her friend's pants shine. She sewed clothes for herself and her kids, plus Barbie doll and Cabbage Patch doll clothes, and many Christmas gifts on a second hand *Singer* sewing machine she bought at *Shannon's Fabrics* (#078).

In the guild, Barb is famous for her *Selvages Trunk Show* - see #148 - that included quilts plus another 30 items including an apron, hat, lamp shade, stool cover, and bag all made from the selvage edges of quilters' cottons (2015-2016). This was definitely "out-of-the box" quilt making. She really took up the "art of quilting" in 2010 - and many of her pieces show her leaning towards quilting arts. Her older sister got her started and recently the tables turned when Barb got Maxine started on longarm quilting. Barb joined the Cranbrook guild in 2013; like so many other members she joined for the workshops. Barb soon treated the members to many interesting programs when she worked on the Programs Committee in 2014-2015 with Betty Valin (#127), Linda Wesley (#041) and Isla Collinson. That year's programs included: Mystery Quilt, Block of the Month, Paint Chip Challenge, Worst/First & Best Quilt, Quilt Strip Poker, Garage Sale, and a Post Card Exchange with the Blue Mountain Quilters, which is her sister's guild in Port Coquitlam. One particularly fun activity was the "Baby Scavenger Hunt Challenge" to make a quilt that incorporated baby items through blocks, fabric, appliqués, and embellishments.

Her next job in the guild was keeping the Membership List from 2015-2017. Barb took this on "to learn the names of the members". She passed this job to Brenda Arnold (#060), who also wanted to figure out "who was who." Another 'fun activity' introduced by Barb is the *Free Table* where members drop items they no longer want for others to pick-up - "one man's junk is another man's treasure." From 2019 to 2023, Barb was in charge of organizing workshops. By then, after a lot of poorly attended classes, the plan was to announce the workshops being hosted by the local quilt shops and only plan in-house sessions with members as instructors. After the stoppage for Covid, the Executive with Barb revised that plan by adding workshops and mini-sessions using the ZOOM ® platform (2022-2023). The members were treated to full workshops: "ScrapTastic" with Cheryl Arkison (Calgary, AB) and "Hoover Quilting" with Peter Byrne (Toronto, ON). Mini sessions were "Machine Quilting Rulers" with Silly Moon Quilting Company (Fraser Valley, BC), "Get Your Motor Running" with Melissa Marginet (Saskatchewan), "Fabric Painting and Quilting" with Helen Godden (Australia), and "Quilting as to War" with Joanna Dermenjian (Toronto). These sessions were open to all the East Kootenay Guild members - Creston, Kimberley, Golden, Invermere, Fairmont, Wasa, Jaffery, Fernie. The workshops cost ~ \$60/participant.

Barb was also a speaker at the *Regional Quilt Conference* hosted by the guild in 2023. Her topic was "*Art Quilting Helen Godden Style*" as Barb had taken a full workshop with Helen through *Castle Sewing* in Langley, BC, and has taken a number of her online "quilt and paint along" sessions. One of these pieces, "Flying into Colours", hung in the guild's 2022 "*I Quilt*" art gallery exhibit, along with Barb's *Harry Potter Quilt*, a piece she did from Gloria Loughman's online course, and her bicycle collage, "Abbey Lane" by Blossoms & Spokes (2018). The collage was featured with the article on the exhibit in *Articulate 2025* (articulatemag.ca).

To make her "art" Barb has a dedicated sewing space in the lower part of her and Dale's duplex. Her mid-arm machine, a *Q'nique 15R* on a 10 foot frame is in an adjacent room. Her

scraps are neatly organized in fabric/mesh baskets that she made following the “Scraptastic” workshop with Cherry Arkison. Barb has space for her two favourite machines - a *Baby Lock* and a *Juki 98*. She bought the “Baby Lock” for herself as a retirement gift in 2011. She says that’s when her love of quilting really started; when with the new machine, she started sewing with her friend Betty Valin (#127) who “taught me all the basics of quilting”.

She bought the *Juki 98* in 2015 to machine quilt all the pieces she was making, then “up-graded” to a mid-arm on a frame. She also has her “first new machine” from 2006, which is a reliable *Kenmore 30* (from Sears) and two *Featherweights* - one she uses for workshops, the other is waiting for her granddaughter. Her cutting table takes up the centre of her sewing space, her ironing station one end, and her design wall is opposite. Barb has made well over 90 quilts - many she has generously given to family, friends, and the community, though she still has a cupboard full! Most were made for the pleasure of creating or to learn a new technique, or now a days many are “to use up scraps”. She doesn’t have a big stash - she buys what she needs - and only has two projects on the go at a time. Recently, she has taken to yarn couching retired wool blankets on her mid-arm.¹

Barb’s first quilt was a “hockey memorabilia quilt” for her son, which she describes as a “total disaster”. Barb spent many hours in arenas; that’s where she first met another member Brenda Maudie. “*I knew very little about making a quilt. I used poly-cotton, hockey jerseys that were not backed with stabilizer, and printed hockey pictures done on my home computer. I straight line quilted it but soon realized I didn’t do nearly enough quilting...it looked quite impressive, but unfortunately did not stand the test of time...the pictures cracked and the jersey’s stretched. My hope was to take it apart and redo it, but it never made it to the top of the list and has now disappeared.*” That is a common lament about the “first quilt”. Her second t-shirt quilt was a success - this was shirts from her travels with her sister making each of the 12 blocks cost ~\$35 or more (\$420+)!

During Covid (2020-2021), Barb connected online with a group from New Brunswick, attended their lectures and workshops and started sewing with them on ZOOM - “the time difference wasn’t in my favour ... I had to start at 7AM.” She also joined the lectures offered online by TAGOR (Textile Arts Group of Richmond). Recently she joined the *Calgary Longarmer’s Guild* - another online opportunity. Locally she joins a small group using the Microsoft Teams platform for a weekly quilt together and a local group of quilters with mid/longarm machines to talk “shop”.

For the past two years Barb has been part of the guild’s *History/Documentation* project and part of the *Quilting in Schools Project*. A favourite guild activity was the first Regional Conference she attended in 2014 hosted by the Creston Valley Quilt Guild. The speaker was “The Bag Lady”, Yvonne Brownfield. Yvonne was the Creston quilter that met Lisa Sharpe and Dominique Drummond, the founders of the Cranbrook Guild, at the Banff School of Fine Arts Quilt Conference, and helped with our guild’s start-up by sharing experience and the *Constitution and Bylaws*.

Quiltmaker	Barbara Olson (nee Milburn)
Date and place of birth	June 30, 1952 Fernie, BC

¹ See Bethanne Nemesh, “Explore the Art of Yarn Couching”, White Arbor Quilting, 2020 (whitearborquilting.com)

Father Occupation	William Milburn Coal Miner
Mother Occupation	Doreen Hockley Office Worker
Date and place of marriage	March 22, 1986 Cranbrook, BC
Spouse Occupation	Robert Dale Olson Truck driver
Quiltmaker Occupation	Postal Worker
Children	1 daughters, 1 son & 2 stepdaughters
Education of Quiltmaker	Grade 12
Where Quiltmaker lived	Fernie, BC; Cranbrook, BC
Ethnic/Ancestry Background	English

CQG #044 - *Project of Dome: Harry Potter Bookcase*

Quiltmaker/Owner: Barbara Olson 1/2"1/4"

Pattern	"Project of Dome: Harry Potter Bookcase" by Jennifer Ofenstein, <i>Fandom in Stitches</i> : 2011 & 2015 (fandom in stitches.com)
Subject	Books and symbols from the Harry Potter novel series (JK Rowling, 1997 -2016) - Crystal Ball, Potions, Harry's Glasses - Mandrake, Golden Snitch - Hedgewig, Butterbeer, Monster Book, Harry's Wand, Candle - Umbridge's quill, Weasley's Wizard Wheezes Bag, Tea cup - Sorting Hat, Cauldron, Berts Botts Every Flavour Beans
Date	Specific date: started 2015, completed 2021
Size	L 66 1/2" x W 59"
Overall style	Finished Wall Hanging Realistic Varied blocks Paper Piecing
Block	Block: L 10" x W 10" square Block spacing/row: side-by-side & plain sashing Paper-pieced blocks Number of blocks: 25

Sashing	W 1¼", one fabric, straight/horizontal between rows Colour: brown
Border	Border 1: W ¼", one fabric, straight Colour: brown Border 2: W 6½", sides & top are one fabric; bottom pieced [legs of bookshelf - 2 paper pieced blocks]
Edge finishing	Facing W 1", straight corners, machine front/hand back
Batting	80/20, medium loft
Top fabric	Cotton, plain weave Motif: geometric, plaid, novelty, polka dots, mottled, plain/solid Feature colour: tonal, grey, black, brown, burgundy, blue, green, red, orange Background colour: gold
Top piecing method	Machine piecing Foundation Paper Piecing
Backing	Hanging sleeve Vertical pieced, multi fabrics Cotton, Plain weave Feature colour: black, red/brown Motif: dots
Quilting	Mid/Longarm machine Thread: <i>Glide</i> gold Patterns: in-the-ditch, diagonal cross-hatch, pebbles, ribbon candy, waves, swirls, meander, feathers,
Condition	Used (as a wall hanging)
Label	<i>Fandom in Stitches</i> <i>The Project of Doom</i> 2015 <i>Harry Potter Bookcase</i> <i>Quilted by Barbara Olson 2015-2021</i>
Commnet	This quilt was exhibited in 2022 at the "1401 Galley" <u><i>I Quilt Show</i></u> of the Cranbrook Quilters Guild

CQG #066 - *Temperature Quilt: Cranbrook, BC. 2023*

Quiltmaker/Owner: Barbara Olson

¾"

Pattern	Rebecca Cartwright, <i>Temperature Quilts: Let Nature Aid in Design</i> , "Quilting Arts Magazine": 2022 (Winter), p 106
Subject	Daily temperature span - Cranbrook, BC for 2023
Date	Specific date: started January 2023; completed January 2024
Size	L 74¼" x W 65¼"
Overall style	Finished quilt One patch (square with hexagon appliqué)
Block	Block: W 3½" x L ½", square Spacing: side-by-side Number of blocks: 418 Appliquéd
Edge finishing	Binding: W ¾", straight, machine front/hand back Colour: grey/ black stripe print
Batting	wool, medium loft
Top description	Cotton, plain weave Motif: tonal, plain/solid, geometric Feature colour: 20-25 colours "cool to warm" colours - red through to deep purple Most prevalent colours: red, pink, yellow smatterings of green, blue Background: off-white, multi neutral tones Quilt Fabric Designer: Moda Bella Solids
Top piecing method	Machine piecing Hand Appliqué - English paper piecing
Appliqué	Motif: hexagon Method: turned edge/blind stitch
Backing	Horizontal pieced Cotton, plain weave Feature colour: blue, rose, white Motif: mottled
Quilting	Mid/Longarm machine Thread: <i>Glide</i> ; Colour: linen Pattern: edge-to-edge pantograph
Condition	Unused

Label	<p>Hand printed, Machine pieced checkerboard with fabrics used for specific temperature ranges [See photo]</p> <p><i>Temperature Quilt</i> <i>Cranbrook, B.C. 2023</i> <i>Pieced and Quilted by</i> <i>Barb Olson</i></p>
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CQG #155 - *Canada Post Quilt*
 Quiltmaker/Owner: Barbara Olson

Barb worked for Canada Post first as a Letter Carrier then finishing as a Counter Clerk. She was able to get a number of 'decommissioned uniform shirts' to make a "memory quilt" for herself. Decommissioning involved removing the Canada Post 'badge/logo' to prevent a proper uniform shirt going to a thrift shop. The Letter Carrier shirts were light grey stripes and the Counter Clerk's were blue stripes.

Canada Post has been a vital service in the local quilting community. Since even before the start of the guild in 1985, members were ordering fabric and notions from out-of-town shops. Cranbrook quilters were fortunate to have local stores (#078), however, other East Kootenay communities did not always have a local fabric or quilt shop. Even today, 2025, Cranbrook, Kimberley, and Creston have shops; Fernie, Golden, Invermere/Fairmont, Wasa and Moyie don't have shops. Specific fabrics, notions like longarm rulers, machine parts, threads, etc. may have to be ordered and shipped. Quilting is a huge industry, with a great variety of wares and most stores now have online and in-store shopping. A few have gone completely to online shopping.

Pattern	"Disappearing Nine Patch" - method of cutting a 9 patch to produce four separate identical blocks
Subject	Canada Post Uniforms
Date	Specific date: 2011
Size	L 73" x W 53½"
Overall style	Finished quilt Repeated blocks
Block	L 6½" x W 8¼", rectangle Block spacing: side-by-side Number of blocks: 88
Border or Frame	W 2", straight, one fabric Colour: red
Edge finishing	Binding: W ½", straight, one fabric, machine front/ hand back Colour: blue
Batting	Polyester, low loft

Top fabric	Cotton, Polyester, Plain weave Motif: plain/solid, stripes Feature colours: blue, grey, red Specific fabric: Canada Post Uniform - Letter Carrier (light grey), Counter Clerk (blue).
Top piecing method	Machine Piecing
Novelty technique	Disappearing Nine Patch
Backing	One fabric, cotton, plain weave Feature colour: blue Motif: geometric
Quilting	Domestic Machine Thread colour: grey Patterns: lines of swirls (custom)
Condition	Well used, damaged
Label	<i>Disappearing Nine Patch Made with Canada Post Shirts Pieced and Quilted by Barb Olson</i>
Comment	Picture was published in: CENTRAL YUKOOTOK HERITAGE CLUB Newsletter #38, November 2018 (Vernon, BC)