

Betty Wardle (Elizabeth Sylvia) (Cranbrook, BC) - CQG #036, 050 and 035 (Vintage top of Betty's mother Elizabeth Bajnok)

Quiltmaker's story (#036, 050) (December 2024)

Betty Wardle joined the Cranbrook Quilters guild in 1992 and never left. She's known for her wild sense of humour and for always winning the draws! Betty was the oldest of three children (and "not the prettiest"), grew up in a railway station-house (i.e. no amenities like running water) in Gull Lake, SK, worked in London, England and traveled Europe as a 20+ year old, raised her boys, and took up quilting about age 50. Her mum, Elizabeth Bajnok (#035), was a quilter, so Betty decided she "should try". She always loved the quilting fabrics and as her boys had left home, she decided it would be lovely to make them quilts like her mum had made. By this time, Betty had settled in Cranbrook and her mum was in Medicine Hat, AB, so she knew she couldn't rely on her mum's help. Betty's first quilt and likely the idea of joining the guild, came from the classes she took with Lisa Sharpe - Lisa's famous sampler quilt - in 1992 (see #023). Betty has stayed in the guild because of the camaraderie, the different ideas members share, and 'the shopping sprees and retreats across the line'. Across the line is the local term for the USA states of Idaho Montana, and Washington, which were popular spots for day shopping trips from Cranbrook, especially as the fabric selection was broader and the yardage cost less than in Canada. Since Covid and the falling value of the Canadian dollar, the day trips have lessened.

Recounting her contributions to the guild, Betty described the anxiety, as workshop planner (2002-2003), of booking a renowned teacher, Dianne Jansson¹ to teach *Mary Ellen Hopkins Machine Piecing Perfection - Part 2*. Members were not signing up. Betty's fear was that nobody would take the course and the guild would still have to pay Dianne. In the end, the class was filled, but that anxiety for workshop planners persisted through the years as the workshops, though wanted, have not been well subscribed. Betty herself taught two patterns: fractured 9 patch² and Convergence³.

Betty had picked up some quilting skills from her mum and the quilting bees in the parlour. Her grandmother and six aunts quilted. Her first actual quilt was the Lisa Sharpe 12 block sampler in "red, white and blue, for Pete's sake!". Betty says that she had no idea about fabric choices and the red might have been polyester rather than cotton. At the time, Betty was a volunteer at Fort Steele Heritage Town starting as a cookie baker and ice-cream maker. One day, the hand-quilters gave her a 'needle and thimble' so she joined their group. Her first quilt was quilted by the Fort Steele hand-quilters.

¹ Dianne Jansson, Diversity Quilting, Pritchard, BC was a certified instructor of the Mary Ellen Hopkins (1932 - 2013) piecing perfection techniques. These cutting and piecing techniques made it possible for quilters to complete tops in a fraction of the time. Her methods such as strip piecing, slap back triangles, and PPM (Personal Private Measurements) with her philosophy about colour in the phrase "all reds go together" were revolutionary to quilters who had been indoctrinated with the "quilting rules" in the 80s and 90s. The techniques were published by Hopkins in her book "It's Okay To Sit On My Quilt (1989, ME Publishing, Santa Monica, Ca). Hopkins, with fellow quilter Martin Michell, invited the acrylic ruler in 1979, the same year that the rotary cutter was marketed for quilters.

² Fractured 9 patch or disappearing 9 patch is made by cutting a basic 9 patch block in half twice: 1 vertical cut and 1 horizontal cut. The four equal sections are rearranged and sewn back together to make a complex looking block.

³ Tims, Ricky. *Convergence Quilts: Mysterious, Magical, Easy & Fun*. C&T publishing, Inc. Lafayette, Ca: 2003

Early on, Betty connected with a group of quilter friends. Betty with Bev Higgins, Audrey MacKinnon (#053), Donna Cockwell, Marilyn Barnett, Jeanette Oddy, and Jennifer Rea were referred to as the “Vultures” by a friend who jokes that they are waiting to descend on her stash. Betty often uses the descriptor “stash beyond life expectancy” when she talks of her own fabric collection. Quilt retreats are still a favourite activity. She’s also connected to other women’s groups - sorority and a hiking group and volunteers at the local Hospital Auxiliary Thrift Shop, plus she sings in a choir.

Betty loves paper piecing⁴ because it is so precise. Two of the pieces Betty has registered are FPP patterns. Everyone of the 30 or so quilts she’s made has been different. Mystery quilt’s are “fun - you never know what will happen”. Betty is drawn to patterns that are different from the traditional. She still likes fractured-9-patch and Kira⁵ Quilts for easy to construct pieces. The Ricky Tims “Convergence” technique has been the pattern for about six wall-hanging or table-topper gifts. One for an Irish friend, where the fabric motifs were shamrocks and leprechauns. An unfinished piece is made of four convergence panels, that she plans to add appliquéd bamboo shoots. Betty likes to refer to unfinished pieces as PHDs (projects half done) as it sounds better to say she’s “working on her PHD” than that “she’s working on a UFO”.

Betty labels quilts that she gives away, and includes washing instructions. She does have to talk to herself when gifting quilts, saying “it’s given away, and that’s it”, for as many quilters lament, not everyone has a grasp of the work involved in making a quilt. Her guild friends tell tales of finding quilts they have gifted as trunk liners, pet blankets, or ‘drying out on the barbed wire fence’.

Most of her pieces have been made for gifts, and include quilts of all sizes, placemats, table-runners and wall-hangings. She has ten grand-kids (5 from her boys, and 5 bonus from Bob’s kids), plus a sister and brother so nieces and nephews and their children.

Betty has sold a couple of pieces, and thinks about selling at the Eureka Outdoor Quilt Show (yearly in August), like a lot of the members, but hasn’t figured that out yet. She does have some pieces on her beds at home. One is a Two-Colour Mystery pattern taught by guild member, Lynn Zak (#069), in 2014. Another is “Trip Around the World” - a pattern introduced to her by a Marilyn Barnett that starts with a centre square and radiates outward with hundreds of colourful squares creating radiating big squares. If there is a draw, chances are Betty will win. She has acquired a number of patterns this way. Some waiting for her attention are more foundation paper piecing designs that she won at workshops with Martha Penner (Fernie) who is a certified teacher of Judy Niemeyer (quiltworx.com) patterns. She has shown her pieces in the guilds quilt shows/exhibits, but never in other venues.

Betty’s quilting space is an office-come-sewing-room with her ironing board and cutting table at easy access. Though she often moves to the ‘dining room table’ that is a brighter space, leaving it cluttered with her quilting stuff for days at a time. At home she creates on a *Janome 6600 Memory Craft* machine, which she bought from a member, and for workshops/retreats she uses a smaller Janome bought in town at *Sugar Town Quilt Company*. Her very first

⁴ Foundation paper piecing (FPP): the technique uses a paper pattern of the block, where fabric pieces are sewn to the paper in a sequence. The paper foundation stabilizes the block while it is being constructed. Once the block has been sewn, the paper is torn away. With FPP, almost any size or shape or pattern is possible.

⁵ Kira Quilts Pattern: designed by Gudrun (www.geguiltdesigns.com 2017). The pattern uses a Creative Grids Stripology Squared Rule. It starts with 10” squares of a variety of light and dark fabrics and uses a technique where a light and dark fabric are layered face-to-face and cut as a stack. The pieces are then rearranged into a the pattern

Janome was “bought” with *Save-On-Foods* (Overwaitea) points. She would like a *Featherweight* - she sees other members with these vintage machines at the guild’s Quilt-til-You-Wilt Saturday’s. They seem so compact, easy to transport and sew well.

Fabrics types of choice are batiks and Stonehenge (*Northcott Fabrics*). She started with the earth tones of brown, green and gold, but has evolved to like the turquoise and teal blues more. She really enjoyed the fabric shopping trips to the “States” with her fellow quilters, and the retreats in Kalispell, Montana (*The Quilt Gallery*) and another place was in Bonners Ferry ‘next to he funeral home’. She was a fan of ‘fossil fern” print motifs and tells a story of fighting with her quilting (and sorority friend) Joy Colombo over the fossil fern prints at the sale when Shannon’s Fabrics was closing. Today she ‘shops’ in her stash, and only purchased the coordinating pieces she needs.

Betty is a Tuesday morning hand-quilter with the guild, and recently re-joined the *Fort Steele Heritage Town* hand-quilters group for the summer months. She only hand-quilts with a group though she has hoops, a plastic frame, and a home-made wood frame for larger pieces that her husband made. In the early days of the guild, the hand-quilters helped each other and gathered at homes for small quilting bees. Since those early days, she has mostly sent her tops to a long-arm quilter. She completes the small wall-hangings with stitch-in-the-ditch. The first few big quilts, back in the 90s, were sent to Penticton. Later, Donna Sheppard of *Donna’s Quilting and Designs*, when she was in Sparwood, BC. After Donna moved, a fellow guild member, Joy French, has done most of Betty’s quilts. She’s currently trying to convince herself to just “do-it”, referring to machine quilting, as she has two Kira quilts for the community. She may use the *Gammill* long-arm at *Sew Creative Chalet* in Kimberley. The shop offers it for free to quilters doing quilts that will be donated to the community.

Most of Betty’s quilts are bound in the ‘traditional’ way - the binding is sewn to the front and turned, then hand-stitched to the back. The flange-method⁶ is now her binding of choice for small items and even some bigger pieces, as it’s completely done by machine.

Quilting definitely helped Betty though the Covid ‘shut-down’. Many a woman friend complained that her husband was driving her crazy being stuck in the house all the time. Not so for Betty and Bob - Betty quilted and Bob painted. Having a “creative outlet” made a difference. Her plan is to take her quilting stash and tools to the Care Home... when she makes that move.

Quilter	Elizabeth Sylvia Wardle (nee Bajnok)
Date of Birth	March 31, 1942 Gull Lake, Saskatchewan
Father Occupation Birthplace	Gabriel Bajnok CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway)-Section man Vari Bereg, Hungary
Mother Occupation Birthplace	Elizabeth Rakai Homemaker/Teacher’s Assistant Punnichy, Saskatchewan

⁶ Flange binding: includes two fabrics - a main fabric and an accent. The method leaves just a small (1/8 inch) edge to the accent piece showing. The binding is sewn to the quilt back, then turned and sewn (by machine) to the quilt top by stitching-in-the ditch between the main fabric and the accent edge.

Date & place of marriage	June 25, 1988 Cranbrook, BC
Spouse	Walter Robert (Bob) Wardle Millwright, Cominco Ltd
Quiltmaker occupation	Steno/Travel Agent for Defence Research Establishment (Suffield, AB), Insurance Agent (Medicine Hat, AB), Steno, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (Cranbrook)
Children	2 sons + 4 bonus
Education of Quiltmaker	Bookkeeping Certificate (College of the Rockies - Cranbrook)
Where Quiltmaker lived	Gull Lake, SK. Medicine Hat, AB. London, ENG. Wilcox, SK. Cranbrook, BC.
Ethnic/Ancestry Background	Hungarian

CQG #050 - North American Bear Paw

Quiltmaker/Owner: Betty Wardle, Cranbrook, BC

The North American Bear Paw quilt was made for “fun” though Betty describes that it could have been “blood, sweat and tears” due to a mistake in the pattern, if it weren’t for her quilter friend, Lynn Zak. Betty’s oldest granddaughter will likely inherit the quilt. Though Betty also says with her typical teasing mien: I’m keeping it forever; they can wrap me in it and put me in the ground.

Pattern	North American Bear Paw (2010) by QuiltWorx (Judy Neimeyer). www.quiltworx.com (discontinued). Purchased as a kit with Island Batiks.
Subject	Mariners star and Bears Paw
Date	2010 - 2020
Size	L 75½ x W 63¼. Lap
Overall Style	Paper-pieced. Non-square blocks, repeated, varied, Artistic presentation

Blocks	<p>Total 66 blocks</p> <p>Straight set, each facing a different direction, with a centre point block</p> <p>1. Six 8 point star "Mariner's Star" blocks - artistic adaptation of Blazing Star - Brackman # 1238 (Nancy Cabot 1933)</p> <p>2. Twelve Bear's Paw blocks - artistic adaptation of a traditional Bear's Foot - Brackman #1879 (LAC #357) with 3 claws rather than 4 and curved 'paw/pad'. Four 5 7/8" bear's foot squares/block. Designed by Bradley Neimeyer</p> <p>3. Setting blocks - artistic triangle blocks</p>
Border or Frame	<p>1. W 4", multi-fabric strips of brown tones on diagonal.</p> <p>2. W 7 1/2", multi brown acute triangles and one-piece black fern print</p>
Edge Finishing	Binding: W 3/8", straight, machine front/hand back, mitred, black fern print
Batting	80/20 slight loft
Top fabric	<p>Cotton, plain weave</p> <p>Batik</p> <p>Feature colours: beige, brown,</p> <p>Background: multi pastel batik</p>
Top - Piecing method	Foundation/paper
Backing	<p>Diagonal pieced with 2 seams.</p> <p>Dog paw print & batik 3 3/4" sections</p> <p>Cotton, plain weave in blue, cream, grey dog paw print</p>
Quilting	<p>Longarm Machine by Donna Sheppard, (Donna's Quilting and Designs: Redcliff, AB).</p> <p>Thread colour - Tan/Brown</p> <p>Edge-to-Edge stipple</p>
Quilt condition	Unused

CQG#036 - Tea Leaf

Quiltmaker/Owner: Betty Wardle, Cranbrook, BC

Betty made this piece in her new favourite colour: turquoise. She bought the fabrics at *Sew Creative Chalet* in Kimberley, BC. The pattern makes two table toppers/wall hangings. Betty gave the other one to her sister.

Pattern	Tea Leaf 1 Table Runner (2016): Quiltworx leaf Series (discontinued) www.quiltworx.com
Subject	One long leaf frond
Date	2017

Size	L 44" x W 13"
Overall Style	One block Realistic, non-square block, non-traditional Paper-pieced Leaf shaped with centre vein
Edge Finishing	$\frac{3}{8}$ " machine front, hand back, double fold
Batting	slight loft
Top	cotton, plain weave, feature colours - cream, teal and turquoise with a strip of sparkle embossed cream coloured cotton for the vein.
Top-piecing method	Foundation/paper
Backing	one piece cotton batik, plain weave, teal colour (blotchy)
Quilting	Machine. Stitch-in-the-ditch pattern Beige thread By Betty on a domestic machine
Label	"Tea Leaf by Betty Wardle"
Condition	Excellent (Wallhanging)

CQG #035 - Vintage Top priced by Elizabeth Bajnok, mother of Betty Wardle (Elizabeth Sylvia Wardle)

Quiltmaker: Elizabeth Bajnok

Current owner: Betty Wardle, Cranbrook, BC (daughter)

Quiltmaker's story: The vintage top made by Elizabeth Bajnok is owned by her eldest daughter, guild member Betty Wardle. Betty 'inherited' the top when her mother was downsizing and moving to a seniors' facility in ~2000. Elizabeth was a longtime quilter. She and her sisters learned from their mother and starting "out of necessity" as was common in that generation. Elizabeth even carded wool for batting. She quilted with a small group of friends in both Gull Lake and Medicine Hat, and when she moved into the seniors' home, she started a group there.

Elizabeth made well over 40 quilts mainly for home use and to commemorate the births of her grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Elizabeth's favourite pattern was the classic "Sunbonnet Sue"⁷. She sewed initially on a Singer Treadle machine, and later on an electric model. Some tops were hand-pieced and all were hand-quilted on a frame made by her husband. Betty remembers the quilting bees with the neighbour ladies in the living room at Gull Lake, mainly in the winter months. The quilting patterns came from friends and magazines. Elizabeth loved to get together and quilt.

⁷ Sunbonnet Sue quilt patterns were "inspired by illustrations of little girls in bonnets that started appearing on cards in the 1800's". The illustrations were drawn by British editor, Kate (Catherine) Greenaway. After other iterations, primer writer Eulalie Grover published "The Sunbonnet Babies Primer" and then "Overall Boys", which are often paired in quilt patterns. (texancultures.utsa.edu)

Quilter	Elizabeth Bajnok
Maiden name	Rakai
Date and Place of birth	March 2, 1917 Punnichy, Saskatchewan
Father Occupation Birthplace	John Rakai Farmer Hungary
Mother Occupation Birthplace	Rosalia Ando Homemaker Hungary
Date and place of death	March 31, 2004 Cranbrook, BC
Date and place of marriage	May 14, 1941 Punnichy, SK
Spouse	Gabriels Bajonk CPR Employee - Section man
Quiltmakers occupation	Homemaker Education Assistant
Children	2 daughters, 1 son
Education of Quiltmaker	High School and Teacher's Assistant. Certificate
Where did quiltmaker live	Farm near Punnichy, SK. Gull Lake, SK. Medicine Hat, AB.
Ethnicity	Hungarian

CQG#035 - Vintage Quilt Top - "Grandma's Antique Wedding Ring"

The top was pieced from the fabric of the family members' clothes. It was made in the late 1930's. Apparently, Elizabeth's sister Helen Harrison (see picture of Elizabeth and Helen), learned to piece by helping make this top. The intent was to make a comfortable everyday quilt from scraps. The colours were "what was on hand". The pattern and instructions came from a magazine. Elizabeth tells that it was a bit fun and a bit challenging. It will be inherited by Betty's granddaughter - hopefully as a finished piece as the plan is to hand-quilt it at Fort Steele Heritage Town (summer 2025).

Pattern	Double Wedding Ring (circa 1929) Variation of Brackman #303 Wedding Ring
Date	1930 - 1949
Size	L 81½ x W 69
Overall Style	Repeated blocks Double wedding ring

Block	L 18½ x W 18½ in a circle shape Side-by-side interlocking circles 30 blocks
Top - unfinished	Cotton, plain weave fabric from clothing in 1920-1930 all patterned including flowers, polka dots, geometric, plaid, stripes, and novelty. Multi-coloured predominant greens, reds, coral, blues, black, white. Background colour - white