

Gretchen Bryant - CQG#130, 131, 135

Gretchen lived in Meadowbrook, just outside Kimberley, and joined the Cranbrook guild in 1989, staying just one year to take part in the workshops and classes. The Kimberley Guild held its inaugural meeting in January 1990. Gretchen took a long time to join a guild after her year with Cranbrook. In fact, Gretchen says that it wasn't until she "was in her 70's that I started quilting with fellow quilters and have had so much fun...". Gretchen joined the *Wasa Country Quilters Guild* in 2015, where she took her turn as President 2018 - 2020.

Gretchen sewed her own clothes and did an abundance of cross-stitch and Brazilian embroidery prior to taking up quilting. She was busy working and getting her two boys to and from activities - hockey being one. Her husband worked in the Elk Valley so he wasn't home each night. They had settled near Kimberley where Art was born to raise their boys "in one place". Gretchen's father was in the Armed Forces so she had moved from base to base; one year she attended three different schools. In her early quilting days, money had to be used wisely, hence her first quilt was made of some "poly fabric and inferior cottons", but she loved the process. She continued to work, raise her boys, and quilt whenever she could. Being in the era 'before internet', Gretchen learned through books and "picking the brains of anyone she could". She remembers that a friend, who was moving away, dropped by with a book she thought might be of interest: *Lap Quilting With Georgia Bonesteel* (Oxmoor House Inc, Birmingham, Alabama: 1987 printing). When Mary Frick and her daughter, Debbie, opened their shop in downtown Kimberley, *Sew Creative Chalet* in the late 80's ('established' September 1991), Gretchen enjoyed the courses offered at the shop and personal mentoring from Mary. Since joining the Wasa Guild, she has gone to several quilt retreats organized at Blue Lake Camp and others at Bull River Guest Ranch organized by Mary and Debbie of *Sew Creative Chalet*.

Paper piecing ranks as Gretchen's 'favourite' technique and her favourite machine is a *Singer Featherweight*¹. She started sewing with a *White* machine, then graduated to a *Husqvarna* that is still a favourite even at 50+ years old. The Featherweight is "light and easy to transport" so ideal for retreats. At the Wasa Guild's weekly sew day, she uses her newer Husqvarna because there she's doing machine appliqué and various other techniques that might require more than the straight stitch of a Featherweight.

In the beginning, Gretchen hand-quilted her pieces. Hand-quilting proved to be time consuming such that it was hard to get things completed before she needed to start another project perhaps for a gift or some other reason. Also, she admits to tackling patterns that were 'intense' so that she needed to take a break, put it away, and try something else for awhile. Sadly, "this means there are 'incomplete' projects that you have to find a way to finish". Gretchen has turned to machine quilting now, in part to speed up the process, and to protect her hands as she has arthritis (RA). She feels that "machine quilting is not my favourite way, but I am finishing more." She has a *Janome 1600P QC* quilting machine for domestic machine free motion and ruler work. Though she envy's the results that professional longarm quilters can achieve, she does like to plan, piece, and quilt her projects herself. Gretchen still binds the traditional way: machine sews the binding to the front and hand-stitches it to the back with mitred corners and a double fold.

¹ Sewing Machines have a fascinating history. The *Singer Featherweight* is a vintage model and popular still in 2025. Many quilters have small collections. It came on the market 1933-1968 as a portable and lightweight machine - only 11 pounds 1 ounce. Its simple straight stitch is all quilters needed.

The *White* machine was first sold in 1858. It was picked up by *Sears & Roebucks* in the 1930's and rebadged as *Kenmore*. Eventually the *White* was the lower end *Husqvarna Viking* last produced in 2006.

Gretchen cannot tell you how many quilts she's made. She has a photo album full of stunning examples of her work though many of the early pieces are missing. She signs small projects and for those that will be given away she often prints a photo of the recipient or at least adds a label with a special message. While she has made many quilts as gifts, the reality is that she loves to quilt: "I find it all so absorbing, working on a quilt in any process is like taking a holiday, enjoying the isolation and being totally absorbed in your own space."

Her space at home is a designated room in the basement of her and Art's home. Initially, like most quilters she used the kitchen table and then graduated to a bedroom when the kids left. Gretchen's new space (actually most of the basement) is "my bit of heaven and I enjoy every inch of it" with all its second hand furnishings - the shelves are dining room sideboards. Gretchen has a stash of fabric that she will "probably be buried with!". Quilters often brag about making quilts solely from their stash as if it's a "free quilt"! Overtime she tells that her tastes changed and she's now more adventurous - heritage fabrics are a delight and, on the other end of the scale, so are Tula Pink designs. She shops locally first. Gretchen pre-washes any yardage over a fat quarter size.

Each time Gretchen finishes a quilt and moves to the next project, she has learned something, tidied up something, or perfected a technique in some way and this is what she enjoys. The learning is what intrigues her. She describes herself as a 'perfectionist', with all the snags that attitude can create and it's part of why she hesitated to join a group. She does have wonderful quilting friends and feels that the camaraderie and sharing of ideas among fellow quilters cannot be understated. From the start, quilting was enjoyable, an escape, and "my happy place". She ponders that fear of costs, lack of time, and busy family lives is why younger folks aren't taking up quilting and joining guilds. Perhaps too it's the contemporary idea that making a quilt should be a weekend project, which is almost an impossible task. That slogan is the selling feature of some of the more 'modern' quilt patterns. Quilting to Gretchen is not to be done "fast and furious". She views quilting as a contemplative hobby where planning, preparation and the methodical piecing/quilting is what makes it fun and fulfilling.

Quiltmaker	Gretchen A Bryant (nee Lench)
Date and place of birth	September 16, 1945 Stourbridge, County of Worcester, England
Father Occupation Birthplace	Kenneth Lench Flying Officer/RCAF (WWII & Korean War). Sheet Metal Journeyman Hastings, Minnesota (raised on a farm in Alberta)
Mother	Joan Mary Lench (nee Roberts) Nurse, Bookkeeper, Care Aide Stourbridge, County of Worcester, England
Date and place of marriage	1989 Calgary, AB

Spouse Occupation	Art Bryant Sheet Metal Journeyman, Gas Fitter, Welding Ticket, Certified Carpenter
Quiltmaker Occupation	Legal Assistant, Shipping & Sales Coordinator (Crestbrook Forest Industries)
Children	2 sons
Quiltmaker education	Senior Matriculation + Certifications through workplaces
Where quiltmaker lived	England (came to Canada 1946) Canadian Air Forces Bases (Manitoba, Alberta) Calgary, AB; Kimberley, BC.
In-laws	Doris Bryant (nee Richardson) [1914 Fort Steele, BC - 2005, Kimberley, BC] & John Bryant [1909 Lethbridge, AB - 1988, Kimberley, BC]
Ethnic/Ancestry Background	British/Slovakian

CQG#130 - My Canadian Quilt
Quiltmaker/Owner: Gretchen Bryant

Gretchen created *My Canadian Quilt* for a contest sponsored by *The Calgary Sun* newspaper. Participants were asked to create a quilt with the theme: what Canada's Centennial meant to the quilter. Gretchen's entry was one of ten projects chosen to be featured in the paper (July 2, 2017). The article tells "*Gretchen Bryant designed and produced this quilt with every block representing something of Canada. The back has a panel signed by [her] six grandchildren along with their ages on this date... This is the time to be great full [sic] for what we have as Canadians and proud of what we are*".

The blocks include a mix of paper pieced and traditional piecing patterns of animals, flags and autumn & maple leaves, plus flying geese, bears paw, and log cabin blocks. The version of the Autumn Leaf/Maple Leaf in the frame centre, the 7 pointed leaf layout, was adopted as the new logo of the Canadian Quilters Association in 2020 (Autumn)²: Canadian Quilters/ Courtepointières Canadiennes.

This quilt will be inherited by a grandson who always stops to chat about her quilting and looks at her projects with great interest.

²See - canadianquilter.com - A Labour of Love: New Logo & Website for CQA/AAC, Betty Biesenthal, Autumn 2020

Pattern	<p>Designed by the quiltmaker, Gretchen Bryant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Animal patches from: Margaret Rolfe, <i>A Quilters Ark: The Patchwork Place</i>, Martingale; Bothwell, WN, 2013 -Autumn Leaf Block from Generations Quilt Patterns, ©2018 (www.generation-quilt-patterns.com) -Circle of Geese block from Piece By Numbers (www.piecebynumbers.com) - Canada Maple Leaf Block by Monica Curry, (cutstitchandpiece.blogspot.ca) 2017 -Bears paw, log cabin, maple leaf in public domain (See Brackman 1879, 2573, & 1887)
Subject	Canada's 150th Anniversary
Date	Specific date: 2017-2018
Size	L 74¼" x W 74¼"
Overall style	<p>Finished quilt (wallhanging)</p> <p>Frame [Unequal 9 patch with large centre block & each patch pieced]</p> <p>Sash & Block</p> <p>Varied blocks</p>
Block	<p>Frame, Sash & block layout.</p> <p>Frame centre: L 35½" x 35½"</p> <p>9 blocks; L 9¾" x W 9¾", alternating block patterns - 'Autumn Leaf' blocks (5) alternating with 'Circle of Geese' blocks (4)</p> <p>Sashing: W 1½", plain/straight, Colour: red</p>
Sashing	W ¾", plain/straight, Colour: black
Border/Frame	<p>Frame 1: Pieced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 pieced cornerstone blocks: Maple leaf around a bears paw (L 11¾" x W 11¾") - 6 logcabin blocks with pieced centre (polar bear, maple leaf (2), Canada goose, loon, buffalo) - top panel: letters, animal (bears) (L 11¾" x W 11¾") - bottom panel: flags of United Kingdom & Canada, and animal (beaver) (L 11¾" x W 35½") <p>Frame 2: W ¾", plain/straight, one fabric, Colour: black</p> <p>Frame 3: W 5¾", straight, one fabric, Colour: red print</p>

Edge finishing	Binding: $\frac{3}{8}$ ", straight, machine front/hand back Colour: red print
Batting	80/20
Top fabric	Cotton, plain weave Motif: conversational, modern, novelty, stripes, maple leaves Feature colour: beige, red, black, brown Background colour: beige; Motif: Stripes, Novelty Quilt fabric designer: <i>Oh Canada & My Canada</i> by Northcott
Top piecing method	Foundation paper piecing Machine Piecing
Embellishments	Beads
Backing	Cotton, plain weave Feature colour: beige, black, red Motif: Stripes, Novelty Quilt fabric designer: <i>Oh Canada</i> , Northcott Panel: <i>Oh Canada 7</i> , exclusively for Northcott Stonehenge (L 44" x W 24"). Added signatures (<i>Colt Bryant 22 years, Beau Bryant 19 years; Gage Bryant 16 years; Lehtyn Bryant 7 years; Whitney Bryant 11 years, Olivia Bryant 13 years</i>)
Quilting	Domestic machine Colour: red Pattern: in-the-ditch, clamshell
Condition	Unused
Label	A printed picture and hand printing <i>2018 - Colt, Olivia, Lehtyn, Whitney, Gage and Grandma Gretchen, & Beau (in the picture) Designed, pieced, and quilted by Gretchen Bryant, Kimberley BC in 2017 in honour of Canada's 150th Year Celebration. This quilt is to be gifted to my grandson, Gage Bryant, a very special young man. With love Grandma</i>
Comment	This quilt was featured in <i>The Calgary Sun</i> newspaper, July 2, 2017.

CQG #131: Mom and Me Sampler

Quiltmaker: Joan Lenocho & her daughter Gretchen Bryant

Owner: Gretchen Bryant

Gretchen's mother, Joan Lench, started this quilt. When Joan retired her Care-Aide job, Gretchen treated her to a quilting course at *Sew Creative Chalet* (Kimberley, BC). Joan was 75. She picked the beautiful colours and worked enthusiastically for months to complete the quilt, often to 3:00 AM. Gretchen enjoyed watching her work - "her accuracy was astounding for a first time quilter". Sadly, Joan hit a wall as her dementia deepened. Gretchen completed her mom's quilt after she died, using only what her mom had cut out, with some changes to a few blocks and the borders.

Pattern	Traditional sash & block sampler
Date	Finished 2019
Size	L 68" x W 52 ½"
Overall style	Finished quilt Traditional Sampler Quilt Sash & Block Varied Blocks
Block	L 12" x W 12", square 12 blocks Straight sashing with cornerstones Brackman #s by row: 1. 1695b (Jacob's Ladder), 2576 (Log Cabin), 1695b 2. 1674 V (Card Trick), 1340 (Dutchman's Wheel), 17763b (Water Wheel) 3. 2586 (Hope for Hartford/Double Stars), 2180 (Rocky Mountain Puzzle), 1674 V. 4. 1695b, 1229 V (Peter's Quilt), 1695b
Sashing	W 2¾" with 2¾" square cornerstones, straight Colour: turquoise, peach/green floral
Border or Frame	Border 1: W 1", one fabric, Colour: peach Border 2: W 1¾", one fabric, Colour: peach/green floral
Edge finishing	Binding: W ½", straight, double fold, machine front/hand back Colour: turquoise
Batting	80/20, low loft
Top fabric	Cotton, plain weave Motif: plain/solid, flowers, geometric, mottled Feature colours: peach, turquoise, green Background colour: white
Top piecing method	Machine

Backing	One fabric, cotton, plain weave Feature colours: blue Motif: geometric
Quilting	Domestic machine Thread: polyester Colour: blue, gold Patterns: in-the-ditch, cable, grid
Condition	Good
Label	<i>Joan Mary Lenocho began this quilt, her first, upon her retirement. She pieced 9 of the blocks, enthusiastically quilting for hours, enjoying the precision required. Due to illness, frustration set in, and she finally gave it to me to complete. From the cuttings left I pieced the balance of blocks and machine quilted it. The completed quilt is truly the work of mother and daughter. I wish she could have been here to see it.</i> With love Gretchen Ann Bryant (nee Lenocho) 2019

CQG# 135: English Flower Garden
Quiltmaker/Owner: Gretchen Bryant

Gretchen has worked on this hand-pieced top for years. While the top is completed, she has been waiting to be a “better quilter”. Gretchen struggles with her “perfectionist” tendency. As she’s now 80, she commented: “I don’t think better is necessarily going to happen. So ruler quilting it is.” The quilt isn’t finished (2025), but Gretchen has a plan for the ruler work and for walking foot quilting the paths and lines in the border using her *Janome 1600p QC*.

Pattern	<i>Grandmother’s Flower Garden</i> , Pattern Pak Sample Card Best Loved Quilt Patterns: Oxmoor House Ltd. 1991. “One patch, equilateral hexagon - sixes” “Honeycomb”
Date	Started 1990’s
Size	L 107¼” x 103½”
Overall style	Unfinished quilt sandwich - top pin-based to batting and backing Frame One-patch (hexagons) Repeated block
Block	Hexagon layout 38 blocks - L 12” x W 12”, Hexagon patch 2” finished, equilateral, central hexagon surrounded by 3 patch rows and 1 path. Brackman #160L (The Wheel of Life ~1931)

Border or Frame	1. Floating frame: one fabric, Colour: flower print 2. Accent frame: W 1½", straight, one fabric Colour: teal 3. Border: W 10¾", straight, one fabric, Colour: flower print
Batting	80/20
Top fabric	Cotton, plain weave Motif: flowers Featured colours: pink, orange, teal, yellow Path colour: neutral tones/off-white Quilt fabric designer: Moda
Top piecing method	English Paper Piecing (EPP) Hand piecing Appliqué
Appliqué	Motif: geometric (hexagon) Turned edge
Backing	Pieced blocks, multi fabrics Cotton, plain weave Feature colour: teal Fabric Motif: flowers
Quilting	Domestic machine Thread colour: white Pattern: in-the-ditch, lines (ruler-work)
Condition	Unfinished