

Sylvia Cooley creates her own quilt patterns



This sampler quilt Mrs. Cooley is making as a teaching aid has already taken 600 hours of work ...and there's still lots of work to be done .

Sylvia Cooley wasn't too enthused about quilting American eagles or Liberty Bells.

But it seemed everywhere she looked the quilting patterns she located were basic American designs.

And what she really wanted to do was make original quilts for each of her four married children as Christmas gifts.

The solution to her problem was simply to design her own quilts...and she did, four original designs, created through trial and error.

Once they were done it occurred to her that others might be faced with the same problem and she decided to attempt to produce and market her own patterns, Treasure Craft Quilt Patterns.

After well over 20 years of quilting and a number of years teaching quilting it sounded like a rather simple process to Mrs. Cooley.

What it turned out to be was a valuable look at the world of business and a world of experience for her.

"There was no one I could go to for advice," she says.

She talked first to Towers Department Store about display space and was sent to the store's head office.

"I got all kinds of good advice from a fabric buyer there."

Then there was the matter of having the patterns printed and packaged, and the construction of display racks.

And then there was more running back and forth to set up a temporary display in North Bay.

But the results of all the work was that the quilt patterns cost more to produce than had originally been intended.

"So I really haven't set the world on fire with them," Mrs. Cooley says.

The patterns, in the \$3 to \$4 range was simply more expensive than major stores wanted to consider purchasing.

"But the Knit and Sew Shoppes in North Bay are carrying them, really as a courtesy".

Mrs. Cooley says she feels that even someone with no quilting experience can work on the patterns, simply by following the instructions.

Was she discouraged by her lack of success with the patterns?

"Not at all. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole process and it gave me a look at the whole range of business."

And she still hopes, in the long run, to be able to sell the patterns she has produced.

The resulting patterns are a combination of hours and hours of work, trial and error matching and, of course the artistry of Mrs. Cooley.

"It is the kind of thing," she says, "that combines art and craft and develops over a long period of time.

"I just made up my mind that in quilting I would never again use anyone else's design."

The quilts in the Treasure Craft series are complete with a full-sized pattern, plus miniatures on a graph-style paper that can be used for cushions, pillows and that sort of accessory.

And she adds that although the basic quilts are designed for a specific size of bed they can easily be adapted to beds of different sizes.

As for quilting her enthusiasm hasn't wavered even a little bit.

At the moment she is at work on a sort of sampler quilt, intended to demonstrate to her quilting students the entire range of stitches and skills involved in quilting.

So far she has put in something in the neighborhood of 600 hours of work on the quilt and there's still lots left to do.