



one woman's journey told in

Quilts

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one woman's journey told in quilts

Why a book about me?

I'm just me — a simple, uncomplicated person.

I was born Betty Elaine Campbell in Purdy, Missouri, 1931.

Just by looking, you wouldn't have guessed I was going to break the family mold.

My family was religious, conservative, the proverbial salt of the earth.

But I seemed to be born with a wanderlust and a desire to see what else the world had to offer.





I got that chance in 1951 when I married Kurt Maurer, a recent immigrant from Germany.

He was an eccentric, adventure-loving man who provided the launching platform for my new life. But enough about him.

I grew up in a time when women sewed, though I never much cared for it. I embroidered in the 60s and 70s along with everyone else, decorating bell-bottom jeans.

I even took an intricate drawing that my daughter, Belinda, had done and stitched it onto a dress. She was very artistic, even as a child. But enough about her.

Here's my story.

In the spring of 1984, Kurt went off on one of his many overseas photo assignments. I was used to him being gone. What I wasn't used to, was spending time home alone. I had just retired from teaching, and our only child was leaving for art school. I found myself wanting something that would occupy my time in a constructive and enjoyable way.



Quilts

I've always loved them... loved the way they look, the way they feel, the stories that seem to be part of every little piece and stitch.

Our sweet 70-year-old next-door neighbor, Mrs. Erickson, suggested I give quilting a try. She arranged for me to meet Ruby Droth, a 94-year-old quilting legend in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Bartlesville is where I've lived most of my life, except for long excursions through Europe, South America, Asia and Africa — but those stories will be told as my quilts unfold. Anyway, Ruby's enthusiasm was contagious and she convinced me. I plunged in.

I didn't have an inkling how much this "hobby" would come to mean to me.

Quilt #6 - Log Cabin (Peacock) 1988 - 1990

Staying with the same pattern but using my new vibrant fabrics from *Nora's*, I rearranged the blocks to create a different overall design. My family calls this one my "Peacock Quilt."

Maybe I do have some artist in me after all.

Cutting out the thousands of pieces that make up a quilt is the most time-consuming part. But those pieces came in handy when I found myself sitting in the hospital for hours with my Aunt Vesta after her brain surgery. *It passed the time nicely* and quilting gave me something to talk about with the nurses who were in and out of her room.





Quilt #9 - Stars & Stepping Stones 1991 - 1993

It was at this point that our travels really started influencing my quilting choices.

Sailing through the Arctic Ocean aboard an icebreaker introduced visions of icebergs, the midnight sun and the stars that dazzle so bright when you're out at sea. Back home, I could still see it in my mind's eye.

I immediately started to work on this star-based pattern, selecting icy fabrics with a hint of cold sun.





Quilt #13 - Jacob's Ladder 1996 - 1998

Back in Africa, I purchased some jungle animal fabric. Nothing special. In fact, I didn't like it at all when I got it home. It seemed cliché when compared to the gutsy material the locals wore and the quilt-like environments they lived in. But Kurt seemed excited about me making an Africa-inspired quilt, so I continued.

I added some black, orange and white. Better... but I still wasn't happy. I finally found a snakey-fabric for the border that brought it all together.

I decided it would make a fun new quilt for Mason. Already?
Yes - children grow so fast and quilts take so long.



Coverlet - Creepy Crawlers 1998 - 1999

My turn - right?

By this time I was ready to have a coverlet for my afternoon naps. I've always been a napper. I love that time of day when I can just [turn things off for awhile](#).

But naps don't have to be boring. This pattern appealed to me because each block let me play with crazy colors and textures.

You know, quilting has given me a new sense of myself. Not only do I have a way to keep my hands busy, but I have more confidence in what I have to offer and a way to express it.

I like that feeling.



Quilt #18 - Walk in the Woods 2006 - 2008

I had started piecing the blocks of this quilt before surgery. Kurt and Belinda brought them to me in the hospital in hopes of helping my recovery. Getting my hands to work right again was a challenge. One of the nurses noticed and would come by periodically to thread my needle for me.

I'll always remember her kindness.

Later I had to pull out a big chunk of the work I'd done when I "wasn't myself." But I do think it helped me find my way back.

Now that it's done, I think it's one of my happiest quilts. I see those strips of fabric as legs, walking and skipping through the woods.

I'm glad I made it.

