

This letter earned Pat Ferguson a position as regular contributor to "ON TRACK!" magazine and is printed with their permission. "ON TRACK!" is the official magazine of the "International Machine Quilters Association" (IMQA). If you would like to subscribe to this worldwide organization who's goal is to further the development and education of private and professional machine quilters by providing a network of support and information, visit www.IMQA.org

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IMQA ,

In regard to the query about quilt top piecers and longarm quilters jointly entering a quilt in a show..... Here are some of my thoughts as a longarm quilter and teacher:

I have been machine quilting and teaching since 1985 and after making and completing countless quilts, I see the completion of a quilt as the work of 3 separate entities: (1) The design of pattern and choice of fabric. (2) The workmanship and skill of piecing the top. (3) The adeptness of designing the appropriate final quilting and edge finishing . These three entities can be completed by one, two or three individuals- this is why I feel that quilt show scoring needs to be broken down into these 3 entities; they are symbiotic and a quilt cannot be completed if one entity is omitted.

Which came first- the chicken or the egg? If the quilt top were not made, the longarm quilter would not have that particular piece to add her expertise to. If the longarm quilter did not add her expertise to the quilt top, it would never have been accepted in a show as just a top. Either way, neither can stand alone in a quilt show- with the exception of wholecloth quilt tops. A joint effort is being made and both parties must be acknowledged. Many quilt top piecers totally leave the quilting design up to the longarm quilter who then uses her design expertise to coordinate the quilting with the patchwork. On the other hand, many quilt top piecers have an idea of how they want their top quilted and the work truly becomes a collaborative effort. Having an idea and being able to execute it are 2 different things- skill and perseverance allows an idea to become a reality which is where the longarm quilter steps in and definitely needs to be credited along with the top owner.

Another thought to consider- the appraisal value of a quilt can be significantly increased if quilted by a published or prize winning longarm quilter. I have been a victim of "loss of credit" - seeing a quilt, that I have longarm quilted, win a ribbon in a show or published in a magazine, without receiving any acknowledgement from the quilt "topper". I can't describe the sinking feeling of disregard, disappointment and ungraciousness in this loss of credit. My impression is that some quilt "toppers" feel that if they pay the longarm quilter, that is all they are obligated to do as they now "own" the quilt. If you made a beautiful frame and then purchased a piece of artwork to place in it, would you take credit for the artwork just because you framed it? The quilting world needs to educate quilt "toppers" to appreciate the TLC that the longarm quilter puts into their top. As a longarm quilter, I have squared tops, tamed wavy borders, repaired open seams and carefully bound many tops to make them flat, square and finished.

Don't get me wrong- thankfully, there are more "toppers" who do acknowledge their longarm quilter than don't. Truly, it does not take much effort to do so and can make the both parties feel so wonderful. What better gift to give a person than a sense of being appreciated and acknowledged?

I wonder- does this become more of a problem when the temptation of prize money is involved? Does the quilt top owner believe that the longarm quilter has already been paid or does she share the prize money with the longarm quilter who did 1/3 of the total design on the quilt? (remember- pattern design, top workmanship, longarm quilting expertise). As a matter of etiquette, I would hope that the quilt owner would share in the glory and recognition.

Longarm quilting is here to stay. Most quilt shows that I now attend list both the quilt owner and the professional quilter in the program. Longarm quilters, quilting publications, quilt teachers, and all quilters have a responsibility to educate each other in the proper etiquette of acknowledgement and recognition. We are all here to keep the art of quilting alive by sharing and passing on the knowledge.

As a quilt top piecer remembers every piece of fabric in her stash, a longarm quilter remembers every quilt top she has put her personal style into. When quilting that top, we see every square inch of fabric, every design element and every stitch put into that particular quilt. Longarm quilting is here to stay- I believe there needs to be a separate category for these collaborative effort quilts.

p.s. – I believe the next big issue will become digitized longarm quilting vs. free hand long arm quilting

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Dear

I am a professional machine quilter and quilt teacher responding to the issue of recognizing the machine quilter along with the person who pieced the top.

I teach machine quilting classes and always begin with the statement "Now that your quilt top is completed you are half way to being finished. The process of sandwiching, designing a complimentary quilting plan, marking your quilt top, machine quilting, squaring and binding your quilt will take at least the same amount of time, if not more time, than piecing the top." Hearing this, gives everyone much more appreciation for the machine quilting step. If done properly and with good planning, machine quilting can greatly enhance a beautifully pieced top. I feel that a top can not be called a quilt until it is quilted. Therefore, if someone else completes your top you should give them the credit due.

I have a clause on my sales slip "Out of consideration for my machine quilting contribution to your quilt, I ask that you remember to place my name with yours on any show entry forms, public exhibits, advertising, magazine articles, promotional materials or class samples. Thank you for the opportunity to share my expertise with you on your creation."

Just my opinion-

Pat Ferguson

Storrs, CT