

# eInsider™

The electronic newsletter for the quilting and soft crafts industry brought to you by Quilts, Inc.

Issue #2, Winter 2006

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## Jackie Robinson Awarded Jewel Pearce Patterson Scholarship



Jackie Robinson

Since opening her first business in 1982—a sewing machine arts center turned quilt shop—in suburban St. Louis, Jackie Robinson has been a part of the quilting arts community in almost every imaginable capacity. Aside from her role as an artist, she is also an established author, with 12 quilting books published to date.

But it is her work as an educator for which Robinson is perhaps most recognized. Since she began teaching in 1976, Jackie has made a name for herself as an enthusiastic instructor full of energy, wit, and patience. Her students, both experienced quilters and newcomers, are consistently impressed by the clarity of her instructions and the personal attention that each pupil receives.

“Jackie is so good,” one student has said, “that my husband and I drove 827 miles, one way, so I could take a retreat class in Montana from her. It was worth every mile.”

Even so, Jackie feels that she has something to learn before she can call herself an

“accomplished” quilter. While her piecing techniques are superior, stitching the layers of the quilt together remains a somewhat difficult task.

“I’m a crummy machine quilter,” Jackie bluntly offers. “I can hand quilt, but it takes too long. So I really want some help perfecting that [machine quilting] and then I know, of course, that it’s just going to take practice.”

It was for this reason that attendees of International Quilt Market this fall got to see Jackie in a different role than usual—that of a student. While she still spent much of her time teaching her own classes, she was also on the receiving end of a lesson plan as the recipient of the 2006 Jewel Pearce Patterson Scholarship for Quilting Teachers.

Each year, International Quilt Market honors a worthy quilting instructor with the scholarship, created in honor of the late Jewel Pearce Patterson. Patterson was a quilting teacher, one of the co-founders of the International Quilt Association, and mother of Quilts, Inc. president, Karey Patterson Bresenhan. As a faculty member of International Quilt Festival with 14 years of teaching experience and strong commendations from so many of her students, Jackie Robinson made an ideal candidate for the scholarship.

As such, Jackie enrolled in three machine-quilting classes during the recent Market to improve her work. While it will take some time and practice before she can really begin applying the new ideas and methods she learned, she is already thinking about the ways in which she can incorporate them into her instruction.

Her own educational background in merchandising and sociology has contributed to the success of her many business ventures. Jackie opened her second quilt shop in 1988 after relocating to the mountain town of Durango, Colorado. It was during this time that she decided to launch Animas Quilts Publishing in order to accommodate her burgeoning writing career. Its success, paired with her increasingly demanding teaching schedule, led Jackie to shift her focus and sell her Durango quilt shop in 1999.

She and her husband would eventually make the decision to relocate again, in 2002 to Eureka, Montana. The quaint mountain town is where she still resides. And while it is time spent with the great outdoors that allows Jackie to clear her head, many of her most cherished quilts were actually conceived within the commotion of an airport terminal.

According to Jackie, her favorite quilts, “all do have one or two things in common. Primarily, they were designed on the laptop, in airports, waiting on delayed flights.”

Still, her muses come in a variety of forms. Hiking time in Durango inspired an entire series of quilts based upon the designs of the Anasazi people. Her fascination with the window designs of Frank Lloyd Wright have motivated her for years to translate his work into fabric. That, Jackie says in jest, is her draftsman and builder “husband’s fault.”

The success of her Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired quilts resulted in the publication of a book

and the initiation of a popular class and lecture in which Jackie “becomes” the famous architect while relaying his life story.

When asked how she is able to do so much, however, her answer is fairly simple. “I love what I do. I just love it!” Jackie explains. “I have never felt a day of what people call burnout. It helps when you have different hats you can wear and you’re not doing the same thing everyday. With so many different things going on, they stay fresh.”

And for those looking to begin their own quilting career and those established quilters thinking of venturing into the business side of the quilting world, Jackie offers some straightforward yet effective advice. “If you want to do it, do it,” she says. “Don’t wait on anybody. Just go do it.”

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