

## QUILTING DESIGNS

I'm going to try to familiarize you with the different types of quilting designs that can be done on a long arm, and hopefully help you understand some of the terminology we use when you bring a quilt top to us.

### IN GENERAL

- Not all machines or quilters are alike.
- Some machines are computerized, which means that two of the same designs done by the computer will be almost perfectly alike.
- Whereas with hand-guided quilting, each design is unique – similar but never exactly the same.
- The benefit of a long arm machine is that it moves freely on rollers across the quilt top.
- On the other hand, the biggest challenge of a long arm is also that it moves freely.
- It takes practice to gain control of a long arm machine.

### CHOOSING

- You should actively participate in deciding on how you want your top quilted.
- When choosing a thread, remember that a solid color thread sometimes showcases quilt designs better than variegated thread.
- Also, when picking out your quilt back, realize that a solid color back will show off quilting designs, whereas busy backs hide the designs. *But the busy backs also hide mistakes, which is sometimes desirable.*

**DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUILTING DESIGNS** – Simply put, there are two ways to quilt your top. One way is an all-over or Edge-to-Edge design, the other is Custom. Some accomplished quilters have a category called Heirloom, which is a more detailed version of custom quilting.

Edge-to-Edge -- least expensive.

- A design that starts on one edge of a quilt and is sewn continuously to the opposite edge, with no consideration for borders, sashing, or piecwork.
- The same continuous design goes over everything.
- Requires rolling the quilt just once.
- You probably wouldn't want to use edge-to-edge on quilts with appliqué or center medallions.
- Types of Edge-to-Edge:
  - Pantographs (can be sparse or dense) – We use a laser light attached to the machine and follow a printed design.
  - Templates – A flat piece of plastic with grooves. A metal stylus, attaches to the long arm machine and fits into the grooves to very precisely guides the machine.
  - Freehand or free motion edge-to-edge is individual to each person.
  - Computerized designs can be adjusted to a desirable size.

Custom or creative quilting –designed specifically for your quilt – including borders, sashing, blocks. *Custom quilting is anything other than edge to edge quilting.*

- Can be very time-consuming and requires securing the quilt first – usually by stitching in the ditch.
- On a domestic sewing machine, stitching-in-the-ditch is very easy. However, on a long arm, it is one of the hardest things to do.
- Can require rolling the quilt forward and back several times.
- Might mean stitching designs that fit specifically within your quilt blocks or secondary patterns on the top. *For instance, if you have an Irish Chain quilt top, the quilting might follow the path of the chain. Or if you have a large star in the middle, the quilting might accentuate the star.*
- Also, if you have large, open areas on your quilt top, a beautiful quilt design in that open area could add an entirely new element to the quilt.
- Custom work can include free motion designs or marking the quilt with chalk or pens, using stencils perhaps.
- Might include what we call ruler work -- using specially designed rulers to guide the machine around appliqué, for example, or to create a special design, like a star or circle.

Heirloom quilting is a more detailed version of creative or custom quilting.

- Expensive and should be reserved for very special quilt tops.
- Might include --
  - Fine stippling
  - Grids and cross-hatching
  - Lots of ditch stitching and/or ruler work
  - Free from designs using feathers, flowers, or intricate meander designs.
  - Inset motifs
  - Trapunto

## BASTING SERVICE

- Don't forget that your quilt sandwiches can be basted together on a long arm machine in preparation for you to hand quilt or quilt it on your domestic sewing machine.
- You might want your quilt basted in a grid pattern, but a very large meander might be better. The meander usually will not interfere as much with your quilting.
- Basting may not be cheap, but it does allow you to put your name on the label as the quilter.

## COMPETITION QUILTS

If you will be entering your quilt into competition, be sure to let your long arm quilter know so you can discuss how to handle stops and starts. Someone, probably you, will need to bury the threads, unless your quilter is willing to do that for an extra fee.