



# THE SEWING GAZETTE

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## *Are You Haunted?*

Victor Hugo said, "An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come." Are you haunted? I am. I have my own personal ghosts. Ideas for quilts, images I have studied and color combinations swirl around my head. They do not haunt me continuously. The image can be mere a wisp of an idea that I cannot truly hold on to, an image just as transparent as ghosts in a haunted mansion. Did you see that? Was something there, or was that just a shadow? Other times they are full blown ideas or even complete designs, like the ghosts in the stories around the campfire. They may not quite as scary, but they keep me up at night just the same. As a quilter and a designer, I am constantly looking for new sources of inspiration, new ideas for my quilts. Ideas are everywhere: in nature, in a color combination, in an intriguing pattern on the floor. If we are aware of our surroundings, the ideas will flow (or so we are told). I look for ideas when I walk the dogs, as I ride my motorcycle, when I am driving around town or on my way to the grocery store. When the ideas do come, I quickly jot them down in the little book I carry, or any stray piece of scrap paper I can find. I'm sure you have done this- scribbling on envelopes, napkins, or the back of the grocery list. I save these ideas for a later day. I can then go back to what I was doing knowing I have stored away something special. An idea may stay with me for awhile, darting in and out

of consciousness, visible one minute, gone the next. This typically happens when I least expect it, while I am doing my morning exercise routine, or some other mindless activity like cleaning. I'll be working away and suddenly, there is that technique or those colors, floating around my head again. They swirl around and dip and dive, trying to get my attention. They seem to be saying, "I know you have your plan for the day, but aren't we more fun to think about?" They are usually right and I give in. I know they may be gone in an instant, just as quickly as they came. I believe we are always working through ideas at some level. The ideas come to the forefront when something has been resolved, or when they need more attention. Have you ever had an idea present itself to you, completely finished? You just had to physically create the item? Other times you have to really concentrate on how to accomplish a certain look or feel of a piece. I saw a technique in a celebration coat that has haunted me for several months now. The coat had mirrors sewn into the elaborate embroidery design. Thread-work covered the corners of the mirrors to hold them in place. The coat was quite stunning. It is the mirrors that haunt me though. How else can they be used. What other designs would benefit from mirrors. These are my hovering ghosts. Until I get the design worked out, I will be haunted by that coat and those mirrors. It seems I am not the only person haunted by ghosts like these. I have spoken with

several others to see if they have the same experiences. My sister-in-law Peg, paints murals. Her ghosts hide in the walls. Sometimes they show themselves right away and she can paint their reflections. At other times she will stare at the wall for days waiting for the ghosts to come out and play. My mother is a knit designer. Her ghosts like to help her walk the dog. I guess they have more room to fly, or they may just like hiding in the trees. My sister's ghosts keep her up at night with visions of clay forms. The prospect of a mound of clay falling on my head would certainly keep me up at night! When the ghosts come out, they can be very demanding. I never know if they will return, and whether their form will be a shadow or something more solid. I try listen to what they are saying and take good notes. I can go back to my notes when I am more focused and work through their ideas. As I said, I keep thinking about those mirrors. I know they are not going away until I do something with them. My ghosts can be frustrating, but they can also be very rewarding. This wisp of an idea is starting to take shape for me. I'm not sure if those mirrors are the eyes of my ghosts laughing back at me or if they are snowflakes, glittering as they fall.

*Julie Pieri*  
Editor

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Wilmington Prints



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## *Choosing a Guild*



I have just moved from Pennsylvania to Florida and am faced with the challenge of finding a new guild. I was a member of two quilt guilds before the move. I love the camaraderie and the spark of inspiration a guild can provide. My guild friends always had great suggestions when I needed them and boosted my confidence when I needed the support. How will I going to go about finding a new group of friends to sew with? I have started with the internet and a site [www.quiltguilds.com](http://www.quiltguilds.com). They provide a listing of quilt guilds by city and state. I've also

looked over the American Sewing Guild site for sewing guilds. Quilt and fabric shops should have a listing of local guilds as well. They frequently know some of the members and can help you decide. I also received suggestions from my online friends. They have been very welcoming and have extended invitations to join them at their local gatherings. Thank you for all your suggestions, you have helped me feel welcome in my new city. I am reviewing the local options and comparing the guild schedules with my own. Most guilds are thrilled to have guests attend their meetings but they are likely to have rules governing how many times you can attend before joining the group. My suggestion is to attend the meetings to see if you feel comfortable with the group. Every guild has a personality

and you need to be sure you feel comfortable enough to ask questions and show off what you have been working on. Frequently guilds will have an annual philanthropic project. My old guilds made blankets for Project Linus and for the local shelters. We made place mats for Meals on Wheels. One last thing, don't be surprised by the dues. Dues are designed to help cover some of the expenses of the meeting location and newsletters the guild provides. Guilds will also hold fund raisers like a Quilt Show and quilt raffles. I haven't decided on a guild yet. I'm still visiting the seven that are local to my new home. I'm sure I'll find at least one guild, maybe two. I'm looking forward to the nights of inspiration and sewing camaraderie every month.

### **guild**

**Variant(s):** also gild \gild\

**Function:** noun

**Etymology:** Middle English *gilde*, from Old Norse *gildi* payment, guild; akin to Old English *gield* tribute, *guild* more at *geld*

**Date:** 14th century

**1 :** an association of people with similar interests or pursuits; especially : a medieval association of merchants or craftsmen  
**2 :** a group of organisms that use the same ecological resource in a similar way <a feeding guild>

**guild ship** \gil(d)-ship\ noun

Provided by the [Merriam Webster Online Dictionary](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

## *National Quilt and Sewing Guilds and Societies*

Are you looking for sewing companionship? There are many benefits to joining a national guild or sewing organization. They can keep you up to date on industry trends and new techniques. They may have resources to answer questions or tutorials to help you improve your sewing. Here are

a few national guilds to get you started:

The American Sewing Guild  
[www.asg.com](http://www.asg.com)

The National Quilting Association  
[www.nqaquilts.org](http://www.nqaquilts.org)

American Quilter's Society  
[www.americanquilter.com](http://www.americanquilter.com)

Home Sewing Association  
[www.sewing.org](http://www.sewing.org)

## *To Wash or Not to Wash?*

This question is asked around the world, over and over again. Should you wash your fabric before you cut it out, or can you skip the washing and get right to the creating? Sewers have strong opinions about both answers. In the past, the recommendation was to always wash your fabric prior to cutting. Older fabrics may shrink more than the fabrics of today. Dyes were more likely to run, especially reds and dark colors.

Today washing is a matter of personal preference. I prefer to wash or clean any fabric that will become a piece of clothing. I

clean the fabric using the same method I will wash or clean the finished garment. Many fabrics shrink when they are washed and I prefer that shrinking happens before I cut out my pieces. My concern with clothing fabric is always about fit. Even 2% shrinkage is noticeable if it happens in a completed garment. Whether or not to wash quilting fabric brings up other questions. Quilts are typically made from 100% cotton. Even the best cotton fabrics made today shrink. It is part of the nature of the fiber content. What effect are you looking for in

the final quilt? Do you like or hate the small puckers that occur when the fabric shrinks after it has been quilted? Will you be using a batting that will also shrink? There are no hard and fast rules to answer this question, just personal preference.



## Goblin Treat Bags

I love to collect Halloween fabric. The prints are so cute. I have to buy them. I bring the yardage home and store it away to be used on a great project. I sort through the stack periodically, dreaming of ghosts, witches and bats. Unfortunately, this is where my project usually ends. I move on to the next project or gift in an attempt to check everything off my list before the end of December. Here's a quick idea to help use some of that adorable Halloween fabric and give the little goblins in your neighborhood a special treat.

You'll need the following:

5" x 12" piece of fabric  
18" piece of cording or ribbon  
small safety pin

Candy to fill your bag

1. Fold fabric strip in half with right sides together. Sew down each side to create the sack.
2. Fold over the top of the bag 1/2" and press. Fold over again and sew along the edge to create a channel for the cording. Leave a small opening to feed the cording through.

3. Insert the pin through one end of the cording and feed through the channel.
4. Tie a knot into each end of the cording.
5. Turn the bag right side out.
6. Fill the bags with candy and enjoy the smiles!



Lakehouse Fabrics

## A Quilt in 90 Minutes

I never have enough time to finish or even start all my ideas. I don't have enough time to start the quilts I've bought fabric for! I read Meryl Ann Butler's book *90 Minute Quilts* and was inspired. We have all been in the situation where we needed to make a quilt fast, baby quilts, challenge quilts, raffle quilts, the birthday I almost forgot. Just knowing that I can make a quilt that fast is inspiring. No more panic attacks when I

realize I have to have a gift in the morning. I can spend an afternoon with my granddaughter playing with the colors and squares and still send her home with the results.

I also realized these easy to make designs were a great way to use those prints, both adorable and stunning, that have been hiding in my closet waiting or the perfect idea. Meryl Ann's designs are not complicated which allows

the fabric you use in the quilt to shine. The straight forward instructions and easy layouts allow me to focus on the placement of color in my project. I can spend hours rearranging the squares and colors (I think that qualifies as petting the fabric). I'm taking a break from intricate piecing to make a quilt that is simple pleasure.

## Caramel Popcorn

The ghosts and goblins are roaming the streets again, or gathering together to celebrate the change of the seasons. This is one of my favorite party treats. Make it extra special with a drizzle of chocolate.

2 bags microwave popcorn (about 24 cups popped popcorn)  
4 T. (1/2 stick) butter, cut into pieces  
1 c. packed brown sugar  
1/2 c. light corn syrup  
1 c. sweetened condensed milk  
1 t. vanilla extract

1. Pop both bags of microwave popcorn and empty them into a large roasting pan (or two 9x13 pans). You should have about 24 cups

of popped corn. Remove as many unpopped kernels as you can. Turn the oven to 250 degrees and place the popcorn in the oven to keep warm.

2. Place the butter, sugar and corn syrup in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir until the sugar melts and continue to cook, stirring until the butter is melted and the candy begins to boil.
3. Stir in the condensed milk and insert a candy thermometer. Continue to cook the mixture, stirring occasionally, until the candy reaches 238 degrees. Remove it from the heat, and stir in the vanilla.
4. Take the popcorn out of the

- oven and carefully pour the caramel over the popcorn, stirring it so that the pieces are evenly coated.
5. Return the popcorn to the oven, and bake it for about 45 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes. If you use multiple pans and your popcorn is in a single layer, the cooking time will be closer to 25 minutes. It is done when the caramel mixture darkens and bubbles all over the pan.
6. Remove the popcorn from the oven and allow it cool completely at room temperature before breaking it into pieces by hand. Store caramel popcorn in an airtight container or bag in a cool, dry place.

REALLY I DON'T DISLIKE TO COOK, BUT WHAT YOU COOK IS EATEN SO QUICKLY. WHEN YOU SEW, YOU HAVE SOMETHING THAT WILL LAST TO SHOW FOR YOUR EFFORTS.

~ELIZABETH TRAVIS JOHNSON

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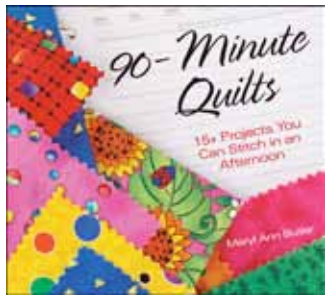
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# Meryl Ann Butler

## How long have you been sewing/ quilting and what got you started?

I learned to sew in 4-H club in the 60's, when I was 12. I started quilting in 1982. At the time I was running my own art school in Louisiana. On a trip home to NY, I saw the Broadway play, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and was enchanted by his quilted coat of many colors. It depicted beautifully appliquéd images of Joseph's powerful dream symbols, and seeing it inspired me to want to wear my own dream symbols, too! But I didn't know how to quilt. Surprisingly enough, when I got back home from my trip I discovered that a quilt shop had opened just two blocks away, and their first class was how to make a quilted jacket. It must have been destiny! I took the class—the first jacket I made won a blue ribbon at the county fair, and I was hooked! (I drove my teacher a little crazy though – everyone else in the class followed her directions and used all cotton fabrics. To everyone's horror, I added a bit of velvet and satin to my appliqués –and thus began my renegade ways!)

I remember that one of the most exciting things that happened in the fabric world at that time was that they came out with a new kind of pin dots: for the first time, the dots weren't white, but another color! I was so excited that I bought 6 yards of a tan fabric with rust-colored dots. I still have some of it. It is truly one of the ugliest fabrics I own, but I keep it as a reminder of the rapid evolution that both the industry, and we quilters, have experienced in just a couple of decades.

This was also before rotary cutters were in regular use – they were just being happily discovered by all of us who were cutting miles of strips for the big new craze, strip quilting! But the wonderful Omnigridd rulers weren't out yet. Instead we used the thin "C-Thru" rulers, which were easily sliced by the rotary cutters, and often melted by the heat from the iron. We've come a long way, baby!

## Why did you decide to start designing and selling your patterns?

In 1984 I developed some fast and easy methods of quilting so I could teach my 7-year old daughter

how to make a quilt, which she proudly exhibited in my local guild's show. (She is a doctor now and has gotten kudos from surgeons on her unusually neat stitches!) Then, I taught those techniques in local and national classes for the next 20 years, and found that quilters – whether they were beginners or advanced – were always excited to learn them!

Then after 9-11, like many other Americans, I wondered what I could do to help ease some of the discomfort. Knowing that playing with color and fabric can be so soothing, I decided to finally write my book, as a sort of invitation to healing the wounds from those traumatic events. Knowing how therapeutic – but also intimidating – creativity can be, I wanted to offer quilting in a way that was attractively easy, and yet exciting, too. So in the book I included lovely quilts made by an 8- and a 10-year old – and as a result, many readers overcame their fear of mastering a new skill and decided, "well, if those girls can do it, then maybe I can too!" And advanced quilters who are used to spending many, many hours on a project are always so delighted to change gears for a spell and stockpile a few adorable quilts in a flash!

## What is your favorite part of designing?

I love to find solutions to problems in a creative way. Sometimes I want to create an effect that seems impossible to get in fabric. So I gather up all my ideas, sketches, and pertinent information, and immerse myself in everything, and then forget about it – and often the perfect solution will suddenly come to me in an unsuspecting moment! Now that's thrilling!

## What are your favorite techniques and why?

I like any techniques that look like they took more time to do than they actually did! And apparently, so do my students, because they keep coming back to learn more of them!

But I also go a little crazy with detail in my more elaborate work, such as in my Jewels of India ensemble for the 2005-06 Bernina Fashion Show, which took about 6 months to create. <http://web.mac.com/merylannb/iWeb/Jewels/Jewels.html> These elaborate pieces with techniques that I invent as I go

are what I love to immerse myself in – so if I couldn't stitch quilts for my grandkids in 90 minutes, they'd probably never get any!

**What is your "I can't work without it" sewing tool?** Since I started quilting when we were still cutting fabric strips with scissors, I can't say enough about how much I love and use a rotary cutter! It has truly revolutionized quilting. I love the newer ones with the ergonomic handle from Olfa.

My other favorite tools are Chaco liners and Ultimate scissors from Clover, The Brooklyn Revolver rotating mat from Come Quilt With Me, and I love to fuse with Steam a Seam 2! I also love the walking foot attachment (for my Bernina) and the even feed mechanism (on my Pfaff), these make stitching so effortless.

## When is your book being released and how did you come about writing it?

90-Minute Quilts: 15+ Projects You Can Stitch in an Afternoon was released in Dec. 2006, and is a bestseller in craft books. Its been reprinted several times so far! When I wrote it, I intended for it to be a book that both beginner and advanced quilters would find exciting and useful, and from the comments I get, I think that happened! I'm grateful to my publisher for using a deluxe spiral binding that lays flat, but also has a spine so it looks pretty on the shelf. **What else would you like us to know about you?** I always get asked "Can you REALLY stitch a quilt in 90-minutes?" Yes, and my personal best is 83 minutes!

But that is only after making quite a few of these quilts, and fine-tuning the process it takes a little longer to learn the process the first time, or even the second. And I always remind quilters that this doesn't include shopping for fabric! In fact, the 90 minutes refers only to actual stitching time, not the time it takes to prepare the fabric, such as washing, and cutting squares. However, once I am ready to start sewing, I can indeed piece, quilt, and bind the basic 30" x 41" baby quilt in under 90-minutes. I can stitch together five in a day, and this makes my methods great for community service project, where quantity is important! Larger quilts take proportionately longer, but this is still the fastest method around for making a pieced quilt.