

Hope For The Irises

Cindy McNutt-Kaestner

www.FibersOfFaith.com



In the fall of 2000, I joined the local quilt guild after our family moved to Philomath, Oregon to live. As I attended the monthly guild meeting I became aware that 3 of the members were teaching quilt classes and donating the money to the quilt guild as a money maker. Since I had taught quilt classes in the past, I figured I would be able to assist in that manner also. So I quickly decided to do my part by volunteering to teach a class also.

The local quilt shop owners were delighted to have me teach in their business. When we discussed the date of the class, I envisioned teaching a class on a technique that was the basis for a quilt I had already designed. Since the pattern and instructions were already assembled (from a previous class I had taught) I thought a 5 month lead time would give me plenty of time to unpack my boxes and find my teaching materials.

The only problem was, when I showed the quilt shop owners the quilt I intended to teach, they thought I should begin with a much easier design. That meant I needed to create a new quilt! I took a deep breath, remembered my promise to help the quilt guild, and agreed to design a new quilt for the class. Then they informed me they wanted me to have the new quilt ready to display at a “cast party” they were hosting in their shop in which customers could view the class quilts and meet the teachers! This event was to be in 2 months! Oops! Reminding myself of the importance of keeping one’s word (especially when one is new in town) I agreed to do my best.

I immediately went home and started tearing through my boxes to find fabric to inspire me. Since my husband had finished one set of shelves to organize my fabric, I decided to unpack only my hand dyed fabrics in hope of finding just what I might need for the new quilt.

One of the first fabrics I unpacked was a piece of material I and a friend had marbled some time earlier. The cloth seemed to speak to me as she said, “Look at me! Aren’t I pretty!” I smiled in agreement with the piece of cloth, and keep unpacking the other material. As I organized other fabric the same piece of pink marbled fabric rang out time and again, “Look at me! Look at me! I’m so pretty!”

I finally said out loud, “Yes you’re pretty, but I have a quilt to make.” The fabric kept hollering at me, so finally I said out loud, “Okay, okay, if I make something out of you, will you let me continue my work on the new quilt?” She (the marbled fabric) merely smiled. Then she (the marbled fabric) said, “I’m an iris!”

“Okay okay, you’re an iris....” I said. And I saw the iris petals in various locations throughout the piece of fabric. I finished cutting out the petals of one iris and then she said, “I have more than one iris!” By this time I had lost interest in unpacking my boxes, so I found the other petals and cut them out also.

When I had finished with that fabric, the pink marbled fabric yelled, “ There are other irises in other pieces of cloth. Why don’t you cut them out also!”

It finally dawned on me that I could make a quilt for the class that was made entirely of irises. My objective was to design a pattern that others would like (not just me). And most people like flowers so, I decided to allow the quilt to show me the way and go forward with the idea.

When I finished the art work, I realized it was a pictorial version of something we had on the edge of our property by our driveway. Right after we moved into our new home, instead of quickly unpacking everything, I went to the farmers’ market and bought hundreds of iris and daffodil bulbs and planted them at the entrance of our property. I love iris because they are a symbol to me of God’s presence. I love daffodils because of their beauty and deer proof quality.

I realized we should have put off planting flowers and clean house instead. But, my husband and I both agreed that it would probably be a long gray wet winter in Oregon and we would need the hope of spring and flowers awaiting us at the first sign of sunshine. Somehow we knew that in the midst of the extraordinary work accompanying a move, we still needed to take time to fertilize our soul. These irises are a testament to that need and that promise.