

Not that long ago, had you arrived at Maryann Bowman's house, with quilt top in hand to be quilted, you might have wondered, "How does this woman find time to quilt??" As you approach the house, you would have passed a huge and prolific vegetable garden bordered by a lovely koi pond and blooming rose bushes and other perennials. Behind and on the side of the house were pens for all species of ducks, pheasants, and chickens as well as bee hives! Phew! Think of the work just caring for all of that plus the harvesting and canning and so much more. And yet Maryann found the time to build a successful quilting business: *Maryann's Machine Quilting*.

A quilter for 30 years, Maryann's first quilt was a king-size Fence and Rail quilt. She cut the pieces with a pair of scissors, pieced it by machine and finished by hand-tying it. Along with her sister, Maryann took numerous classes at Tumbleweed Quilting (when it was located in a small strip mall on Rte. 132). Helen Weidman, before Helen opened Heartbeat Quilts, was one of her many teachers at "Weeds".

Twenty years ago, Maryann went to a quilt show in New York with Bayberry Quilters and fell in love with the Nolting longarm quilting machine. She spent the entire show talking to Fred Nolting and never even saw any of the show! Roger Bowman, Maryann's second husband and soul mate, who was always supportive of her love of quilting and her desire to have a quilting business, agreed to knock down the wall between two bedrooms to make space for her longarm. Once the space was finished, Fred Nolting himself came to install the machine head and 14-foot table and her business was launched. That first machine had no stitch regulator, so Maryann practiced on anything she could. She literally travelled around the country taking whatever classes she could find as there were few classes offered then on longarm machine quilting.

Maryann has four children - three boys and a girl, which she raised in Taunton. As she puts it, two inherited the creative gene and two didn't. One of her sons, a graphic artist, designed and printed her first brochure. She brought her brochures around to various local quilt shops. Since hand quilting and tying were the norm at the time, the initial response to her business was tentative. Her first customers were interested in machine quilting mainly for utilitarian items — baby quilts, children's quilts or quilts going off to college with students. As machine quilting became more accepted and knowledge of Maryann's beautiful quilting spread — mostly through word of mouth — her business grew. In 2000, Maryann and Roger basically rebuilt their home, adding a large room on the back to house her machine and table and everything else she needed to run her business.

The world of quilting has changed a lot. Quilters now want more elaborate, custom designs, and that kind of machine quilting can take quite a toll on the lower back. Seven years ago, Maryann installed IntelliQuilter, a computerized program that allows for very intricate designs and eases some of the physical demands of the longarm quilting process. However, as Maryann described it to us, the computerized process actually takes longer than freehand longarm quilting. She stays with the quilt the entire time the machine is working, stopping often to adjust for extra fabric or seams that are not straight. Maryann always asks her customers if they have a particular design in mind, but most leave the designing up to Maryann. On average, Maryann will have a quilt for about two months. But the results are well worth the wait!!

Maryann constantly takes classes to update her skills or to learn something new just for the fun of it. Every month, she gets together with Pat Harrison (Bayberry Quilters' September speaker). They share quilting information and pattern ideas, but Maryann is very aware of copyrights and always purchases her own copy of patterns. If you looked closely at last year's patriotic raffle quilt, you will have seen her wonderful quilting. And we are so fortunate that Maryann agreed to quilt next summer's "Surf and Sand" raffle quilt, besides being our Featured Quilter and keeping her business moving along!!

Rada Elegant, Ellen Bowler, Noreen Couture