



photo by David Bull

Journey Through Time

A QUILT FOR HOSPICE NIAGARA

by Irma Bull
St. Catharines, ON

Group projects in school were never this much fun. When six of us volunteered to make a quilt for the new Hospice Niagara, we knew it would be a challenge to construct a 12 foot wall hanging without tripping over each other's scissors. But the lure of spending someone else's money in three fabric shops was just too inviting.

We were given some parameters. We had to be sensitive to all religions and there were to be no human or animal forms or obvious religious symbols. Consulting with the staff, patients and volunteers from Hospice, we got a sense of direction. We quilters brainstormed and came up with some sketches and invited comments. The vote was split over whether to place Niagara Falls on the right or the left. Taking all of the ideas, I made a full size drawing incorporating various Niagara landmarks into a panorama, spanning all seasons and the change in light from morning to night. After contemplating what we were trying to achieve I decided that Niagara Falls had to be on the left to represent birth. The design was 12 feet wide by 3.5 feet long.

Thankfully, St. Giles Presbyterian Church let us use their gym so that we could tape our fabric on the wall to get a sense of the entire project. Our first disappointment was the sky fabric. It didn't work. When we put the water fabric with it, things looked worse. So we auditioned the sky fabric as water, reversed it

and voilà! The water fabric became sky. That was it. I took it home and blended the sky colours by cutting on angles to get a smooth transition from light to dark. The next week, we cut the foundation fabric with the sky and water, into three sections and we each worked in pairs, sometimes in trios, adding landscapes. By the end of June, Margaret and Sharon sewed the three sections back together. I took the top home and made the four season trees, placing them in such a way that the seams would not show. I painted clouds and elements to tie the whole thing together. Like eating chips, you can't seem to stop. By July 2, 2008 I pried myself loose from the paintbrush and gave the top to Sharon to stitch over my trees. Sharon drew up a quilting design and we gratefully

brought the top to Al Cote of Patchwork Porch. We love him because he agreed to quilt the whole thing at no cost. He gave it dimension and sparkle.

Each of us brought something special to this quilt. Sharon Colli, an accomplished quilter, has an artistic eye. Irja Donaghue, plays with a wonderful colour sense and Margaret Chesney, a new quilter, came with an enthusiastic spirit and was amazed at what she could do. Lorraine Westhouse, with experience in weaving and embroidery, did 300 French knots for us. Barb Legg, one of the busiest women on the planet, who paints and quilts, even managed to find some time to help. My job was coordinating the artistic vision and cracking the whip.

Margaret sewed on the binding and Barb



Adding landscape under the watchful eye of Irja Donaghue. (photo by Margaret Chesney)

came and helped with the final hand stitching. I added beads and stars and more paint. The piecing was started on May 28, 2008 and the entire quilt was done on August 30, 2008. It took six women and one man 246 hours to make. We created something far greater than what any one of us could have done alone. The making of this quilt portrays the concept of Hospice, people working together in harmony, with peace and love. No matter where we are on the road, we are all on a *Journey through Time*. And, it was a blast.

Background Information

The **Spring tree** is full of blossoms, bursting with new life. Niagara Falls, coursing down the escarpment is like birth. The rainbow is a symbol of hope. New crops are being planted and ships sail out of the canal into the lake.

The **Summer tree**, in full leaf, stands straight and tall, casting a big shadow. Like early adulthood there is more activity in this section. The sky in summer is seemingly carefree, but clouds are starting to form. The ships head for the next destination.

The **Comfort Maple**, at 500 years of age, is our **Fall tree**. It has withstood the test of time, weathered many storms and has a golden crown and beauty in its gnarled branches. Grapes hang in the vineyards to be made into fine wines, which get better with age.

The **Winter tree**, the evergreen, stands gently, with a mantle of snow. Here is rest from toil, a time to remember, a time to enter into wisdom, where the meaning of life becomes deeper and clearer. The skyway bridge has an opening. A new beginning and a new spring beckons. Night does not last forever but is a part of the great cycle of life, a mystery continually unfolding.



Irma Bull making trees (photo by David Bull)



Lorraine Westhouse, Barbara Legg, Margaret Chesney, Irma Bull, Al Cote, Sharon Colli. Seated, Irja Donaghue. (photo by David Bull)