



# Heather Stewart **TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2009**

by Maggie Robinson, Ingersoll ON

I am honoured to have the privilege to introduce the Teacher of the Year. She is no stranger in the quilt world. She is passionate about her art and finds it very rewarding in every way. She has taught in many parts of the country, and as some of you know has been a teacher at the CQA/ACC conferences more than once. Her protégés feel very privileged to have her as a mentor.

My relationship began many years ago when we formed a unique group with Carol MacLean and Karen Cole called the "Mellow Yellows". Our time together is spent making donation quilts to raise money for Breast Cancer research, and more recently quilts for wounded soldiers. We have a lot of fun together and take pride in our accomplishments. The fun never ends when we are together and when she learned that she had been chosen for this award, she informed the three of us that we were welcome to call her "Your Teacherness" when we get together. A sense of humour is so important in this world today. We love Heather and I am sure all that know her do, so it is with great pleasure that I give you this year's Teacher of the Year, Heather Stewart.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
Heather Stewart  
*Wheels of Whimsy* (2005)  
*Log Cabin Chevron Batik* (2007)  
*Links to the Past* is 92" x 110"  
and has 5,219 pieces!  
TOP PAGE BORDER:  
*Dancing on the Wild Side* (1992)



# HEATHER'S ACCEPTANCE

What a tremendous honour it is to be selected as Teacher of the Year by the Canadian Quilters' Association.

I would like to thank Stacie Littlejohn and Maggie Robinson from Ontario and Suzanne Horne from Nova Scotia for all of their hard work in collecting the materials required to nominate me for this award. To all of my students who took the time to write such kind letters of support for these nominations, I can't thank you enough.

Anyone who is a professional teacher knows that you can't do this job without support from your family. My family has become quite used to me coming and going with various piles of luggage, as well as answering the phone and taking messages in my absence. To my husband Tom, my son Christopher and his wife Tabitha, and to my daughter Julia...thank you, thank you, thank you for your patience and endurance. Missed meals because of deadlines, countless airport deliveries, computer emergencies and a few pins-in-the-couch accidents along the way haven't dampened your support for my career.

It's so wonderful to know that I have been able to communicate my passion for quilting and fibre art to so many quilters in Canada and in the United States. Reading some of the support letters was both humbling and heartwarming.

To be included into the Teacher of the Year group of teachers is amazing! I have such respect for the previous winners of this award. It has been my privilege to get to know a few of the previous winners and I can tell you that they are most deserving of their recognition.

Quilting for me happened around the age of ten, while helping to make utility quilts for our home and also quilts at the church for the Mennonite Relief Sale held every year in New Hamburg, Ontario. Over the years, I have made many quilts but really only starting to combine my art training and quilting after attending the Jinny Beyer Seminar in South Carolina. Previously, I had been content to make traditional Mennonite quilts and paint with oils.

While staying home with my young children I began making a few commissioned quilts. After awhile, I had so many people wanting quilts that I began teaching people to make quilts themselves, instead. That was the beginning and, now, 28 years later I'm standing here in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan at the *Quilt Saskatchewan 2009* conference to accept national recognition for teaching. Wow!

I have taught all over Canada but not in the Yukon, Northwest Territories or Nunavut. There's still time...call me.

Over the years I have been blessed by friendships made with other quilters from one side of this country to the other. In fact, most of my friends are quilters. Who else would understand?

When billeted with quilters, I have attended picnics, wedding showers, nature hikes, oceanside walks with the dogs and so much more. People have been so generous to invite me to be a part of their lives and homes for my visits with their guilds. Thanks to Lori, I have even eaten cod tongues (once was enough!). The Kelly family got me hooked on Grey's Anatomy and Betty took me for a hike to see a hibernating bear. Barb and Peter feed me lobster every time I'm in Nova Scotia. The richness of these experiences combined with the lifelong friendships make teaching a very rewarding experience.

During the course of my quilting career I have been fortunate enough to teach at three previous *Quilt Canada* conferences and will be teaching in Calgary next year. In 1991, I served as the Director of Publicity for the CQA/ACC and continue to promote our organization wherever I happen to be teaching. Registrar was my role for the *Quilt Canada 1990* conference in Waterloo, Ontario.

Canada can be proud of its talented quilting teachers and artists. We can hold our own when compared to any other country, whether for the artwork produced or the quality of its instructors and judges. Somehow being Canadian we tend not to shine a light on ourselves. The next time your guild is looking for a quilting



Heather receives the award from CQA/ACC board member Kathy Strawson PHOTO BY LILY LAM

professional, look in Canada! Support your local teachers and especially support the professional teachers in your own guilds. Encourage your own guilds to hire professional teachers from the Canadian Quilters' Association's Teachers List.

It is my sincere hope that one day soon we will have a certification program for professional teachers in Canada.

Sharing my quilting knowledge with students over the past 28 years has been an incredible journey; one that I hope to continue for many years to come. I would rather teach quilting than anything else. It still amazes me when people are willing to spend their hard earned money and take the time out of their busy lives to spend a day or two with me to learn about quilting. Those students have made it possible for me to receive this award and I am truly grateful.

Thank you to all of the guilds, conferences and shops that have invited me to teach for them over the years. I would also like to thank the Canadian Quilters' Association for selecting me as Teacher of the Year and for its continuing efforts to promote quilting in Canada.

*See you in the classroom!*