

March 1, 2018

Dear Quilters,

There are some moments in life (choices we make) that really make a difference and I'd like to share one with you today. I have been quilting for over 40 years and I learned the old-fashioned way - taping the bottom layer to the floor, laying the quilt batting over that and then laying the quilt top over the other two. I would get down on the floor (much easier in my younger days!) pin the quilt into quarters and then pin each quarter until the whole quilt was filled with pins. Then I would baste the whole thing, again in quarters, until I was confident that I could cut it off the floor and take it with me wherever I went, hand quilting it on a hoop. All the quilts I have made have been for charitable or family events and it has been my pleasure to donate my work for great causes.

A few years ago, one of my seven children (Mark) lost a dear friend, Ben Robinett, to PTSD. He left behind two daughters, the oldest a senior in high school. It struck my son that his friend's girls might not be able to continue their education since suicide most often negates life insurance and not many people prepare ahead of time for the expenses college brings. He started a charity (BR54.ORG) to assist the daughters of his friend and held golf tournaments & trivia nights each year to raise funds. He has worked so hard to make around \$10,000 a year and I hoped that maybe I could help him with the increasing numbers of families requesting aid. Ben served three stints in Iraq and Afghanistan and came home to live his dream job of being a firefighter. Something patriotic seemed in order.

So, at 68 years old, I decided that I should use my "talent" to help make things easier for my son's great charity. I'll make a quilt, I said. It took forever to design it, first in my mind, then on paper and finally with fabric. I wanted to have a patriotic theme since that encompasses military people, first responders and all people loyal to this country - all heroes in my book. Of course, I chose patriotic colors - red, white and blue - but I wanted to honor these heroes for what they stand for, what they live for. I chose words that exemplify patriots - Honor, Courage, Dignity, Strength, Passion, Pride, Integrity, etc. and wanted to embody them in the quilt. As the lucky owner of an embroidery machine and with the help of one of my granddaughters (Maya), we came up with 25 meaningful words to use. What has always struck me about heroes is that they don't need to boast about their talents or intentions - they just do what they do with inner pride. So, I chose to embroider the words in red on red background instead of boldly highlighting them. I chose quilting stencils that were meaningful, like stars, hearts, pathways and even free styled some "forget-me-nots" in the little squares.

It would have made a fun video to see me on the floor pinning and basting. Thank God my husband was away for a few weeks so he did not see me rolling down the hall, putting my feet down the basement stairs and pulling myself upright by the handrails. It was comical but I was on a mission! I worked for 10- 14 hours a day for ten days before I cut it up off the floor with help from granddaughter Tai.

I have worked over 1,000 hours on this king size "work of heart" and am now ready to present the **2018 PATRIOT QUILT RAFFLE** to the world to honor my son and his friend. I hope you can appreciate the effort and I am enclosing information to the site -BR54.ORG, showing the outcome. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have and I thank you for your time - and I truly appreciate that you quilt for amazing purposes. Sincerely, Julie Felicelli