

JOANNE BUTLER MYERS
Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show 2010 Inspirational Instructor

As a child, Joanne Myers slept under quilts made by her mother and grandmothers. She has vivid memories of crawling under Grandma Rosa's quilt frame to help identify parts of the quilt needing further stitching and remembers helping by threading needles. Fascinated by her mother's treadle sewing machine's many drawers and compartments, she learned to sew before her feet could reach the peddle of the sewing machine. Her mother, Ola Butler, pulled some strings and Joanne was able to enter 4H sewing program at an early age. She grew up sewing—constructing her first garments from feed sacks carefully washed and ironed by her mother. As her skills grew, she tailored suits and coats, sewed curtains and furniture slip covers.

As a young mother, Joanne squeezed her sewing machine into a tight corner of the master bedroom and her children remember being lulled to sleep to the sound of the machine. She sewed dresses and coats for her three girls, shirts for her son, husband, and father as well as Halloween costumes, drapes, and alterations for neighbors. Kidded by her family for her love of garage sales, she became interested in the old quilts that she occasionally discovered.

And in the early 1970's influenced by the antiques she found as well as the nation's bicentennial celebrations, she constructed a patchwork comforter made of four-inch squares hand-cut from sewing scraps (including knit fabrics remaining from Stretch-and-Sew projects). This inauspicious beginning was the beginning of a life-long love affair with quilts. In rapid order, she joined a guild, began to "buy" fabrics for her quilts, purchased a Bernina sewing machine, and began to seek out magazines and books for new pattern and design ideas. Initially, she was heavily influenced by Jinny Beyer and enjoyed attending her quilting retreats.

In 1986, Joanne and her husband, Horace, retired to Bend, Oregon. These Indiana natives, accustomed to the pancake flat terrain of the Midwest, were delighted by the mountains. Joanne remembers they were awed by the blood red sunsets, the red vine maple leaves in the fall, and the wild life of the Oregon high desert. Formerly interested in traditional quilt blocks, she began to depict her fascination with central Oregon in a series of art quilts.

Today, 40 years after she collected dress-making scraps for her first quilt, Joanne is eager to share her love of quilts. She is an enthusiastic teacher and at 84, still works almost daily at her art. Her ideas come from old quilts, photos in magazines, other art work including friends' quilts, and beautiful fabrics. A tireless worker, she is a proud member and past President of the Mount Bachelor Quilt Guild, enjoys participating in many philanthropic group quilting projects, as well as designing and creating raffle quilts for guild fund raising. Joanne admits, however, that the best part of her quilting journey has been the many friends that she has made along the way.