

## **Organizing my Quilting Stuff** by Sue Lentz

### **I. Projects**

The SMM Omega Club has been a great incentive to organize all of my unfinished projects. Before this, I did have most listed in my computer, however when I joined Omega last year, I went through all my boxes, jogged my memory, and was able to compile a complete listing. I couldn't believe it. I had over 70 unfinished projects!!! (I got so many because the first 2-3 years I began quilting, I didn't know how to quilt, so the projects sat.) I finished 12 last year and hope to maintain that rate. My problem is that I still start new projects.

- A. My projects are now listed in Excel in the computer along with a code which tells me the importance of getting each one finished.
- B. The projects are each in their own bag and put into large plastic containers with the contents listed on the container (taped outside if the container is not see through).
- C. The projects in these containers are sorted by the computer listing, so when I finish one project, I know where to find the next one.

### **II. Fabric**

First my fabric is sorted according to type, then according to color.

- A. Christmas, Children, Halloween, and Flannel have their own bins.
- B. Basic fabric yardage is folded and stored according to color on shelving units in my quilting room. I love just looking at this wall of color.
- C. Fat quarters are here and there. I don't have room to have them either with my yardage or all in one spot. Some are in large bins, some are in small bins, and some are in an old, very narrow, but tall kitchen shelving unit whose shelves are exactly one fat quarter width. It's great.
- D. Scraps are sorted into smaller plastic containers by color with labels that show through.
- E. I have a medium sized container on a shelf under my cutting table so I can whisk scraps into it. When it is jam packed, the scraps get sorted into the other bins.

### **III. Fibers**

- A. Thread is stored by color in old DMC floss drawer units.
- B. I have a separate drawer for my invisible and wash away thread. The wash away stays in a zip lock bag when not in use for identification purposes.
- C. Specialty fibers (for couching) are stored by color in small bins.
- D. You won't believe this (or maybe you will if you know me), but I also save my long thread ends when quilting. I use them for embellishment. These are stored in those divided plastic sandwich type containers.

### **IV. Time**

I live with a timer and quilt with recorded books. I usually have about 1 hour at a time for quilting, which is the length of a recorded book CD or tape. If I am grabbing 10-20 or other minutes between something else, I set a timer so I don't forget and burn the brownies.

### **V. Patterns, books, and kits**

- A. Books are in a separate room with cabinets set aside for quilting books and magazines. (Good reminder, these all need to be organized according to subject. In fact the entire room needs to be organized. Yikes!)
- B. At one time I organized the magazines according to title. Last year I reorganized most of them according to time of year, so now all of my (Jan-Feb books are together, March-April books are together, etc. no matter if it is Quilting News, Fons and Porter, or anything else I happen to have purchased.) This really saves me a lot of time when looking for inspiration. I can grab all the magazines at once when looking for a particular subject. It also saves time when returning books to the shelf. They all go in the same place.
- C. Patterns are in a box sorted according to subject.
- D. Right now kits have their own cabinet, however I would like to get them into a bin.

#### **IV. Miscellaneous**

A. Have a basket or other container at each work station with scissors, pin cushion, container for small scraps and threads to be thrown away, pencils, or anything else that use constantly used. The pin cushions don't roll around and get lost and you know that everything you need is right there. I also have a set of these supplies (plus rotary cutter, safety pins, extra bobbins, etc.) in my sewing machine case so I have my supplies when I go to a class.

B. Sewing stations are – sewing machine, cutting table, in a wall basket by my ironing board, and in the living room by my chair.

C. I clean my sewing machine every Monday.

#### **VI. Quilting Room**

I really lucked out with my quilting room. It is one of the old office rooms from my business and is located in the basement close to the washer and drying,. It is complete with corner desk with shelves at one end for sewing and a niche that the ironing board fits into perfectly. One 14 foot wall is perfect for a series of 2 foot wide shelving units painted white for my fabric. The center is two 36" high shelving units with a piece of plywood on top for a cutting table, and the walls were made with a special board that allows you to pin into them, so any exposed wall can work as a designing wall. It was destined for quilting. The only drawback is the ugly electrical panels in one corner, but I can live with that.

#### **VII. Actual Quilting**

A. I am lost without my 3 ring binder/notebooks. When I begin a quilt, I begin a page in the notebook to record tensions, threads used, and all sorts of notes about that quilt. Since it is very unusual for me to work on a quilt from start to finish, this notebook is a must.

B. Notes on index cards are here and there. There is one I constantly use that reminds me which way I turn my tension to bring my thread back or forward. It also tells me how to put a new needle into my machine. I keep that card in the box with my presser feet.

C. Another large note is by my ironing board. It reminds me to iron appliqué onto the WRONG side of the fabric. I'm getting better at this, however I just loused up again the other day. (I was in a hurry.)

#### **VIII. Problems**

A. My biggest problem is keeping my cutting table clear so I can use it for cutting and appliqué layout.

B. My second biggest problem is that I need another complete room to store everything!! Most of my working supplies (and that is a lot) are in my quilting room, a very packed 10' x 14' space. As mentioned, books are in a different room and many of my fabric bins are stored in another building on our property. Am I set for a lifetime? I try not to buy, but it doesn't always work.

C. My third and final problem is that the bins I use for my fabric are too heavy for me when they are full. I need to find smaller bins that fit the area especially since my husband put the last three bins on top of 8 foot tall shelving units in the other building. Oh dear, that building is crying for organization too. I guess there is another problem – never enough time.

I think that's it and I think it is enough! I am anxious to hear about how you organize so I can add new ideas to my list.

*Sue*