

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MACHINE-QUILTER

By Kathy Adams of KoolKat Quilting.

**K**athy Adams is a long-arm quilter, quilt designer and tutor based in Toowoomba, Qld. She started her business, KoolKat Quilting, six years ago and it has grown from being a part-time, single-person occupation with one hand-guided quilting machine to a full-time, two-person business with three computerised quilting machines and a 12-needle embroidery machine. Kathy, with the help of husband Geoff, has now quilted quilts for customers numbering in the thousands and every day 'at the office' is a busy one.

## TUESDAY MORNING

**5.30am:** Dear Husband (DH) takes pity on me and lets me sleep till 6am. We've had a lot to do this week and the constant wet weather – which we had wished for to break the drought – has slowed up the painting of our new quilt studio. The grass is growing, the birds are singing and it may be a dry day, so here's hoping.

**6.30am:** I check the emails that have come in overnight. No sales from the website today, but there's a request for bank details from our US pattern distributors and a suggestion from Dave from Statler – my brand of quilting machine – on how to solve an issue with the new software we recently installed for it.

**7am:** The electricians arrive for what is hopefully the last time on the new studio project. We should have power in there soon – yeah! When the lights are on we'll finally be able to see where we



Kathy operating her Statler machine.

have to touch-up the paint; we weren't able to check it last week as it was dark and raining.

**7.15am:** Our mailman, a dear, wonderful, underpaid fellow, brings me a quilt to sign for. It's a wonder he could find the door as there's so much stuff lying about, mainly the contents of our former studio.

**7.30am:** I finish the quote for the quilt that came in and spend a few minutes on the phone chatting to its owner about quilting options. She lives on a property out west and is delighted with the recent rains. Meanwhile DH is working on an all-over quilt job on our second quilt machine.

**8am:** I decide to do a little work on a custom quilt while the electricians are connecting a new phone line in the office, but then I realise I can't do this

as the apprentice has his legs hanging out of the ceiling manhole that's directly above my machine. He could get a nasty surprise if I suddenly jerk the trolley the machine's on.

**8.30am:** I must have done something between 8 and 9am but I'm blown if I know what! Could have been dealing with emails.

**9am:** Whoo hoo! The electrical work is finished and there are lights, a phone port, oodles of power points, a TV connection – most important – and a sensor light. No more tripping over the garden hose trying to find the studio door at night! Now we can see all those bits we missed with the paint. Hmm.

**9.30am:** The laptop, which holds all our customer records, has just died, or rather the screen has; the information is all there, we just can't see it. DH decides to take it to an expert and plead 'URGENT'. As he will be going into town later he can also take the laser printer in for a service as it isn't printing perfectly at present.

**10am:** It's time to attack the paperwork that's been breeding on my desk. Suppliers' bills to file, invoices to type out, bank statements to reconcile and important scribbled notes to type up somewhere so the information can be found again.

**10.15am:** Coffee time. DH and I discuss what lines we'll buy to resell based on demonstrating the new fabric-cutting machine. As usual, he wants to spend ("invest") money and I want to hang onto

it. He takes off into town with the laser printer after setting up the machine so I can quilt a row while he's gone.

**10.30am:** Betty calls in for her quilt. It's a huge king-size piece – her first – and features a Mariner's Compass in the centre. DH quilted a pattern on the background and I custom-quilted the compass in the centre. Betty also had an embroidered label made, as it was a gift for her grandson, and we added it to the quilt. She was delighted and her big smile at seeing it made me forget all about electricians and mud.

**11am:** Dianna called in for her quilt, a lovely queen-size stitchery we quilted all over with a simple pattern to blend with it. She loved it! What a smart girl Dianna is – she started quilting about a year ago with little cot-size pieces and is now confidently tackling larger ones. (Most of us started with a king or queen-size quilt, didn't we? Be honest now!)

**11.30am:** I answer a phone call from a quilting friend who wants some details about the local show's quilting section.

## TUESDAY AFTERNOON

**Noon:** The paperwork is all done but my desk is still a mess – how can that be? Nearly time to make lunch – whose turn is it?

**12.30pm:** Lunch is still not ready. DH is back and we're looking at the laptop trying to figure out how to set up my



Kathy's quilt Bali Twist.

digitising monitor as a second screen. Eventually, we get it going. Now, if the laptop screen fails we can still work on the computer.

**1pm:** Time to gobble down a toasted sandwich and sip three cups of black tea, no sugar, whilst I lose myself rereading *The Thorn Birds*, I love it! I first picked it up years ago but it's still a great read.

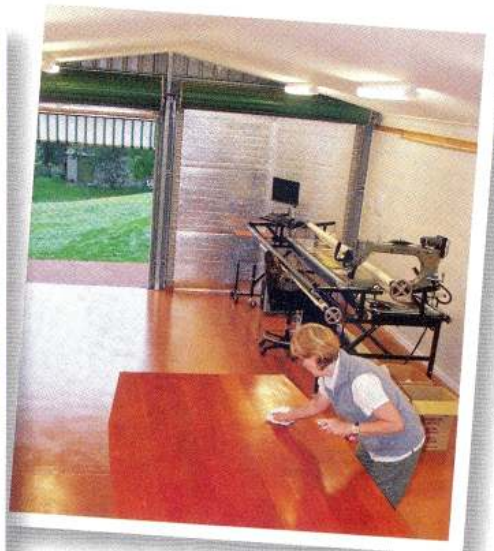
**2pm:** Back to work. DH is about to load another quilt on his machine for an all-over pattern. That will make two finished today, despite the computer meltdown, electricians and mud. I'm catching up on emails and writing a couple of articles, including this one, that I promised I'd do.

**2.15pm:** The screen on the laptop died again, so tomorrow we'll be taking a trip into town to buy a new laptop while the old one gets fixed. We needed another one but didn't plan on having to buy it so soon – sigh!

**2.30pm:** I'm going out to the new studio to do some of the remaining painting. The phone works out there now, which is great – no more running between the house and the studio to take calls!

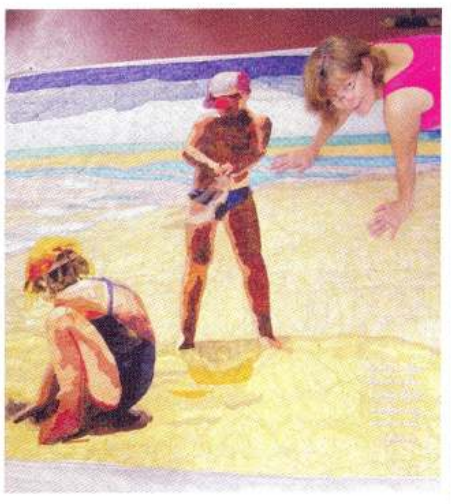
**5pm:** I come inside covered in paint, so I'm off for a hot shower. Then DH and I can argue about whose turn it is to cook!

Well, that was my actual day today. There are days, however, that are much less chaotic than this one. I rise, shower, eat and quilt while enjoying classical music or a talking book on my headphones. The phone rings only at



Polishing her new work table.

morning and afternoon tea and I get more quilting done than I expect to. Supplies arrive ahead of when I need them and all machines and computers work effortlessly. Dinner is cooking in the slow cooker and DH is out doing the grocery shopping for me. I'm so relaxed at the end of the day that I work on a new quilt design, before retiring to bed with a great novel. Yes, there are days like these – and there were two or three of them last year! It's a lot of fun mostly and we always get there in the end!



Kathy working on The Sky is Blue quilt.



Kathy and textile artist Hetty Van Boven.

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