

Family tragedy leads to a new quilting venture

BY RITA CRAWFORD

Hello, my name is Rita and I am a sew-aholic. I cannot go into a fabric store and keep my hands to myself. Every fibre, thread and notion must be looked at and/or touched.

The creative juices start flowing freely and soon, before I know it, I am all too consumed in what wonderful things I want to create.

A quick glance at my watch (notice how they never have clocks on the walls in those stores?) lets me know that, in what seems like 20 minutes, two or more hours have gone by! Sewing is an addiction—

I started out, over 25 years ago, using my mom's old machine. We had a small spare bedroom called the sewing room where I learned how to sew.

Soon for the first time I sat down with fabric and machine. I was instantly captivated!

As time went on, we moved several times.

Each house had a bigger sewing room and soon I was granted my own sewing machine, a hand-me-down Riccar. Now I didn't have to wait—I could sit along side her and do my own projects.

We kept great company to each other when we were in there together. Sadly, my mom passed away a few years later in 1989. All these years later, I still miss her very much.

The sewing she has taught me however, will be with me for a lifetime. It is like a legacy, as I am now teaching my

own child, who is eager to learn, to sew.

Over the years, my thirst for more knowledge in sewing and quilting began to envelope me. I bought my first computerized sewing machine in 1994 (I have since upgraded even that), the year before my son was born.

I would tape all the sewing shows on TV that I could find and then sit and watch them on my days off. I remember thinking that I wish I didn't have to go to work so I could sit in front of my sewing machine and create.

But I had to make money to buy more fabric... It's a vicious cycle, I know!

Then, I met my now fiancé. He had a son as well. We

originally met at the daycare our children both attended

His child was a year and a half younger than mine, but they got along so well.

The daycare staff set us up on a "blind date" and ... things grew from there.

Soon we decided to move in together. The four of us lived together in the Greater Vancouver area for about four years before the unthinkable happened.

I was out riding my bike with my son and step-son on a sunny September afternoon, celebrating the first day of school. The kids were going into grades three and four, respectively.

In the blink of an eye my step-son was struck down while riding his bike. He fought hard, but didn't make it. Life changed forever.

Over the next few months I threw myself into sewing even more, just to cope with things.

I made my fiancé a photo memory quilt to honour his young



When tragedy took the life of her stepson Kris, below right, with her son Parker, Rita Crawford immersed herself in sewing and making a memory quilt for her fiancé to cope with her grief. From that has grown a business of making memory quilts.

— Photos submitted by Rita Crawford

son. It was a real labour of love.

Not long after it was complete, quilt requests for more from family members began and I was happy to oblige.

Needing a major change, we moved to Castlegar in May, 2005. Although we will never escape our grief, we need to try and move forward.

Now I am creating memory quilts as my business. I also offer quilting services.

All my quilting is free hand (no frame), by machine, at Kootenay Custom Quilting... your memory quilt maker, 250-365-2006, quiltingqueen@shaw.ca, www.kcquilting.com.