

From the Other Side of the Machine

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Quilting is a dangerous and addictive activity which needs to be federally regulated!

This is, of course, a very provocative and argumentative statement, and I've arrived at the conclusion after several years of observation and reluctant participation. Very reluctant! And it all started when some friends introduced my normally sane spouse to the newest sewing genre of quilting. Chief among them was a summer friend who lives, sleeps and breathes quilting, and has several blue ribbons for her creations with which to mesmerize unsuspecting home sewers.

The first inkling I had that what this quilting thing was, was when our spendable income started to spiral downward; a new sewing machine, I'm sorry, a quilting machine, and for just a little more it also did embroidery, and with the purchase of a laptop computer the embroidery attachment would work. "But wait, if you buy it right now we'll supply upgraded software which will allow so much more." The machine, (now correctly called a sewing computer), laptop, attachment, upgraded software, now rang up at three times the cost of our first car.

But wait; with all of the hardware what are you going to sew on? Of course you need to buy the entire stock from every fabric/quilt store within a hundred miles of your current location. And Apple I-phone's Siri should be imprisoned for causing distracted driving. Every time we're traveling... "Hey Siri, quilt stores near here, Hey Siri, quilt stores near here," and on and on for hundreds of miles, every 10-12 minutes. I've contacted the Federal Dept. of Transportation about what can be done to curtail this distraction, but apparently all of the males in that branch of the Federal Govt. have quilting wives, because they all responded there was nothing that could be done, but they'd be happy to meet with me at a Quilters' Husbands Anonymous meeting at Flannigan's pub for a ritual pint of Guinness.

The next Federal agency I communicated with was HUD, Housing and Urban Development. This seemed like a natural, since our housing abode was shrinking by the day. Physically the exterior of our house was unchanged, but the inside was a different story. By now the quilting hardware had doubled with an exponential growth in the necessary, accompanying fabric.

We use to have a very spacious, comfortable "family room" in our basement; TV, stereo, easy chair, queen sized couch (which doubled as a queen-sized bed), even a small pool table. I had my Lionel electric trains mounted on the walls, along with a collection of vintage RR lanterns, pictures and other memorabilia. Today every available space, and some that wasn't available, is crammed with fabric shelves/cabinets, and not one, not two, not three, but five sewing machines (I still subscribe to the machine moniker). One

of these monsters even required the making of a PVC frame to support a quilt while being quilted. (I tell my friends that it's really an adult toy which my wife enjoys. She doesn't think that's at all funny.)

Our family room no longer exists. It is one huge fabric warehouse/quilt factory. But wait, there's more!

For several years I've preached to the addicted spouse that quilting is a very dangerous activity; dangerous to our family economy, our home, and to her personally, but she just scoffs at this notion, at least until Oct. 31, 2015 that is. Happy Halloween..."trick or treat!"

Our Blue Ribbon friend proposed that the two of them go to the Houston Quilt show, and the spouse's sister who lives in Houston, says "Sure, come on down. You can stay here and use one of our cars." (I use to like that sister-in-law). Off they went, and for three days enjoyed quilting nirvana, then headed back to their respective homes, Blue Ribbon to central NC and susceptible minion to Western NY.

The return went badly right from the arrival at Houston's Hobbie Airport. Due to severe weather in Houston, the flight to Chicago and a connecting flight to Buffalo were delayed for over an hour. Upon arrival in Chicago's Midway Airport, the spouse had to hurry from one end of the long concourse to the extreme other end to reach the connecting flight's gate. While walking very fast (not running she insisted) she "stubbed" her right leg, causing instantaneous pain in her right knee.

Six, suffering weeks later, a visit to the orthopedic surgeon produced a diagnosis of a torn meniscus in the right knee. After x-rays, cortisone shots, failed physical therapy, an MRI, and finally arthroscopic knee surgery, the knee is on the mend. (I only tell the spouse once a day how I had warned her that quilting was a dangerous activity to her well being, and I get an "uh huh" in return.)

Now since this knee injury occurred as a direct result of a quilting activity, it only stood to reason that it was an occupational hazard, as part of a dangerous activity, and thus should fall under the jurisdiction of OSHA, a branch of the Federal Dept. of Labor dealing with safety and health. More communication with Washington followed.

However, they too must be husbands of quilters as they also informed there was nothing that could be done, and they too would be willing to meet with me at a QHA meeting at Flannigan's. One brave soul speculated that the distaff members of congress were blocking appropriate protective quilting legislation, but to please say nothing lest his quilter wife hear of his transgression.

So, there it is; quilting is a dangerous activity. But, since the Feds can't do anything, I guess I'll just have to suffer with it. Soon, I'm traveling to DC and Flannigan's, and when I walk in I'll just announce, "Hi. My name is Chip, and I'm a quilter's husband!" I may even try to start a QHA chapter here in Western New York. O'Lacy's seems to be a good location to raise a pint or two to our mutual suffering.