

Chris Sews

Chris sews. To say that my wife, Chris, sews is like saying that Arnold Palmer plays golf, or that Michael Jordan plays basketball. True enough in fact, but falling far short of describing the extent of her skill and her passion. I am no expert, but people who come to her for advice on everything from skirts to sweat suits, pants to potholders. Like the pioneer women of yesteryear, I think she can make almost anything with needle and thread, most of it with some little flair that pronounces it her work. Although she is the envy of friends and relatives, you won't find her creations for sale in the arts and crafts stores, or at the state fair, or even on the Internet. Mostly, Chris sews for other people. She creates one-of-a-kind treasures, beautiful gifts that say "I love you" every time you see them or wear them or feel them. It may be embroidered pillows, or a heirloom handbag, or blazers embroidered with just the right emblem, or matching Easter outfits for big and little sisters. In my case, my three favorite, most comfortable shirts, tailored to fit me perfectly, are from her hands and heart. Innumerable babies have spent their first months wrapped in one of her blankets, each unique, each crafted with her hopes and prayers and insight to receive some little child into the world of her love. Chris sews.

Chris knits. Some children, born too soon, get to wear the little hats she knits to protect their fragile heads. She may not know their names, but she touches them with her love, with her prayers, as she counts the knots, rosary-like, forming on her needles. Older children, suffering the aftermath of chemotherapy, get hats too: bright hats, funny hats, you're-going-to-be-alright hats. Lately she has been making "prayer shawls" for elderly friends. These are not shawls to be worn during prayer, but shawls made with prayer, to warm, to comfort, and to reassure people that they are remembered and loved. When she delivers these gifts she likes to sit and talk, drink tea, hear the old stories, and add her blessing to lives mostly lived. And, she has always knitted the Mom and Grandma stuff: mittens and booties and sweaters so numerous that over the years we have all forgotten which items in our winter wardrobe were from her hands, forgotten the time and care and skill invested so patiently in our comfort, forgotten everything except the bedrock message of "I love you" which she has knitted into our lives. Chris knits.

Chris quilts. Not just the traditional bed-coverings: she is an artist. Her medium is cloth and her palette is the countless fabric swatches she selects for hue and tone, cuts precisely and sews into the picture she is imagining. Come and look at some of them! I have a mountain tapestry: you can see the hazy ridges receding into the distance beyond deep valleys, reminding me that she knows my deep love for hidden trails and distant hills. Her friend Diana, whose impossible dream is a 100-gallon aquarium, has an undersea tableau scattered with fish in radiant colors over a background of multi-hued coral. A "Madonna and Child" done in a "stained-glass" style graces a wall of my brother's home. But most of her quilts are made for the beds of family and friends, each with a unique pattern personalized for the person whose bed it will grace. Grandson Drew has a "soccer quilt" festooned with bright, bouncy soccer balls, not unlike his own exuberant personality. His sisters, Julia and Gracie, have more subdued quilts in soft green and purple, matching the décor of their rooms - perfect for two sisters who are very close. Our son Carlisle has a tiger quilt, done with an exotic tiger fabric that Chris had to cut into just-right pieces and reassemble into her quilt design. Dan's quilt is resplendent with eagles - all sizes and shapes around the border, framing the magnificent lone eagle flying out of the centerpiece. But the most amazing of her quilts is "Seven stars for Sara", made for the daughter of some dear friends, a special little girl whose delight in this gift will always be childlike. Looking at it, you see the beautiful pattern of stars and colors, but look again: there, quilted into the background of the whole quilt, is the angel that Chris sees watching over Sara. Chris quilts.

Chris has spent countless hours sewing, knitting, quilting.. The sheer volume and quality of her work is an amazing legacy, even more amazingly, the hundreds or perhaps thousands of beautiful things she has made are not about her: they are about the people she loves, and as such, they speak the essence of her life.