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Mourning Quilts in America

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Quilts have been the constant companions of American women for over two centuries, created for all occasions, giving comfort day to day. Women made quilts to commemorate births and marriages, to honor community leaders and friends, and to memorialize the dead. Quilts in this last group, mourning quilts, provided the maker with a tangible memorial to the departed and sometimes served a practical purpose in the burial process or the home.

Death's toll in both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America was formidable. However, acceptance and accomodation to death varied greatly from one century to another. In the American colonies in the eighteenth century, mourning rituals tended to be simple. The family prepared the deceased for burial in the home, and both men and women were expected to have a matter-of-fact attitude towards death. Verses wrought into samplers by young girls often alluded to the makers' mortality. Children's toys sometimes took a form we would consider morbid today: toy coffins, often with removable figures, were acceptable playthings.[1]

The advent of the Romantic movement at the end of the eighteenth century resulted in a different way of viewing death and memorializing those it took away. Death was romanticized, mourning became more elaborate and new memorials were created for the deceased.[2] Mourning pictures in needlework and watercolor became popular and were made in great numbers by young women with sufficient time and leisure. These pictures were based upon classic Greek models and included standard motifs, such as urns set on inscribed tombstones in a landscape with weeping willows, and mourning figures, usually female, bowed in grief, near the tombstone.

In addition, the Romantic movement stressed the expression of feelings, and young women created sentimental representations which echoed the views expressed in popular literature of the day.

As people began to sentimentalize death, they also began to domesticate heaven, which became known as a "home beyond the skies," a domestic world particularly suited to Victorian women.[3] Heaven was no longer a place to fear one's judgment; it became another home, offering a place for a reunion with the dear departed. Novels even offered homey descriptions of heaven complete with household essentials.

Compatible with this sentimental and domestic view of heaven was the ideology, prevalent by the 1830s, of the Cult of True Womanhood, or the Cult of Domesticity. As individuals romanticized death, they also defined separate spheres for men and women. No longer was woman simply man's helpmeet as she had been in the eighteenth century. She was instead removed from the world of trade and commerce and encouraged to pursue "indoor pursuits (which) would harmonize with her natural love of home and its duties."[4] Her role was to care for the home and rear the children; she was the preserver of home and hearth.

Women were viewed as more pious, sensitive, and generally closer to heaven than men. As such, women became the primary mourners. A woman writing at the end of the nineteenth century complained that a wife often stayed home in mourning while her husband went to a party, even though it was his blood relation who had died. And further, "the custom of mourning presses far more heavily on women than men. In fact, so trifling are the alterations made in a man's dress . . . that practically the whole burden of mourning wrappings would seem to have fallen on women. . . . They (men) positively manage to mourn by proxy!"[5]

The rituals of burial and mourning became more elaborate in the early nineteenth century. Tombstones sometimes bore portraits of the deceased; and angels, willow tress, urns, garlands, and weeping survivors became appropriate ornaments. Nineteenth century imagery contrasts sharply with the stark symbols of earlier gravestones: skulls, death masks, and empty hourglasses. It also became proper to preserve reminders of the deceased in the home. Mourning pictures and posthumous portraits and photographs were frequently

Figure. 1. Posthumous daguerreotype portrait of George Henry Williams, son of Henry C. and Diana T. Williams, who died at age 18 months. Collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, gift of Irving Brown.

executed for the grieving family. These pictures became a way of holding onto lives too soon ended. Portraits of children were especially popular.

The posthumous photograph, often displayed in the home, could be placed on a mantel or table in the sitting room. Grace Snyder, describing her life in frontier Nebraska, recalls walking into the home of her future husband's family: "Big family photographs in heavy frames hung on the living room walls. Among them was one of the little dead William, and another of a sister who had died on the West Coast."[6]

Mourning customs and costume of the nineteenth century were carefully developed by the time Queen Victoria ascended the British throne in 1837. However, no one mourned with greater intensity or dedication than she. In 1861, the Queen lost both her mother and her husband. After Prince Albert's death Victoria wore mourning dress for the remaining forty years of her life. Every

bed in which Victoria slept had, at the back, on the right-hand side, above the pillow, a photograph of the head and shoulders of Prince Albert as he lay dead, crowned by a wreath of dried flowers.[7] The Queen commissioned a succession of monuments and memorials to Albert, but it is perhaps the private shrine Victoria created for him that tells us most about her grief and her obession:

> The suite of rooms which Albert had occupied in the Castle was kept for ever shut away from the eyes of any save the most privileged. Within those precincts everything remained as it had been at the Prince's death; but the mysterious preoccupation of Victoria had commanded that her husband's clothing should be laid afresh, each evening, the water should be set ready in the basin, as if he were still alive; and this incredible rite was performed with scrupulous regularity for nearly forty years.[8]

Queen Victoria fostered the cult of mourning, spreading it among all classes during her lifetime. Published accounts of the Queen's faithfulness had a tremendous effect on people, and her example was followed by many of her subjects.[9] While other women did not have this kind of power, position, or wealth to devote to their grief, outward manifestations of sorrow were customary and expected. Mourning customs controlled one's dress, social life, and the interior of one's home. Quilts in black and white and shades of gray, usually with a black border, were often made to replace the brightly-colored calicoes. Some individuals even used black sheets for their beds during deep mourning.[10] It is probable that these quilts were passed among families as need arose. Mourning quilts appear to have been more common in America during the second half of nineteenth century than earlier.

Quilt historian Dr. William R. Dunton, Jr., discovered four mourning quilts made by Mrs. Julia Ann Cromer Flickinger (1827–1901). Mrs. Flickinger lived near New Windsor, Maryland, and was a prodigious quilter and seamstress. At her death she left 150 quilts, 100 of which were finished, so that her four children received 25 quilts each as part of their inheritance.

Dr. Dunton states that Mrs. Flickinger made four quilts in black and white which she used during mourning following the death of

her husband in 1896. Dr. Dunton describes one of Mrs Flickinger's quilts, called Midnight Star:

> The quilt measures six feet ten inches by seven feet and is bound with the lining material. The five-inch border is of a black and white striped calico, and the alternate blocks are of black with a fine white line in which occur tiny spots of red and green. The other blocks are in "Aunt Eliza's star design" (with a modified central square) of white, figured blacks, and grays. The triangles adjoining the central square and those outside the stars are dark gray, and the squares in the corners a lighter gray. The quilting, double parallel lines, is well done.[11]

A quilt believed to have a similar function is in the collection of the American Museum in Bath, England. Referred to as the Widow's Quilt, or Darts of Death, this quilt is made from pieced blocks of black darts alternating with plain white blocks, which are quilted in a lyre design. A black border surrounds the pieced design. The blocks are small, seven-and-a-half inches square, and the quilt is narrow, ninety-two by fifty-nine inches. There has been speculation that this denotes the solitary state of the sleeper, but the size could also indicate its use as a coffin cover. The quilt was found in New Jersey and dates from the mid-nineteenth centry.[12] This quilt, like many others of this type, is surrounded by a black border similar to the black-bordered handkerchiefs and stationary used by those in mourning.

Another type of mourning quilt is the Memory Quilt, made from the deceased's clothing. According to Carrie Hall, the pattern generally used was "Memory Wreath" and was "made of pieces of dresses worn by the dear departed, the name and date of death being embroidered in the white center square."[13] Memory quilts often contained religious or sentimental verses memorializing the deceased or comforting the living. Two examples of this type are the Susan Burr quilt and the Laura Mahan quilt.

The Burr quilt was made in 1844 in Mt. Holly, New Jersey, in memory of Susan N. Burr. The quilt incorporated pieces of Susan's clothing and was signed by her family and friends. The quilt is large, 94 by 96 1/2 inches, and is made in the Crossroads pattern. Twelve signatures are still visible, as is this inscription near the center of the quilt: "Think not though distant thou art/Thou cannot forgotten

be/While memory lives within my heart/I will remember thee," and nearby: "To the memory of/Susan N. Burr/1844." The quilt descended in the family to the great-granddaughter of one of the signers, Anna Elton Rogers. The Rogers family were Quakers who settled in Burlington County, New Jersey, in the 1680s. While signature quilts in general were popular during the mid-nineteenth century, researcher Jessica Nicoll suggests that members of the Society of Friends found the idea of memory quilts particularly compelling.[14]

A second memory quilt, begun by Laura Mahan before her death in 1848, was finished by her stepmother, Sarah Mahan, in 1851. Quilt historian Ricky Clark tells the story of this quilt and the individuals involved in its history.[15] The quilt incorporates pieces from Laura's dresses, and the completed work commemorates Laura's life and death.

Forty-five of the blocks are inscribed by friends and family of the Mahans, primarily with biblical quotations and poems indicative of the sentimentalism of the day. The inscriptions also recognize the depth of Mrs. Mahan's loss; she was already a widow in 1843. Two blocks on the quilt record Sarah Mahan's departure from Oberlin, Ohio, a community which had been her base of support following her husband's death, to Belle Prairie, Minnesota, to teach in a mission school. The quilt was a testament to the love felt for Laura, just fourteen when she died. Additionally, it was a record of the community which had supported Sarah and her children and had been their home.

The practice of making a quilt from the clothing of the deceased was a fairly common practice. However, one unidentified widow, reversed this and made a quilt from her own mourning coat. The maker opened her black silk coat along the seams and made a mourning quilt to tell the story of her life with her husband. The central design is a coffin surrounding a vase with a drooping lily. Other design elements most likely illustrate aspects of the couple's life together, such as flags and a ship, while others symbolize their affection, paired hearts and spoons. The fabrics include pieces which may be from a wedding dress, and the maker embroidered a depiction of a man, perhaps to represent her husband. Fallen leaves and the lily symbolize death; the pansy, remembrance. Other embroidered motifs are not as easily understood, although the empty chair and pocket watch at the lower left appear to be additional symbols for an inter-

rupted life. Writer Penny McMorris noted that the lines of embroidery, at time even and regular and at other times erratic, perhaps express the quiltmaker's changing moods.[16]

This unknown quiltmaker's manifestation of her grief over the loss of her husband is one of the most moving and eloquent of mourning statements. While one can only speculate as to their life together, we can surmise that the making of this spectacular object offered the maker solace and comfort in her grief and created a tangible memorial for her husband.

Quilts could and did have very practical purposes in association with the dead. A quilt might serve as temporary covering for the body, line the casket, or offer the only protection for the body in the cold ground. The latter practice was especially common during the Western migration in America in the mid- and late-nineteenth-century during which the mortality rate was high, and, on the treeless prairie, quilts often functioned as shroud and coffin combined.

Mrs. D. M. Burbank writes of much hardship and death on her journey west, to Utah:

> Then we went along the Platte River where we had cholora [sic]. Five died with it in our company. . . . My husband's wife Abby died with cholora and was buried without a coffin by the Platte River among the others. We had to go on in the morning and never saw their graves again. The night that Abby was buried the wolves were howling. It was awful to hear the dirt thrown on their bodies. A young lady and I were the only ones to wash and dress her with what we could find. Her underclothes and a nightgown. We sewed her up in a sheet and a quilt. That was all that could be done for her burial.[17]

Grace Snyder writes of the death of her first child:

> Bert made a coffin from a stout little ammunition box, and I told kind old Gramdma Houk where to look in my box cupboard for a lovely little featherstitched silk doll quilt that Aunt Ollie had given me years before. They wrapped the baby in the little quilt and laid her in the box. . . . Bert buried the tiny coffin in the yard at the foot of the little cottonwood tree. As soon as I was able, I went out and put a frame of narrow boards around the little grave.[18]

Sarah Leggett of Kountze, Texas pieced nine Lone Star quilts in black and white. She intended that each of her nine children be buried

in his or her quilt. According to family tradition, "When a member of the family died, the kitchen door was removed (referred to as a 'cooling board'), placed on two chairs or sawhorses, and the body was placed on it and covered with the quilt while a pine coffin was constructed. When other family members died, they could be wrapped in the quilt—but it was to be buried with the son or daughter for whom it was made."[19] One quilt survives today because the son for whom it was made lived beyond the time of this burial tradition. The quilt remains in the family.

The "shroud quilt" or "coffin quilt" are the family names for a quilt made by Polly Taylor and Elizabeth Taylor Ruff which incorporates not only clothing of the deceased, but fabrics from shrouds and coffin linings. The quilt was made in Searcy County, Arkansas, about 1898, in memory of Polly's husband, Captain Benjamin Franklin Taylor. Taylor was ambushed and killed in the line of duty in Dover, Arkansas. The quilt incorporates names of other family members, some accompanied by birth and death dates. The center of the quilt forms a large square cut from remnants of the casket lining and edged with bits of lace from the same lining. "Pa's Shroud" is embroidered in the center. Remnants from Captain Taylor's burial clothing were also included in the quilt.

Referring to the quilt, Mrs. Opal Lee Taylor, a granddaughter of Mrs. Ruff, stated that "people in those days were sentimental about deaths and funerals. Caskets were made at home while the deceased was laid out on a cooling board and covered with a quilt, sheets were used in the summer. A silk handkerchief was placed over their face which was lifted for the last look." Mrs. Taylor remembers her father's statement upon the death of her younger brother, "Take the last look at your brother. The only time you will see him now is in heaven."[20]

Many of the quilts made to honor the dead were album quilts and signature quilts, both styles which were popular in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. In Baltimore, between 1846 and 1852 an exceptional and distinctive group of quilts emerged which have come to be known as Baltimore Album Quilts.[21] Within this tradition is a very fine quilt made by members of Eli Lilly's family at the time of his death in 1847.

Eli Lilly was born in Bristol, England in 1780, and immigrated

Figure 2. Detail of "Shroud Quilt" made by Polly Taylor and Elizabeth Taylor in memory of Benjamin Franklin Taylor, Searcy County, Arkansas, ca. 1898. 83 by 68 inches. Collection of Mrs. Opal Taylor.

to America with his parents in 1789. Lilly married three times, outliving each of his wives. He died December 3, 1847, in Baltimore. According to family tradition, at the time of his last illness his family gathered and made this quilt. It is signed by nine of Lilly's eleven children and their spouses, several friends, and by Lilly himself.

The quilt is beautifully appliqued with a variety of floral motifs, several of which are embellished with padding and embroidery. A swag border surrounds all four sides. Making the quilt provided a way for the family to gather, physically and symbolically, around Eli Lilly at his death. The quilt may have helped each member, including Lilly, prepare for his death.

Lilly signed the block with the lyre, an image often associated with death, but also a popular motif in the design vocabulary of seamstresses and other artists of the day. The quilt also provided a family record, commemorating the months the children and their spouses, many of whom had traveled long distances, spent together. The quilt has remained in the family, passed from daughter to daughter, to the present day. It continues to be a connection to that group of individuals who gathered around Eli Lilly in 1847.[22]

Several other album quilts of the period include a memorial to those departed, or a plea to those the maker left behind to "Remember Me." Some of the quilted memorials were similar to the painted and embroidered mourning pictures popular with young women at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

An album quilt from Rockland County, New York incorporates mourning symbols into one square. A male mourner, hat in hand, stands at a tombstone which is inscribed: "In memory/of/Edward H. Thompson/Died/June 3rd 1851 Aged 20 years/Blessed are they who die in the Lord." That block and several others are signed "John C. Gurnee" and on the back of the quilt is the inscription, "D. Thompson Gurnee". Approximately three dozen signatures, most of them North Rockland names, are penned on the quilt. Next to this block is a depiction of a building ringed by a cross, an anchor and hearts, symbols for faith, hope, and charity.[23]

Signature quilts sometimes included memorials along with other names and inscriptions. A quilt in the collection of the DAR Museum, made in Berks County, Pennsylvania, 1850–1851, contains a memorial inscription for a woman who died before the quilt's

Figure 3. Watercolor rendering of an Album Quilt, ca. 1850–60. All of the blocks carry a signature or initials with the exception of the central block which bears only "Mother" and "Remember Me." Index of American Design, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

completion, "Ellen B. Brimfield/Aged 77 years" and includes a verse from Longfellow's poem, *A Psalm of Life*: "Art is long and time is/ fleeting, And our hearts/tho stout and brave, still/like muffled drums are/beating funeral marches/to the Grave."[24] Signature quilts brought together people who were parted by death or distance. The quilts gave comfort and solace to their owners and helped to keep alive the memory of those departed.

The most famous of all quilts commemorating the dead is the Kentucky Graveyard Quilt made by Elizabeth Mitchell in 1839. Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell and their children moved from Pennsylvania, first to Ohio in 1831, then to Kentucky in 1834. While in Ohio, two of the Mitchells' sons died. After they moved, Mrs. Mitchell returned to Ohio to visit the boy's graves and experienced such grief that, upon returning home, she created her masterpiece. The quilt serves as a family record, a tangible memorial for her lost sons, and, hopefully, it helped her to cope with their deaths. Judging from its wear, it also served a practical function as a bedcover.

In the center of the quilt is the Mitchell family plot, with appliqued coffins labeled with names of the deceased. Along the border of the quilt are additional coffins labeled with family names. Mrs. Mitchell planned to move these coffins into the plot, or cemetery, as her relatives died.[25]

Mrs. Mitchell's depiction of the family graveyard reflects this country's move away from the churchyard and public burial grounds of the eighteenth century to the formally planned, pastoral cemeteries of the nineteenth century. The earlier, disorganized lots gave way to enclosed burying grounds with an atmosphere of respose and protection from the harsh forces of the exterior world. Families also used metal railings to set apart their plots within public burying grounds.

Mrs. Mitchell's use of the burial ground as the the center of her quilt is both emotionally and visually compelling. She also uses the symbolism of flowers effectively. The rose or rosebud symbolizes death of the young and is a confession of love. In American art, a rose held downward or drooping from a broken stem meant an innocent life cut short. Roses, along with morning glories, were often included by painters and photographers in posthumous portraits of children. Mrs. Mitchell carefully embroidered roses trailing along the fence

railings and entrance gate. Many of these blooms are drooping from their stems.[26]

Mrs. Mitchell expressed her grief through a very personal composition, although she incorporated accepted symbols for love and death. A number of twentieth-century quilters have taken objects from burials and imbued them with their own, personal, symbolism. Ribbons which adorn the floral sprays at funerals are collected, pressed, and used to create quilts which function as memorials and beautiful objects. The tradition has roots in both white and black communities, though the tradition may be more rural than urban.

Laura Lee, a black quilter in Chatham County, North Carolina, made a quilt from the funeral-flower ribbons of Judge Harry Horton. In discussing the quilt Mrs. Lee says, "He's dead, but I mean his wife saved the ribbons. She knew I made (quilts) and so she saved the ribbons. . . . And brought them. And I made that one and I remember what went into that one."[27] The ribbon quilt is composed of twenty squares with a pieced star at the center of each. While pink is the dominant color, yellow and red have been used to great effect in the pieced blocks. According to folklorist, Mary Anne McDonald, who has researched African-American quilts in Chatham County, Judge Horton was seen as a fair and reasonable man during the racial turbulence of the 1960s and was respected by the black community. For Mrs. Lee the quilt became a symbol of Judge and Mrs. Horton.[28]

Mrs. Lee also made a quilt from her son's funeral-flower ribbons. "She does not mention her feelings of grief at her son's death. . . yet . . . she frequently mentions the quilt she made from his funeral ribbons. This transformation from ribbons to quilt, from loss into useful object, enables Laura Lee to order her grieving within the framework of her life."[29]

Mrs. Bessie Alexander, a white quilter in Walker County, Alabama, made a quilt in 1972 from the funeral-flower ribbons of her mother-in-law. She was not aware of other quilts of this type, but said, "I just had so many ribbons, I wasn't sure what to do with them. A quilt was the only thing I could think of." In addition, she felt it was a "good way to keep something of sentimental value to you." Mrs. Alexander made one for herself and her husband, then two more, smaller ones, for each of her husband's sisters.[30]

Mrs. Alexander takes great pleasure in showing her quilt to others. It is a beautiful object, its lengths of richly-colored satin arranged unbroken by scissor-cut or elaborate pattern. Mrs. Alexander organized the colors symmetrically, beginning with deep lavender at the center of the quilt. The other colors—red, yellow, orange, and olive—fan out, in pairs, on either side of the first lavender ribbon.

The ribbon quilts have special meaning to the makers, commemorating a loved one and saving something associated with them. The ribbon quilts are related to other mourning quilts in memorializing the dead and in the comfort they provide the maker. The process of creating a whole from fragments is a healing activity and serves an important psychological function for those in mourning.

A contemporary quilter, Radka Donnell, discusses quilts she made commemorating the death of a young girl.

> I was commissioned to do two quilts using the clothes of a girl that had died. . . . It wasn't a mere question of [the mother] remembering her daughter. It was a question of putting her to rest. She needed some sort of ceremony that she could not find anywhere else and that the conventional funeral hadn't provided. . . . I was helping face the situation. And so I made the quilts and still had the feeling that the main thing had been her interaction with me and that the quilt was only a memorial to what happened between us."[31]

Another quiltmaker mentions the healing force of making a quilt. "The quilt was made just after my youngest brother was killed in a plane crash, a very sad event in my life, and this quilt [White Light] reflects my feelings. Also, making this quilt gave me much solace at the time."[32] Quilt artist Terrie Mangat created "E.B.'s New Pasture" after the death of her grandfather in 1982. The quilt incorporates loving memories of her grandfather, but also reflects conflict and resolution within the family and the love and deep bond between her son and grandfather. The quilt becomes both a memorial and a celebration.[33]

The AIDS epidemic and the scores of victims in its wake moved Cleve Jones of San Francisco to initiate a quilt project to illustrate the enormity of this epiemic. The NAMES Project Quilt, begun early in 1987, is an ongoing work which was first displayed in Washington, D.C., in October 1987, during the National March for Lesbian and

Figure 4. Some of the panels composing the NAMES Project Quilt on display in Birmingham, Alabama in 1989.

Gay Rights. The project involves stitching together cloth panels, measuring three by six feet, made by friends and families of AIDS victims.

The panels, made all over the country, memorialize those lost to the disease. Some of the memorials are stark statements, others are decorated with mementos from the lives of the deceased. When the quilt was first displayed it contained 1,920 panels. By early 1988, the quilt included 3,500 panels representing approximately thirteen per cent of the deaths from AIDS or Aids Related Complex.[34] The project has been an emotional one, but its healing forces are undeniable.

Mourning customs have become significantly less elaborate in the twentieth century. Mourning clothes were worn by women through World War I, but Geoffrey Gorer suggests that so many found themselves grieving the loss of loved ones during that time that the custom ceased to have much meaning.[35]

Romanticism of death and sentimental memorials to the deceased are no longer common or even considered appropriate. Mourners today are expected to accept their losses and go on with their lives as soon as possible. Viewed from the distance of the 1980s, we may

consider nineteenth-century mourning customs and the objects associated with these customs, as overly sentimental, embarrassing, or bizarre. But, as one writer has noted, "mourning objects were external symbols of attachment and loss—and attachment continuing, in spite of loss."[36] Mourners in the twentieth century have, for the most part, abandoned visible adornments of mourning, but this does not mean our grief is any less powerful than in previous generations. The question is, did these visible expressions of mourning isolate the mourner and impede her integration back into the world around her, or did the separateness offer needed time for acceptance and accomodation to her loss?

It is possible that our century's de-emphasis on death makes the healing qualities associated with making a quilt in memory of a loved one even more important to those grieving. And, further, that mourning quilts, which have never been completely abandoned by quiltmakers, will become a more visible type made by today's quilters. The abilities that quilts have to bring people and memories together, to offer comfort to the makers, and to provide tangible memorials to the deceased are unmatched by any other medium.

A final example of the healing qualities of quilts are those made by quilters all over the country to memorialize the astronauts lost in the Challenger disaster. The explosion of the space shuttle Challenger on January 28, 1986, shocked and grieved people across the country. The tragedy propelled many quilters to come to terms with their grief through the creation of quilts. The efforts were spontaneous; none of the makers knew of others who, like them, needed an outlet for their sadness and loss.

Kathleen Francis, a quiltmaker in Wayne, Pennsylvania, states "When the Challenger exploded . . . more than the seven aboard were affected. . . . An entire nation grieved. In the grief I felt over the tragedy, an idea was born. To create a memorial for the seven and those they left behind. I knew from the very beginning that it had to be a positive statement. Since I am a quilter, it would, of course, be a quilt."[37] Ms. Francis and Linda L. Jesse created "They were Flying For Me—A Challenger Commemorative." © KWF1987 (based on a song by John Denver and used by permission).

The Francis/Jesse quilt is a variation of "Birds in the Air," adapted to include seven "birds" instead of five. Seven large stars are quilted

across the quilt representing the seven astronauts, and smaller stars inside the larger stars represent the dependents they left behind. Fabric was chosen to best represent those aboard while other fabric and quilted designs symbolize spirit and light and the inspiration to keep reaching for our dreams. This quilt will hang in the Challenger Center in Washington, D.C., scheduled to open in 1992.

Ms. Francis discovered twelve other quilts made to commemorate the Challenger explosion. Several of the quilts employ the symbolism of birds in the air and stars and incorporate Christa McAuliffe's motto for the school children of America, "Reach for the Stars."[38]

California quiltmaker Linda Ballou made a quilt in subtle pastel shades, indicating a sunrise, with seven birds flying off in the distance. Ms. Ballou said, "This is not a hopeful quilt. It represents their spirits flying off never to be seen again. . . . I did not consciously think of that when I made it, it occurred to me after it was completed and I looked at it. . . . I have never made a quilt with such an emotional base to it."[39]

The Challenger disaster was a tremendous loss, one felt by the nation as a whole. When the nation loses a hero or suffers a grievous shock, there is often a need to express this sorrow in a tangible manner. According to Linda Ballou, "The loss (of a national hero) impacts your life so hard, you have to do something. I chose to make a quilt because that's the way I express my feelings best." These contemporary quiltmakers, many unconsciously, are continuing a tradition of accomodation to loss through the creation of quilted memorials.

Notes and References

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2. Sampler verses, tombstone epitaphs, musical lyrics, and literature provide excellent comparisons of the attitude change and resulting sentimentality in the early nineteenth century. For example, Rebecca Park's gravestone of the late eighteenth century reads in part, "Behold and see as you pass by/My fourteen children with me lie/Old or young

you soon must die/And turn to dust as well as I." DePauw and Hunt, *Remember the Ladies*, 38. Compare the above with "The Mother's Dream," published by Currier and Ives in the mid-nineteenth century with the verse: "The great Jehovah full of love;/An Angel bright did send,/And took my little harmless dove/To joys that never end."

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17. Mrs. D. M. Burbank, "Pioneer Journals," Special Collections no. Bt 8693: 53, University of Utah Library, information provided by Jeana Kimball of Salt Lake City.
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19. Texas Heritage Quilt Society, *Texas Quilts, Texas Treasures* (Paducah, KY: American Quilter's Society, 1986), 36–37.
20. Mrs. Opal Lee Taylor, telephone interview by author, November, 1987.
21. Dena S. Katzenberg, *Baltimore Album Quilts* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1982), 13–15.
22. Interview with Mrs. Louise Francke, June, 1987. The author is grateful to Mrs. Francke, Lilly's descendent and owner of the quilt, for the family history and personal research she so generously shared.
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24. Gloria Seaman Allen, Curator, DAR Museum, Washington, D. C., interview with author, March 1987.
25. For further discussion and a photograph, see The Kentucky Quilt Project, *Kentucky Quilts, 1800–1900* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 52–53.
26. Martha V. Pike and Janice Gray Armstrong, *A Time to Mourn: Expressions of Grief in Nineteenth Century America* (Stony Brook, N.Y.: The Museums At Stony Brook, 1981), 114–16; Combs, "Commemoration in Mid-Nineteenth Century Georgia," 79.
27. Mary Anne McDonald, "Symbols from Ribbons: Afro-American Funeral-Ribbon Quilts in Chatham County, North Carolina," in *Arts in Earnest: North Carolina Folklife*, eds. Daniel W. Patterson and Charles G. Zug, III (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 164–78.
28. Ibid, 164–65.
29. Ibid, 175–76.
30. Mrs. Bessie Alexander, interview with author, October 1987.
31. "Quilts in Women's Lives," a film by Pat Ferrero, quoted in Thomas L. Frye, ed., *American Quilts: A Handmade Legacy* (Oakland, CA.: Oakland Museum, 1981), 35.
32. Marilyn Davis, "The Contemporary American Quilter: A Portrait," in *Uncoverings 1981*, ed. Sally Garoutte (Mill Valley, CA: The American Quilt Study Group, 1982), 49–50.
33. Terrie Mangat, interview with author, October 1989.
34. Jeff Weinstein, "Names Carried into the Future: An AIDS Quilt Unfolds," *The Village Voice* (June 21, 1988): 19–23.
35. Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief, and Mourning* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), xx–xxii, quoted in Patricia Campbell Warner, "Mourning and Memorial Jewelry of the Victorian Age," *Dress* 12 (1986): 60.

36. Warner, "Mourning and Memorial Jewelry," 59.
37. Kathleen Francis, "Challenge Quilts," *Quilting Today* 18 (Spring 1990).
38. Joseph J. Devanney, "The Legacy of the Challenger Quilts," *Quilt World* (December/January 1990): 56–7.
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