

Janet Nesbitt



From a childhood interest to a career, Janet's crafting journey grew as she did, from helping her dad on the farm to raising her own family and running a business.

By Hayley Penrose

Janet Nesbitt fell into fabric designing quite by accident. As a young mother working as a civil engineer in the US Navy, she spent her free time taking classes from Sue Linker who was teaching Sunbonnet Sue All Through the Year from her recently published book. Having two boys, Jane began to adapt Sue's patterns (with her permission!) to Overall Bill instead of Sunbonnet Sue. It wasn't long before she was drafting her own blocks and making personalized quilts for each of her children, featuring their pets and favourite activities.

This was not Jane's first foray into sewing and crafting – "I always liked to sew and craft as a kid," she recalls. "I participated in 4-H [a youth organization] where I made my first

quilt using a McCall's pattern for a 4-pointed star quilt to enter in the local county fair - even way back then I liked star patterns!"

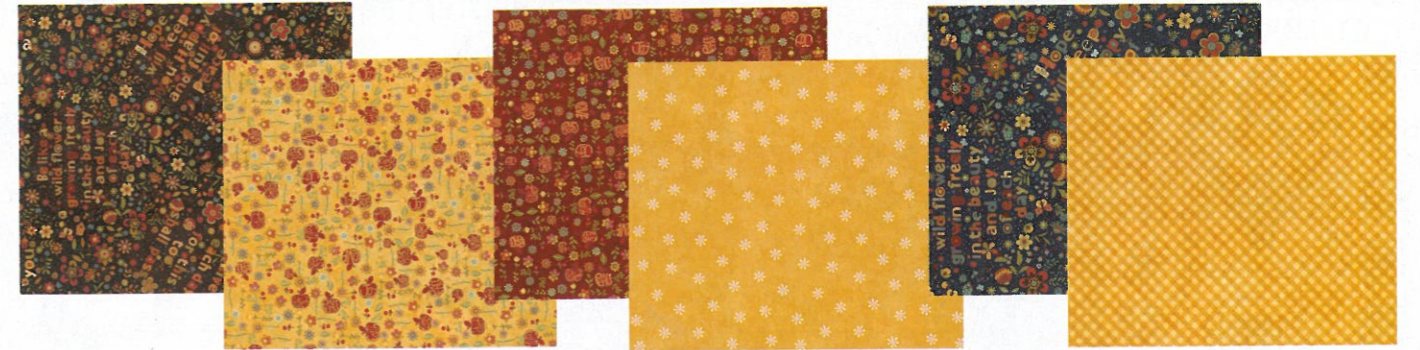
Growing up on a farm as one of four girls, Jane has fond memories of helping out with harvest, haying and everything in between. "I was an 'oops' baby, born years after the other girls, so I spent a lot of my younger days tagging along with my dad, doing chores and feeding cows," Janet remembers. "Even as a very young girl, I'd go out with my dad to milk the cow, and my 'job' was to hold her tail to keep her from swishing Dad in the face as he milked!"

In 1993 Jane and her family moved back to her hometown of Reardan in Western Washington. Her husband had a job opportunity in the nearby city of

Spokane, and it meant that they could be closer to her mother, providing a welcome distraction following the death of Jane's father a few years earlier.

The move also meant that Janet had to leave her job with the Navy. This gave her the opportunity to stay home with her kids and spend her time volunteering at church and school – and quilting of course! "I did continue quilting, designing and making a couple more quilts for the boys with lots of dinosaurs and trains," Janet says. "At the time, I didn't think of it as 'designing'; I was just sketching something out and appliquéing it down to make a quilt!"

It was 1996 when Janet's quilting became more than just a hobby. Her youngest son began kindergarten and



her sister's youngest was headed to college so together they decided to open a quilt store in her barn, and the Buggy Barn was born. The name came easily thanks to the history of the barn which the realtor called a carriage house. "After talking with the 96 year old lady whose parents had homesteaded our place, she said that carriages were much too fancy," Janet explains. "That building was always the buggy barn and so that is how we got our name for our shop!"

There was a challenge, however. Their location was about 40 kilometres from the nearest city so Janet and her sister, Pam, needed to give people a reason to make the trip. One day a dear customer of Buggy Barn came into the shop and was explaining a method she'd seen for making scrappy pockets for a vest. Inspiration struck and Janet questioned whether that method would work for a quilt. "I had been paper piecing and had a bunch of leftover fabric so I drafted a pattern and gave it a try and Buggy Barn Crazies was born!"

Crazies is a technique of stacking fat quarters, transferring a pattern onto the top layer of fabric, cutting on the lines, shuffling the fabrics so there are no two fabric pieces alike in any of the blocks, then stitching it all back together again. Initially Buggy Barn Crazies was a class

to encourage people to go out to the shop but when customers began to ask for patterns, Janet's career as a designer began.

Since then she has been busy writing over two dozen patterns and releasing a number of books. In 2003 Janet and Pam were approached by Henry Glass & Co to design fabrics under the Buggy Barn name, which Janet now continues as One Sister. Janet developed One Sister after she and Pam decided to close Buggy Barn after a great run of 18 years. Now Janet focuses completely on designing, her true passion. "For me, fabric design is all about the colour! But then I have to have a variety of scales in the patterns in each line. I really like word prints, stripes, and dots. I love stars and I have to have plaids," Janet details. "I can't sew with just a few fabrics!"

A scrap piecer at heart, Janet continues to teach her crazy piecing technique and needleturn appliqué, as well as her own quilts. She has experienced many developments in the patchwork industry over the years: "To think how far we've come in our industry from pinning tissue paper pattern pieces to the fabric and cutting with scissors to today's rotary cutting methods," Janet muses.

For those wanting to break into the

designing industry, Janet has some wise words. "I believe as a designer; you have to stay true to who you are," she warns. "You can't be chasing fads or what's in at the moment. Find your niche and carve it deep!"

Her current book, *Down This Country Road*, features 'My Home Town.' A quilt complete with her house and barns and those of her friends, family and neighbours. Janet looks to the world around her for fabric and pattern design. Recently her eldest son laid claim to two of her projects 'Farm Fresh' and 'Garden Party' because they are just like he's looking out the window.

"Design is all around!" Janet exclaims. "If my husband see me taking a picture of something odd he now knows it's either for fabric or a quilt and just smiles and shakes his head - and maybe explains to whoever we might be with that 'she's working again!'"

ONE SISTER

For more information about Janet Nesbitt's designs, visit www.onesisterdesigns.com

