The Joy of Hand Stitching

by Shannon Adams

A needle, straight pins, ruler, pencil, thread, paper, an idea gleaned from a book, an architectural detail on a building, scrolling the antique quilt page on eBay. Who knows what particular combination of color and pattern sparks the beginning of a quilt? The right side of the brain goes "wheeee!" and off I go, another quilt.

I admit, the planning is the best part. No, wait. the making of the templates and cutting the pieces. No, no, it's the piecing and watching the top evolve as each block takes its place in the parade and the design, once a fuzzy imagined whirl of color, becomes an object not only of beauty but of utility and practicality.

I will also admit that basting the three layers together, marking the quilting lines

and doing the actual quilt stitching with the waxed thread and tiny needle is absolutely NOT my favorite part of the process. So much so that there are five quilts in the queue. Sigh. My right forefinger and thumb ache just to imagine the months of work ahead.

The reward, though, comes at the end, when the bias tape gets stitched on and I get to look at the quilt in its newly finished entirely, perched on a chair looking down at the result of the months of patient cutting, pinning, and stitching lying on the living room floor. When the smile spreads and the thought comes, "it's just the way I saw it!" then it is worth it. Currently a blue and white quilt in an old pattern called "Ocean Wave" is in progress. Going to take awhile to piece, as it has many many little triangles that need patience to be accurately fitted to keep the illusion of motion going. It's been previewed by a friend who is familiar with my quilts, and she claims it is the best one ever. After it's finished, maybe it will supplant the blue and yellow "Rose Dream," but that remains to be seen.