



Sequim Gazette photo by Emily Matthiessen Robirts shows the top of a child's quilt that she will give away after completing. Behind her, in her sewing room, stacks of cloth await her hands.



Sequim Gazette photo by Emily Matthiessen Robirts made this quilt for her now-deceased husband from T-shirts and other memorabilia he loved. He was a big fan of Lehman's store.

Sixty-two years of marriage - At age 18 Robirts married 19-year-old Dale, home on leave from the Navy. Their courtship was brief but they'd known each other since childhood.

After she finished school and he went into the reserves, they were able to live together as husband and wife and "I said, 'I ain't living in my hometown and I ain't living in your hometown,'" Robirts said. The couple moved to Spokane, where they lived for 40 years before moving to Sequim in the early '90s.

Before retiring, Dale spent 30 years as a mechanic – or a "millwright," as Robirts said they were called – for Kaiser Aluminum. Robirts gave birth to six children in eight years and handmade their clothes.

She was also "growing a garden and sewing and stuff. Of course we was always busy. The three boys went through Scouts, and I was a Campfire leader. I look back now and I don't know how I did it, but you just do what you have to do."

"So I just keep on sewing," said Robirts. "When they had a birthday party for me in March, I let all my great-grandkids pick out a quilt because they've all had one when they were babies, so that they had their names on them and stuff. But these that I make for Linus, I don't sign them or anything. They sew a little tag on them."

Organizers with Project Linus say they "strive for warmth!" They know, as does Robirts, that life can be hard for children facing adult-sized problems. Sending a blanket to a child is a message of love, shown by the care and expertise that goes into it.

Robirts said the quilts she makes for Linus are about 42 inches wide. "I try to keep it so I can get it on just a width of material, and then I make them from 48 to 72 inches long," so that big children can have them, too. She said she makes them simple and durable, made up of triangles or squares.

"I make somewhere between 10 and 20 tops," she said. "And then I figure, 'Oh, I gotta put them all together.'" That's her least favorite part, she explained.

Sequim Gazette photo by Emily Matthiessen Robirts shares a quilt she made from pieces of her six children's clothing. Many of the clothing items her children wore were made by her. The mushrooms were embroidered by her daughter on a pair of jeans. Robirts says she saves and uses scraps as much as possible.

Wedding quilts and childhood quilts for children, great grandchildren and a great-great grandchild were just some of the detailed quilts she has done them for over the years.

Robirts said she has been a member of Project Linus for about 25 years, "but I just kind of did a few at a time. After my husband died 10 years ago, why then I just really started sewing. It gave me something to do. And of course, I like to sew."