

fiancé, Frank Laury, was in Navy flight training. After he received his wings, they married and moved to San Diego, where he was stationed and where their son, Tom, was born. The young couple next entered graduate school at Stanford University, where they both studied art and design. Their daughter, Lizabeth, was born while they were living in student housing.

The quilt Jean made for a class project at Stanford in 1956 launched her career. She retained a vivid memory of a quilt she had seen years earlier in a Nebraska museum. The quiltmaker had recorded his own life by piecing bits of old Civil War uniforms into his quilt. This inspired Jean to express her own life in her quilt, setting a precedent for much of her future work.

This quilt, which she named _____ for her four-year-old son, featured bold colors and graphic images that would appeal to any child: an ice cream cone, a train, a birthday cake, the sun, flowers, children playing, and a host of other visions. Included in a Stanford student exhibit at the de Young Art Museum in San Francisco, the quilt was chosen for a world tour sponsored by the United States Information Service.

Jean's career was off and running. In 1958, she entered her quilt in the highly esteemed Eastern States Exposition at Storowton Village in Springfield, Massachusetts. Her work captured the attention of contest judge Roxa Wright, needlework editor for _____. Roxa encouraged Jean, calling her work "the first attempt she had seen to modernize the art of quilting that combined good design and contemporary color with inherent simple and structural integrity that should be the basis of any quilt."

Jean's successful writing career developed in tandem with her quilting. Roxa Wright invited her to write for _____, where her first article was published in the January 1960 issue. Jean's work has also appeared in _____

, and many other publications.

In 1982, Jean began writing her column, "Keeping it All Together," for _____, followed by her "Talking it Over" series in 1984, which delivered her supportive advice with a sense of humor.

Jean Ray Laury was widely acknowledged as a leader of the quilt revival that started in the 1960s. Through her writing, teaching, and lecturing, she encouraged quilters to experiment with ideas and techniques, and to express their own lives in their work. She wrote the first contemporary quilting books, _____ (1966) and _____ (1970).

Jean enjoyed a special rapport with young mothers, who face difficulties allowing their creativity to flourish while caring for their families. Her book, the highly regarded _____, published in 1977, was directed at this group of women.

Jean was an original and prolific writer in a variety of styles on a wide range of topics. She also illustrated her humorous _____ series and the children's storybook, _____. Her recent titles, _____, _____, and _____, focus on surface design.

She drew inspiration from children and their fresh approach, and she tried to keep a similar lack of barriers in her own work. Other sources of inspiration were the serene setting of her home in the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada Mountains, as well as current events.

The _____, also known as _____ was inspired by an insensitive comment made by an Arkansas senator. It uses cartooning effectively to satirize the senator's remarks. This quilt was selected as one of _____ during the

Ultimate Quilt Search by panelists representing the Alliance for American Quilts, the American Quilt Study Group, the International Quilt Association, and the National Quilting Association.

Jean's first major exhibit was held at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts (now the Museum of Arts and Design) in New York City in 1960. She also exhibited at the American Crayon Company, the de Young Art Museum in San Francisco, and in a series of one-woman shows at the California State University Fresno Art Museum. Numerous group shows include the Smithsonian's .

Old quilts also inspired this thoroughly modern quiltmaker. Jean Ray Laury worked in the California State Quilt Project and authored the book about the project's findings,

(1990). She remembered when a particularly unusual quilt from the nineteenth century was being unfolded, she could feel the power of the quiltmaker's message across the many decades.

A pioneer herself, Jean Ray Laury was inducted into The Quilters Hall of Fame in 1982. She was honored by the San Francisco Women's Foundation and received a California State Arts commission grant and the Fresno Women Making History Award. In 1997, Jean received the Silver Star Award, presented by Quilts, Inc. at Houston's International Quilt Festival.

After retiring (her husband laughs at the use of that term) she took commissions and wrote fiction, including work on a quilter's memoir, called . Before it could be published she died of respiratory complications on March 2, 2011. Through her quilts, her writing, and her teaching, Jean Ray Laury truly inspired thousands of women to express their own creativity.

by Elizabeth Palmer-Spilker

Jean Ray Laury

(1983), p. 15





THE CREATIVE WOMAN'S

GETTING-IT-
ALL-TOGETHER[^] *at home*
HANDBOOK

- Finding Time
- Finding Space
- On Being Superwoman
- The Playpen in the Studio
- Coping with the Mess
- Shifting Gears
- Getting Started
- Coping with Deadlines
- Supporting Yourself

by Jean Ray Laury



Photo courtesy Lizabeth Laury

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