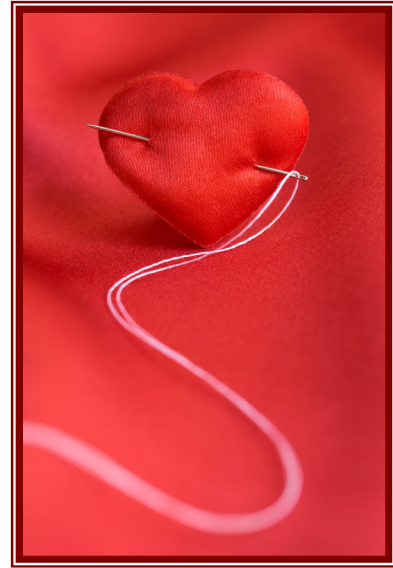


My Cup Runneth Over and Spilleth All Down the Sides

By Pauline M. Long

When I finished my fiftieth 10-inch pillow to be distributed to the elderly in our congregation to relieve the pain of arthritic knees, I gave a sigh of relief because this project was complete. Then I opened a drawer to my supply cabinet and found a square of pink flannel - just right for more pillows, a receiving blanket or the lining to a baby quilt. I was reminded of the widow whose oil never ran out way back in Old Testament times. And suddenly I wanted to say, "Cease and desist, Lord! My cup runneth over and spilleth all down the sides!"



This 'perpetual supply' concept was not new to me, for during the Depression years my mother had her own 'bottomless box'. We had one big closet for the whole family; the women's and girls' clothes hung on the left and the men's and boys' clothes on the right. The big box sat under the men's shorter clothing and was filled with all our worn-out, outgrown, and much-mended hand-me-downs.

Many of our East Texas relatives came through our little West Texas town of Childress, on their way to California to find work, and back through when they didn't. They always needed something from mama's box - shoes, a shirt, women's and children's clothes.

Hoboes and tramps somehow knew our house was an easy mark, because they showed up at our back door with frequent regularity. Mama's sharp eyes would notice the man shivering in a lightweight shirt with the elbows worn out, and while I was handing out food and drink, she was rummaging through her box.

"Here is a jacket that my son outgrew," she would say. "But it may not fit you." It always did, of course. "And here is an old wool cap I mended. At least it will keep your ears warm.

My mother was a great 'recycler' before the word reached our vocabulary. Her philosophy was to "Reuse, and make do with what you have," and by the time we kids grew up and established our own homes, charity had been bred into our bones.

During one three-year period when the ladies' class met in my home for bible study on Thursday mornings, we would work on some benevolent project after class.

What we really needed was money to purchase supplies for a particularly ambitious project, but the women were strapped for cash. We did the only thing we could think of - we prayed for guidance in this endeavor.

Then a lady called to say that her recently widowed mother-in-law was moving to smaller quarters and wondered if I could use a big box of scraps. I wondered where I could put more scraps in my already overstuffed sewing cabinet, but what could I say?

The next day when she delivered the scraps I was surprised and pleased to see it was a treasure trove indeed. From several big lengths of material I was able to make twelve blouses and skirts and decorate them nicely with trimmings already on hand.

Since it was in late fall, the women snatched them up for Christmas presents at reasonable prices. Now we had our fund for our project - helping six needy families during the holidays.

But I had used only the larger scraps. There were many smaller pieces which were used for making baby quilts and garments. Heavier pieces were sewn together to make lap robes for shut-ins.

Then one of the ladies brought a half-finished quilt top which she had found beside the dumpster at her apartment complex. "Do you think you could do something with this?" she asked.

Could I!! Quilting became our next big project. I would piece together the tops, purchase lining material and batting, and pin them all together. Then on Thursdays I would make a big pot of soup and after class the ladies would tack one or two quilts together, with time out for a bowl of hot soup. I didn't keep an accurate count, but I'm sure there were at least two dozen full-size quilts.

There were a number of hardship cases in our congregation as well as national emergencies - floods, tornadoes, and the like - and when our church packed food and other supplies to send to the victims, we always had a number of quilts, baby garments, etc., to add.

Others in our community heard of our projects, for scraps were donated by people leaving town or from materials left over from garage sales.

The ladies' class teacher brought me some outing flannel which served as linings to baby quilts. I bought a yard of material with small dinosaurs, which I cut out and applied randomly to the quilts to give them a personal touch.

I made numerous laprobes for shut-ins - twice as long as normal with a hole in one end to fit over their head to keep their shoulders warm. On the darker colors I applied roses for women and sports figures for men (using iron-on methods) outlining them in gold glitter. I figured they needed a little something special to brighten long, lonely days.

Pieces about two yards long were made into quilts for toddlers and older children. Cowboys or bits of lace decorated these quilts.

All that was left in the many boxes and bags, shelves and drawers in my sewing room were some odd-shaped scraps and 10-inch-wide strips of cotton fabric. These were just right for small pillows to go between arthritic knees, under a hip in the wheel chair, or to support, neck, shoulder or ankle.

The day I finished fifty of those pillows, I happened to notice one last piece of pink outing flannel. I was tired and wanted to hide it somewhere out of my sight, but with a sigh I studied the soft flannel. I didn't have any more stuffing for pillows. There was no more batting for a quilt. I quickly hemmed it for a baby blanket, laughing as I sewed. "Cease and desist, Lord," I said. "My cup runneth over and spilleth all down the sides!" But I had such a good feeling from helping others that I really didn't mean it!

Sometimes when we pray, we think the Lord will place something "big" in our laps and so we overlook the "little" things. Thanks to my mother's example of 'recycling', we were able to recognize our Lord's answer to our prayer in boxes of discarded scraps.