



The Guys vs. the Girls

GUY Retreat

by Paul Leger

Four to five months before the next retreat, an email is sent to see who wants to attend the next *Quilt Guy Retreat*. Within 24 to 36 hours the 22 spots are spoken for!

The email states the official retreat start day is Thursday at noon. Normally three to five guys fly in from all over the US, and they like to arrive a day early. Some of the other guys decided they do not want to drive on the morning of the retreat, so they also decide to arrive a day early. It is now common to see guys sewing at 10:00 am on the Wednesday morning before retreat.

During the last retreat in March, due to a bad storm coming in on Tuesday, there were guys (me included!) set up and sewing on the Monday before retreat. I know all quilters take retreat seriously, but how many rebook their flights and change all their travel plans to arrive 72 hours before the official start of the retreat! Unfortunately, because of the storm, four fellow's flights were cancelled and they were not able to attend.

The *Quilt Guy Retreat* started back in August 2008, in Woodstock, NY, with seven men attending from the New England states and Canada. Nine years and 17 retreats later, the attendance is now at 22. The attendees come from as far west as California, Oregon and Washington State and from as far east as England. The author (Paul Leger), a Canadian, is the only one who has attended all retreats. Nothing stops us Canadian quilters from attending a retreat!

What makes the *Quilt Guy Retreat* different from girl retreats? For one, we do not cook. If we cannot find a retreat location that it is all inclusive, we won't go. We want to eat, sleep and work in the same building if possible, but

we are willing to leave the building to go to a fabric store. Like the ladies, we also love our fabric stores. Another small plus to any location—is there a bar? Not a must—we can always bring our own liquids—but sometimes it is fun to have multiple choices. At one retreat there were several bourbons and whiskies available, so we had a choice of Manhattans. I won't go into the beer selection at some retreats (yes, we had a beer-tasting evening).

Having attended retreats where I am the only male along with plenty of ladies, one thing I noticed for sure is that guys are a lot quieter than the gals. I've tried to understand

why it's so different, but guys are simply quieter while they sew.

The quilts and techniques being worked on are as varied as the locations attendees come from. The men who attend all have varied skill levels and interests. Some quilters are basic, some are intricate, artistic, modern, and some quilters decide on the spot what they will work on. One sure thing is that if anyone has a problem, there is someone in the room who can help. I'm not sure there is a mechanic in the room!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 72

GAL Retreat

by Elaine Theriault

Like the men, women are eager to get to a quilting retreat. It's like we haven't sewn in months. While normal arrival time is scheduled for 10:00 am on retreat day, a special standing request is on our application. Groups can arrive at 9:00 am. Even then when I arrive, I find that some quilters have been sitting in the parking lot for at least one hour, waiting for 9:00 am to arrive. Oh yes—we love our retreats!

Here are a couple of areas where Paul and I differ. I prefer a smaller group with a maximum of eight quilters—the maximum our rental house holds. Personally, I like to rent a dedicated quilting retreat house because it saves on bringing a lot of extra stuff and having to do a ton of setup. Let's get the quilting on the road!

Although there are many ladies who prefer to rent space in a resort or an inn, my preference is the quilting house. Why? I like peace and quiet on my retreat. Too many women, too many conversations, too much drama!

By renting our own space, my small group also gets to make our own meals. Gasp! Why would we go on a retreat and have to cook? The men don't like to cook, some ladies choose not to cook, but our group likes to cook. I'm not much of a cook, so we don't go for fancy, we go for practical. We split up the meals, so one person has to cook only once. Bring a casserole from home, plop it in the oven and it's done.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 72



Guy Retreats Fun Facts

- In addition to the Northeast *Quilt Guy Retreat*, there have been two men's retreats in Oklahoma. Next June there will be a men's retreat in Canada which will be open to men no matter where they reside.
- September will be the 18th *Quilt Guy Retreat*.
- In all, 39 men have participated: Ontario (2), Quebec (1), England (1), California (1), Florida (1), Georgia (1), Illinois (2), Maine (1), Massachusetts (5), Minnesota (1), New York (10), New Jersey (2), Ohio (2), Oregon (2), Pennsylvania (1), Rhode Island (1), Tennessee (1), Vermont (2) and Washington (1).
- Past locations: Woodstock, NY; Teaneck, NJ; New Lebanon, NY.
- Current locations: Chester, VT; Tulsa, OK and Arnprior, ON.
- Oldest attendee: mid 80s.
- Attendees from all walks of life: lawyer, retired military, legal aide, head costumer on Broadway, quilt store manager, hairdresser, IT worker, home care worker, publisher, teacher, quilt store owner, sheep farmer, sewing machine repairman, federal government worker and more.
- Most consumed alcohol: beer, Makers Mark and some wine.
- The first few retreats hosted a large table of junk food for all to enjoy. Over time the table contents got smaller and smaller and is now down to nothing, with the exception of the September retreat when Richard always brings his cookie tins filled with homemade cookies (Richard also travels with his wife, who travels all over the state while he is sewing).
- Some of us discussed bringing one female guest each. It has not happened and probably won't simply because the work room is not large enough.

Guys CONTINUED FROM PAGE 70

When we outgrew the work room, the inn offered us the use of the dining room. We knew there would be a lighting problem, so Andre took it upon himself to fix the issue. He purchased hanging LED lights, metal pipes and whatever else he needed and made light stands. We no longer had a lighting problem!

Another interesting fact I've noticed with guys versus girls is when a guy disappears from the group, it normally means one of two things, he's gone for a nap or he's gone to the quilt store. When a gal disappears, it means only one thing, she's gone to the quilt store... or any other shop within walking distance! ♦

Gals CONTINUED FROM PAGE 70

Doing our own cooking also allows the women an opportunity to go shopping—yes, even if it's simply for groceries. You never know what kind of quilting magazines you'll find in the store (yes, the same ones as at home, but not always!) and you can buy healthy snacks. I have to say when I started organizing retreats about 10 years ago, the amount of food and snacks the ladies brought was obscene. Over the years, I've finally convinced them we don't need that much food. We're much more reasonable now.

When our group first started going to quilt retreats, we started on Friday and left on Sunday. We sewed like maniacs staying up until very late and were up at the crack of dawn, or even earlier, to get in as much sewing as possible. Our bodies couldn't take it any longer and now we start our retreats on Wednesday and leave on Sunday. We're super relaxed and have so much fun!

I've also learned I don't want to drive long distances to get to quilting retreats or, god forbid, fly there. I would have to pack too carefully. Nope—I simply open the car door and wing as many bags and boxes as possible in there. Actually, I'm much better now, but I've been known to arrive at a quilt retreat with barely any room to spare in the car. Driving long distances? Well that cuts into the quilting time. We're fortunate that we've found a retreat location only 70 minutes from my house. It's perfect. I sometimes aspire to be like one of our retreaters who brings one

laundry basket filled with projects and supplies. That requires discipline—something I don't have.

Do we shop when at retreat? Well, that is a matter of debate. Our retreat house is five minutes from a quilt shop, even though the house is in a very quiet countryside. Some of the ladies are at the quilt shop often, including the local fabric outlet store. I have been known to ride my bike to the local shops and have someone ferry my purchases home.

What are the ladies doing when they disappear? Some of us have a nap, catching up on sleep that is long missed while working like mad to get to the retreat. Others are shopping—okay—the ladies like to support the economy. And others will be out walking. It's a chance to get away from the hubbub!

What do we sew? Anything and everything. It could be the latest block-of-the-month, it could be finishing up a class. One thing I've noticed is that women tend to be sheep at a retreat. Someone comes with a cool project and next thing you know, everyone (well, almost everyone) is sewing the same project! Iron caddies, tote bags and sewing machine aprons are some of the more popular projects. Are we productive? You bet! I get so much accomplished in those five days, I can't wait for the next retreat. I'm up to four five-day retreats per year and I work full time!

The fun, the camaraderie, the productive time, is so worth the retreat. ♦