

The Connecting Threads Quilting Podcast  
Episode 20 - The Importance of Thread Featuring Diane Henry

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**Zoey Baggins** 00:08

Hi, I'm Zoey and I'm the host of the Connecting Threads Quilting Podcast. Lately, I've been thinking about the importance of thread in all sewing, but especially in quilting. Thread is much like the laces in a shoe. While absolutely vital, they're often taken for granted until troubles arise. For years, I put absolutely zero thought into thread, which feels a bit absurd given how much time I've spent carefully selecting fabrics, servicing my machine, and choosing buttons and trims. If a thread broke, I would almost immediately and unfairly blame my machine. It wasn't until I became more interested in bag making and experienced a few unfortunate snapped seams that I realized there were even differences in thread at all. While I've been sewing for years, I'm far from an expert. In truth, I'd classify myself as an overconfident, intermediate sewist. Somewhere firmly between beginner and expert. I'm bursting with enough ambition to jump straight into a project and learn new techniques as I go. I'm all about utilizing my resources, and that includes chatting with those around me who are willing to share their experiences. Today, I'm taking you with me to thread school. First up, I'm chatting with Eleanor who just attended an event and has come home with some new perspectives. Later on in this episode, I'll sit down with sewing expert, Diane Henry, to talk all about choosing the right thread for your project and how to think about selecting colors. Really, Diane is a thread superstar. An industry leader, she has been known to host incredible informative seminars where she pours pizzazz into this often overlooked subject. She knows the ins and outs of all things that make thread exciting and has some of the best tricks to keep thread troubles away. Hold on to your bottoms, grab some spools, and wind some bobbins. This episode is going to be an incredible tool to jumpstart you into thinking about thread and hopefully teach you some new tips along the way. I'm here with Eleanor. Hi, Eleanor.

**Eleanor Burks** 02:07

Hey, Zoey.

**Zoey Baggins** 02:08

So I heard a few weeks ago, you went to your very first quilt show in Kansas City. Was it the Kansas City Regional Quilt Festival?

**Eleanor Burks** 02:16

Yes, it was the Kansas City Regional Quilt Festival. And if you didn't know, the city of Kansas City is on the border of two states. That's a fun fact I learned. I didn't know it was in both Missouri and Kansas. This particular show was in Kansas, though, just so you're aware.

**Zoey Baggins** 02:38

I think I heard that before. But I know very little about that area. And this was your first quilt show ever, right? Not just in the Midwest?

**Eleanor Burks** 02:49

This was my first quilt show ever. And first, any of those shows to that scale I have ever worked. I've worked booths in the past, but never where you're surveying 1000s of people. So it was a definitely an eye opening experience.

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**Zoey Baggins** 03:05

That's so cool. And you were working with our sister company Superior Threads, correct?

**Eleanor Burks** 03:10

Yes, Superior Threads goes to a lot of shows around the country. And that was their main method of selling back in the day. And so they're keeping it alive. And it's what we're known for.

**Zoey Baggins** 03:22

As a newer sewist getting thrown into the booth in the middle of this quilt festival, did you have any like things that you learned that surprised you or any key takeaways anything that you wanted to share with us?

**Eleanor Burks** 03:39

I mean, right off the bat, I don't even really understand thread weights or how they worked the sliding scale. And then even like needle weights that that was such a crucial element to your success with using different threads is like your needle and tension. And like objectively, I understood that. But then when you're hanging out with these people who do it every single day and understand the nuances of these threads, that's another thing. Another probably the biggest takeaway I walked away from just speaking with our customers and hanging out with these educators was that there are really no rules when it comes to quilting. Like you kind of feel like you should use a maybe maybe you should use a 50 weight from two piece or, and then like a 40 weight thread to quilt and if you're being extra particular have like an even higher thread weight in the bobbin. So it's like hidden but sometimes you want the thread to be thicker or maybe not matching the colors or matching the colors like all those preferences when you're quilting, make a difference, but it's all personal preference. And there's no hard and fast rules. It's just all up to like the creative decisions of the quilter which was the biggest thing I took away from it. And then even, you'll probably learn talking to Diane, like, the different opinions like she has a preference for thread weights compared to other people. And like maybe why or but there's no yeah, there's no right or wrong it, it that's what my biggest takeaway that was a very long tangent. But

**Zoey Baggins** 05:19

That's such a good takeaway, though, and it's so important. I feel the same way with most elements about sewing and quilting and just crafting in general is it's such a personal sort of process and thread, notions, different materials that you use, it just comes down to what you like to use and what works best for you. So I love that that was one of your takeaways that there's no there's no rules, there's general guidelines, there's information that you can get from other more experienced sewists or crafters that can guide you to ways that they think might lead you to success. But it really comes down to you and your personal style and how you want to create whatever it is that you're making. So I love that that was the biggest thing. I was, honestly, I was a little bit concerned when you were going, knowing that you were still learning and I didn't want you to get overwhelmed by all of the options and all of the different pseudo rules and different things that were going on. So I'm glad that that you've discovered the

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freedom that comes from sewing and the different weights and threads, and the different fibers. That's, that's really good to hear.

**Eleanor Burks** 06:34

And it was also really fun because you see all the colors or people will bring their projects in and they're wanting to match it or maybe highlight a certain color component in their fabric on their quilt top. And so just being able to give my opinion on the colors and just staring at them all day. I obviously made favorites. But then I was like, I think this pink would look better with this your quilt top or instead of this one. And then we're like Diane, Ashley and I are all debating what color we think or what even what thread we think they should use. Like I think a thicker thread would look great with this or like no a thin one. Yeah. It was very fun.

**Zoey Baggins** 07:11

What an epic experience for the customer too, to have so many different sets of eyes on the different colors.

**Eleanor Burks** 07:18

Yes, it was amazing. Literally my favorite part, this was my favorite moment was this woman came in and she had one of those vintage star style quilt tops. And she had vintage fabric with it too. That's what she created with it. And then she also used to Kaffe. And she was talking with Diane all day, bought some threads. And then the next day she came back to the booth with her quilt top as well as a ripped out image from the connecting threads catalog of our Garden Star Quilt Kit by Nancy Rink. And it has the same similar star pattern, which is a traditional quilt top. But she was inspired by the dark background. And he was just so fun to kind of help her navigate a thread or just make a decision on this like very, I mean, there's a lot of colors going on with those star quilts. And so it was very fun. But that was probably my favorite moment. It was just seeing all everything come together. And I was like Connecting Threads catalog. And she was like "I don't know like, maybe" I was like "I know it is because I photographed that quilt before.

**Zoey Baggins** 08:25

That catalog was sitting on my desk for a week. Look at that quilt almost every day. Oh my gosh, that's so cute. And that, I also love the Connecting Threads catalogs for reference, even if that specific collection has been sold out or it's an older catalog and things are kind of outdated. I still keep the old catalogs to flip through and do exactly what that customer did. Finding references, finding different designs and patterns that you can you can pull color inspiration from. Oh, that's so wonderful! I love that that person brought so many resources to try to find the perfect thread. That's wonderful. I'm very envious. I've only been to a few quilt shows. And that one sounded like a pretty rad one.

**Eleanor Burks** 09:10

I think you would have enjoyed it, Zoey. It was cool. It was amazing to see the quilts on show, the skill, and then even recognizing some of the patterns. Like, we sell them at Connecting Threads or I was trying my best to be like is that a Connecting Threads fabric you know, it was very fun. A lot of people

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didn't even know what thread they use. They don't have a preference, they would be like it's just whatever it was at the big box store that I picked up. And so then we would kind of, I would help, eventually got to the point where I could be like well do you know if you want a cotton thread or a polyester thread? Most machines like are using a 50 weight because most machines come tensioned for 50 weight but maybe you want a thicker thread to show off more do you want a 40 weight so just kind of walking them through this process. Do you want variegated? Which is where the thread has different colors if you pull it out. Or do you want a solid thread? That, those are the questions we would ask people. Or like, do you use a long arm? Are you domestic machine? Are you a hand quilter or applique? So then you kind of ask those questions to narrow down.

**Zoey Baggins 10:18**

Right!

**Eleanor Burks 10:19**

These are three that you might like, if you don't know. Most people didn't have a preference. Okay? A lot of people had a preference between cotton or polyester. But also a fair amount of people were like, "I have absolutely no idea. I don't know, if I do, I don't know if I care if there's a difference." They haven't tried it.

**Zoey Baggins 10:41**

Right, or they maybe have tried it and didn't know which one was in their machine or what was going on. I honestly had no idea that there was even a difference. And it wasn't really anything I gave much thought to which is absurd, because I spent so much money on fabric and I spend so much time picking out fabric and then I would just grab a random spool and throw it in my machine. Personally, I prefer 50 weight polyester thread, I do a lot of bag making. So I like to have a thread that I can use both for quilting, and for bags or whatever zipper pouch or other things that I'm sewing without having to constantly go through different spools and constantly like switch out all my threads I like as low maintenance of sewing as possible. And I use 50 weight is generally the go to I just really liked the polyester threads and extra low lint they are and how little I have to clean out the bobbin area.

**Eleanor Burks 11:43**

Yeah, that's something I heard about. I haven't used all of our threads or been sewing long enough to have lint in my sewing machine. But that our, at least the King Tut thread that we sell on Connecting Threads, as well as our Connecting Threads thread because I've talked to some people at the show about it too, they would use our essential quilting thread as well. And they people who would make comments that the land was pretty low, it's expected with a natural fiber, there's never going to be if it's real cotton, 100% cotton, there's going to be lint no matter what.

**Zoey Baggins 11:50**

Absolutely. And, the Essential Threads is if I'm gonna use a cotton, it's only Essential Threads because it is so low lint. And the 100% cotton thread is really good when you make soup bowl cozies. You need

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all cotton components. So fabric, thread, and batting, and I'll use that Essential Thread when I'm making those because then it's like semi microwave safe.

**Eleanor Burks** 12:49

Yes.

**Zoey Baggins** 12:50

Or, you're not as worried about heat. Or if it's something that I know is going to take a lot of pressing, I'll grab a cotton thread. But if I'm just doing general, just chugging along, going through my sewing, I'll stick a polyester only spool in the machine.

**Eleanor Burks** 13:06

That's what that was a fear. Or there's like two rumors that I heard at the quilt show. One is that you don't use polyester thread if you're on cotton fabric because the polyester will rip the fabric.

**Zoey Baggins** 13:21

Yeah. Yeah, that's actually incorrect. It's an old misnomer. And it has been proven wrong 100 times which I'm sure you stumbled upon.

**Eleanor Burks** 13:33

Especially our thread. I mean, I'm not gonna speak for any other companies' thread, but our thread can be vouched for that. That isn't true. And then the other myth is that polyester will melt. Like yes, it does have a melting point, but your standard iron will not melt the polyester thread. But those are the two big ones where people are like, I only use cotton because polyester melts and they would be like no actually like yes, technically but.. Right? Yes, it has such a high melting point. Yeah, your iron will not do that. Diane will probably tell you this to where she's like your standard iron is nowhere near gonna get close enough to melt polyester.

**Zoey Baggins** 14:14

Otherwise, you would be scorching the heck out of everything that that iron touched. That would have to be very hot. Absolutely. Otherwise, how would you ever press like poly blend clothing? Yeah, anything like that. But oh, that's so funny. And I had heard the rumor of polyester shredding cotton, and it just doesn't happen. I don't know if it possibly had happened with like, older machines like a century ago or older fibers, older things. But with today's machines, today's threads, how everything is calibrated and how tension works and all of those things, it's just not something you have to be afraid of. Thank goodness because I would have ruined a lot of things before I realized that fibers were important.

**Eleanor Burks** 15:04

Yeah. Again, it's so nuanced. And like it just takes practice or personal preference and how you work using these materials.

**Zoey Baggins** 15:15

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It is absolutely so much of it comes down to personal preference. And that's, that's just another layer that makes sewing so personalized. It's down to what you like to do, someone else can create something just as beautiful and just as awesome, using completely different notions, completely different threads, different techniques. And it just comes down to what you're comfortable with. So I'm excited to see as you work more on this Christmas tree skirt, and you'll start getting more into sewing. What you'll find as your personal preference and what you'll like, if you will be team cotton or team polyester somewhere in the middle. If you'll go back and forth. Or try nylon thread, or some sort of other fiber. It's not just cotton and polyester. There's a whole world of different thread fibers out there. It's just so the two are our most common.

**Eleanor Burks** 16:20

I'm so excited for you to speak with Diane. She's a wealth of knowledge and like the nicest person. I know you're going to learn so much.

**Zoey Baggins** 16:28

She is! I feel so spoiled just being able to chat with her. So I'm excited to be able to sit down with her one on one chat about thread, learn all the things that she has to share. And I think it'll be pretty good.

**Eleanor Burks** 16:41

It'll be so good. Thanks Zoey!

**Zoey Baggins** 16:43

Well, wonderful. Oh, absolutely. Thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me today and share your experience at the quilt festival and all the things about thread. And we'll get back together soon and see what how you're doing with your your first project.

**Eleanor Burks** 17:01

Yes, all the best.

**Zoey Baggins** 17:03

Have a good one. Today I have the pleasure of getting to talk to Diane Henry, who I like to think of as the Beyonce of Threads. Diane Henry has been working with fabric since her grandmother taught her how to handpiece her first nine patch block at age four. In 2007, Diane purchased her first long arm, but not her last, a HQ 16 with pro stitcher, and started her own quilting business. Today, she works with quilting groups and shops leading classes for beginners and advanced quilters and organizing workshops, conducting lectures, classes and demonstrations at quilt shows. Welcome, Diane.

**Diane Henry** 17:46

Thanks for having me. I'm so excited to be here. And they Beyonce of Thread?! I think I need to embroider that on something.

**Zoey Baggins** 17:54

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Oh, absolutely. I've been to some of your classes. I've listened to your seminars, and you are like the rock star of threads. You make it sound so much more exciting than I ever knew thread could be. So it's a title that is well deserved.

**Diane Henry** 18:07

Thank you. I appreciate.

**Zoey Baggins** 18:11

And thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me this morning. I'm so excited. And I know you have just a wealth of knowledge. So I'm excited to kind of pick your brain this morning and talk a little bit about thread.

**Diane Henry** 18:25

Great. I can't, it is one of my favorite subjects. I just love I love thread. I'm excited by it and I love how it looks when we used it. So let's go!

**Zoey Baggins** 18:36

Wonderful! Well to start, can you kind of give me a little bit of your intro. Can you talk a little bit about what made you take the leap and buy along arm machine and start your quilting business? And for anyone who doesn't know, could you maybe describe what a longer machine even is?

**Diane Henry** 18:52

Yes, I have always been I've been involved with thread and fabric since I was a kid my grandmother loved quilting and sewing and my mom as well. And so I just naturally it was something I would pick up and I sewed my own clothes through college. I finally was able to start quilting as an adult in earnest. And, after I got married actually, and I just had so much fun doing it, but I always was attracted to the finishing. I loved the actual quilting and I was a prize winning hand quilter I really loved doing that quilting part. I don't know if it's the visual texture created by the stitches and the thread and how it just accentuates the quilt and the piecing to make it look that much better. Every every quilt is always better looking when it's finished. So I actually started to develop arthritis in my hands early on, and I needed to be able to do machine quilting and I started like most of us do on a domestic machine. Quilted several years like that, and then discovered how much better faster and easier it was when I borrowed a friend's long arm and just fell in love. My husband was like, "Did you like it?" and I said, "I have to have one of these," it was just the best experience I've had. I mean, I was so excited. I had a, I had a king size quilt loaded on that frame, and quilted in five hours, a king sized quilt under a domestic machine, and I had a Bernina, you know, a regular little 155. So very small throat space. And it would have taken me probably 30 hours to do the same amount of quilting, I believe, 40 hours. And that's a lot of sitting and moving your shoulders and your arms, it can be very tiring, you have to take a lot of breaks. And I mean, that quilting, I just got up there stood up and just went went for it. So I looked for about a year and I finally bought the HQ 16. And I, you know, like many of us, it's hard to justify spending a lot of money on yourself. And so you say, "Well, what can I do to offset this, I'll quilt for my friends." The other benefit to that is you practice because that's what's so important about doing art is doing it, you know

what, once you get involved and start doing it, you're making progress with your skill set. And so I started doing it, and for customers, and I just was in love with the process, because that's the part I love to do the most So, and every quilt is different. And they're piecing things that I would never piece or that I don't have time to get around to piecing. And so I'm always getting to work on that new project, having a new thought process that I have to go through. And then that's what really developed my love and appreciation of thread and different threads. And the fun of trying to make the machine work with that thread and getting an effect that really complements the quilt and brings even more to the party, you know, and that's what I think thread does for us.

**Zoey Baggins** 21:53

Oh, absolutely. I'm so jealous of your long arm. I'm I'm still at the point where if I want something really fancy, I will have to send it to a long armer because I don't have the equipment. Oh, gosh, I am sure that it's just there's so many different things that you can do with it in five hours for a king size quilt. I can't even imagine. I mean, it would take me months of a few hours at a time because like you said you get exhausted, really, crouching over the machine and balling it up trying to shove it in the neck of a domestic machine. So that's impressive.

**Diane Henry** 22:29

Right? And it's a if you're working or you're busy, you know with because most of us are busy with our families and lives. That's a lot of time commitment. When you can get the project done in five hours a night I just I can't resist that sort of efficiency. That's my nature. So yep, it's a I have never ever regretted buying a long arm. I love it.

**Zoey Baggins** 22:51

Oh, I'm sure I visit them and pat them fondly as I go to the sewing machine shops. Whenever I take my name to get serviced. Like Oh, one day- I dream of you always. And so I know from watching some of your seminars and some of your lectures that you are a fan of color. Can you talk to me a little bit about choosing the right colors of thread or kind of the systems that you go through in picking your colors?

**Diane Henry** 23:22

Yeah, that's a good question. And I I just worked at Kansas City regional. And it was the number one question in the booth people showing me their projects via phone or some of them actually had them in the bag. And they were like, "What color do I use?" And the first thing, first off, you have to decide what sort of quilting that you're going to do. And you have to know your own taste with regard to that quilting. Some folks, like most of my customers really don't want the thread to take over the show. So they don't really necessarily want a lot of high contrasting thread. They want it to complement what they've done. Because it's still their quilt and I'm doing the quilting, so they still really see they still have a lot of ownership on the piecing part. And they maybe don't want my ownership of the of the quilting to dominate what they've done. So I tend to be a little more subtle in my color choices. I pick threads, I will always look for medium values. And I I've built a stash basically based on medium values. Because most quilts are full of medium value fabrics. We don't use a lot of darks, we don't use a lot of lights, we use a lot of medium values. So for edge to edge style quilting where you're quilting a pretty design over

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the entire quilt and medium value from that quilt will compliment nicely so just look for your favorite color. Find the medium value and realize that because that's the last thing that's going across the entire quilt, it will probably tone, I call, it the quilt kind of to that color. So if the, if the quilt has some gold in it for say, and it's a warm ish quilt, and you want to live in up the quilt across all the way across a medium value, gold might be a good color to cast that warm color across the whole quilt and just warm it up a little bring it more to life. If you've got another color that you really want to bring out in the quilt, then you can select that color and see and I always recommend just unspooling a few yards even have that thread and laying it on the quilt just in a puddle across the different fabrics to see how you like it across. But a medium value helps you stay where the the quilting can be seen. But it's not jarring off of a super dark fabric or a super light fabric. And I don't usually match specifically identically. Like if I had a black and white quilt, I would never use black or white, I would use like a gray. And just do that across the whole quilt.

**Zoey Baggins** 26:04

That makes so much sense. I love the idea of almost auditioning threads. I audition my binding. And I'll take all the different fabrics and try to pick my binding but I never oh my gosh, I never would have thought to make a puddle of thread on my quilt to just audition it that's that seems so straightforward and obvious. And I never every time I talked to you, you changed my life.

**Diane Henry** 26:31

I appreciate it!

**Zoey Baggins** 26:33

So clever. And the idea of medium tones. Do you often when you select threads for quilting, do you ever not often do you ever use different colors like use some lighters and some darker in the same quilt? Or do you mostly use one thread color throughout the whole thing?

**Diane Henry** 26:54

If I'm doing custom quilting, and that's when you're, you're tailoring the quilting to the piecing. So you're not doing that all over thing I was just talking about you're actually focusing on you know, I want to highlight this spot, or I want to do background fills here and do more or larger design saying the border or whatever, then I really do I match thread a lot. And so I have a very broad collection of thread. And 50 weight, like the Essential Cotton that can that Connecting Threads sells, it's a great weight thread, you can piece with it, you can quilt with it, your machine already comes tensioned for that thread. All sewing machines are tensioned to 50 weight, so it's like the least no fuss, no muss. There's my thread. I don't have to think about it being fiddley when I worked with it, my machines ready to work with it, domestic or long arm. So, you know, I would have and it has 140 I believe different colors. I haven't checked yet recently, but I kind of looked at the list and what that looks like close to 150, to me. You can pick your medium values and get your warm and your, your cool for each of the colors that you like and, and have that depth. So then when you're ready to quilt, you can go for it with that 50 weight. I have also really enjoyed using the the Essential Pro, which is polyester. And it's a little thinner. So for background fills where I'll like on white, I might choose white, or I might choose silver. Or if there's some

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warm tones, I might choose more of a natural color, just to give the quilting a little bit of depth. But I'm not. Again, I'm not a high contrasting person. So that's when I'm, I'm gonna I want the quilting to be there and to look pretty, but it's just to compliment the piecing because especially when you're custom quilting, you're doing it because the piecing is telling the story of the quilt so you want to accentuate you don't want to take over.

**Zoey Baggins 28:56**

Absolutely.

**Diane Henry 28:58**

Yeah, and that's how I choose for for doing the custom quilting.

**Zoey Baggins 29:02**

Yeah, and that makes a lot of sense. And if you're using like the Essential Pro that's a little bit thinner, that polyester thread, I guess you wouldn't really see much of the stitches, but it would really pop after you washed the the quilt and you got that quilt crinkle out. So not necessarily the stitches, but more the the depth and dimension of the quilting itself. Is that right? Right, exactly. And adding a deeper shade, just a slightly deeper shade than what you're quilting on. Helps to helps visually enhance that depth. Oh, yeah, so it almost adds a layer of shadow to the divot of the quilt crinkle.

**Diane Henry 29:41**

Exactly.

**Zoey Baggins 29:42**

Oh, that's so clever that oh my goodness. And we so we've talked a little bit about quilting, on top of the quilt. Do you have any sort of system when you're choosing the color for piecing? So do you often go for neutrals or do you change it a few times if you're going between light and dark fabric, do you have a system there?

**Diane Henry 30:05**

I do choose neutrals. I make it really easy. You know, a stone color, a silver, a taupe, maybe a cream and a white and a charcoal for those darker colors. I don't really use black very much. I don't think black as a thread shows shadow. So for quilting, or for piecing, if maybe you had a lot of darks in the quilt, maybe black would work. But for quilting black is it doesn't really give you the dimension of the stitch because it doesn't show shadow. So even on black quilts, I'm going to use a charcoal so that I can see more of a dimension. But anyway, those sort of basic neutral colors in light, medium, one dark, maybe a charcoal. If you have those colors, you're covered pretty much on the piecing. But I will tell you I am right now percolating a quilt that's going to be predominantly rich, deep blues like indigo and Navy. I think I am going to reach out and get an Essential Pro they have an indigo, that's a gorgeous color. I think I'm going to go ahead and invest in in that color for the piecing of that quilt. Just because it's going to be so strongly stated one color, I want to make sure I don't have any little pops of thread that are going to detract from the the smoothness of that blue. Does that make sense?

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**Zoey Baggins** 31:31

Yeah, absolutely. And generally, with a lot of the color tones that I use, I stick to just kind of like a medium gray when I'm piecing it unless like you said I'm going with a really strong color throughout and then I'll try to get kind of in the hue of that color because I'm always worried, if I press my seams open, you're going to get that little pop even if I use little stitches. I'm always paranoid about that little pop of thread showing through.

**Diane Henry** 31:57

Me to, exactly. I think you're you and I have the exact same feeling on that. So yeah, a medium, a medium cool in a medium warm and you should be good but a light in case you're piecing what's white, because that will show through.

**Zoey Baggins** 32:13

Absolutely I made that mistake before of piecing some lighter colors and using a brown thread. I just I don't know why I didn't change the darn thread but I did a bunch of chain piecing and then I pressed it and you could see the brown through this light fabric and I tore the whole thing apart. I just I knew if I left it I was gonna be angry forever.

**Diane Henry** 32:37

You would point it out. That's what we do. We point is like look what I did right there and oh my gosh, we should not do that. But that's what we do.

**Zoey Baggins** 32:44

I know.

**Diane Henry** 32:44

It's better to just fix it.

**Zoey Baggins** 32:46

Exactly. Then I don't have to point it out or it's a success story. Have I really messed that up but look at it now it's amazing.

**Diane Henry** 32:54

Exactly.

**Zoey Baggins** 32:56

And when you're doing you're all over quilting, edge to edge quilting, do you take the time to add any sort of embellishments or is that really just for special smaller projects.

**Diane Henry** 33:10

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It depends on for me what the customer would like but if I have the quilting is an embellishment and of it in and of itself. So sometimes when a quilt needs a little zhoosh up, I call it I will reach for a thread that takes it up a level so maybe a variegated thread might add a little more energy to the quilt. Or I'll pick a high sheen trilobal polyester that that really shines. I don't really like the feel of pure metallic and you know in a quilt that you're going to cuddle with, but sometimes those trilobal polyesters in metallic colors can give you the feeling of metal of a metallic stitch thread and you don't have to deal with metallic. So, I have a lot of gold and coppers and silvers and bronzy colors in the metallics, those metallic looking colors in a high sheen trilobal polyester thread to give me that feel. And that adds a sense of embellishment. I've even been able to change the way a quilt looks just by the thread on top. In one case a lady picked a peach that was just a little too cool. For the copper focus fabric that she had. She had all these beautiful rich coppers and then this peach background fabric was just a little too cool. And I took that copper color and picked this shiny, it was a Magnifico from Superior, polyester thread. Quilted it fairly densely with an edge to edge design, and it toned that peach to a warmer tone. And no one can tell afterwards. I mean, the first reaction everyone had was "Ew, what's wrong with this quilt?" And when she held it up at Guild, everybody was like, "It's ga-ga-gorgeous." And she actually sold the quilt. And no one. No one ever noticed that the peach had changed, you know that that was what happened, the peach changed color because of the thread. So thread really has a power to the quilts. And that's an embellishment, that's what brings them out to life, you know, fulfills the story. Yeah.

**Zoey Baggins** 35:26

Absolutely. There's like a magic to it. Sorry, go ahead.

**Diane Henry** 35:30

You can thread paint you can at that point, whatever the quilt needs, you can do it. And like, there's a really pretty combination sometimes of citrus colors and variegated, that when you put them on a black and white quilt, it just sings. Isn't that interesting, like a fluorescent citrus color. But on black and white, it just adds a sparkle life that is just sometimes that's just what you need.

**Zoey Baggins** 35:53

Yeah, absolutely. And I was thinking of that when you mentioned that you don't quilt with black or white on a black and white quilt. And I never would have thought to add a spark of color to a monotone quilt. But that that's absolutely a you would add dimension and embellishments at that point as you're quilting it rather than letting the fabric shine. I'm so used to fabric being the main focus that I forget about this end final process.

**Diane Henry** 36:19

And, it can make or break. I've seen quilts. In particular, this is what really started me thinking about thread was a quilt that a friend had quilted. And it was a very warm sable brown, just beautiful brown fabric. And she had been told that a taupe a gray taupe thread will work on anything and she quilted that quilt it just went dead on that sable. And she could not figure out why does it look so bad. And I said you've that's the wrong thread. You need to we need to get you a warm, we need to sable brown. And when we she ripped out that quilting, and when she replaced it, I mean, she cried, it was so much

better. She really thought she had ruined the quilt. And it was just that. So I tell people, when you're first starting quilting, when you if you have that little feeling inside of "I don't like something," stop. Just stop what you're doing and analyze it. Take a good hard look. Is it the color? is it the wrong temperature? Is the design that you don't like or physically do not like making the design and you need to switch to something else? Because we want to have a good experience, we want to have fun through the whole process. And so if it's causing you pause, stop and figure it out. Me, as a professional quilter, sometimes my customer wants something that's not to my taste. And I call that a "close your eyes and quilt" moment. Because I want them to be happy, right?

**Zoey Baggins** 37:53

Absolutely.

**Diane Henry** 37:54

So I do what they want. But you know, you need to know your own taste. And it helps to practice. I stitch on sample pieces sometimes. So that I'm sure I'm getting what I want before I start laying that thread down. Because, especially with a long arm, you can get it down really fast. And then you don't want to then you're hesitant to rip it out. And that's that's not where you want to be. You want to just identify before you get too far into the process. But that's what that's what's worked for me so far.

**Zoey Baggins** 38:25

I love the thought of again, auditioning it on a scrap. And when you when you make your little swatch sample of different stitches to try to decide your color, do you take it into different lighting? Does it matter? Do you like maybe go outside to see if that sheen is right? Or when you're when you're going through that this decision process, do you have any tips or tricks that you could share of how to how to really hone that in?

**Diane Henry** 38:51

Definitely, I think if you have in your sewing studio, or if you can take the project to true light sunlight or have good lighting in your studio. It makes huge difference. If it looks good in in true light, it probably is going to look good everywhere. Do not do it in bad lighting and make the decision in bad lighting because you can't always tell the temperature correctly or the correct hue. If your lighting doesn't give you that true lighting like you really do. It's important. Ott lights that kind of thing. You need something that gives you that clear, what is the clear color so you can make the right color choice. That's a really good point. Yeah.

**Zoey Baggins** 39:35

Yeah, that makes sense. It's like choosing paint for your walls. You don't want to pick the paint in the paint store. You want to take it home and use it with your home lighting. So that would that would absolutely make sense.

**Diane Henry** 39:45

Yeah, absolutely.

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**Zoey Baggins** 39:47

And you mentioned briefly the difference of working with cotton and then switching to polyester and sometimes polyester has that beautiful shine to it. What are the pros and cons of the different fibers, and what methods do you use to choose between the two? It sounds like you kind of use both. So do you have, I guess simple examples of why you would pick one over the other?

**Diane Henry** 40:11

Um, yes, for piecing, I like cotton, I do tend to piece exclusively with cotton, although you can piece with polyester. But with cotton, it can take the heat of a hot iron. And so when you're pressing those seams, if I really feel like I'm going to need to really get in there and get aggressive with a hot iron, I want that cotton because it can, it can take it and it doesn't affect the fiber. The cotton is just as strong unless you're scorching it cotton is just as strong after it's had a hot iron as it was before. With polyester. If you really set your iron, like on a wool setting, and you're using grandma's hot iron, you can it won't melt, but it will, it becomes a little bit brittle. So I'm not I don't want to risk necessarily affecting the stability of the stitches. But with but just so you know, polyester now is manufactured in so many different ways. And for quilting and piecing, you can use a polyester thread, you don't want to use a super heavy, like a dual duty. That's that's the kind of thread we're all used to using for clothes. In that case, that is such a strong thread because it's meant to hold seams together, we don't want our clothes popping apart, we want them held together. So that's pretty, that's a fairly strong thread to use to piece a seam in a quilt where cotton and the polyesters that are made for quilting, they break the same. So you're not going to you don't have to worry about like sawing through your fabric or anything like that. But so you can piece with like a So Fine or even an Essential Pro, if you wanted to find a fine thread to use for piecing to give you that really nice smooth seam. But for then, so that so I choose, I choose, you know, a thin a 50 weight or a 70 weight 60 weight for piecing. And then for quilting, I'm choosing based on the effect that I want. So if I really want to see the thread, I'll choose a King Tut, which is a variegated cotton, or I'll choose maybe Omni which is a 40 weight, polyester, they have a little more body to them, they're a little more "oomf", so you can see them on the quilt. And they're both great at holding the quilt together and and looking good. But if I want the thread maybe to be a little more subtle, then I'm going to choose either a 50 weight cotton, the Essential cotton, or I'll choose Essential Pro in the 70 weight. That thread is lovely and it quilts beautifully. And it's just very subtle. Because the thread is so fine, you really won't see it. So if you want if you want the piecing to show but and I might choose sometimes I'll choose like a denser quilting design so that in areas where the quilting really shows, it shows up. But over the piecing, the piecing can show and the fabrics can show. And then that way the quilt, even even doing an edge to edge it almost takes on a kind of custom look, because the thread is not dominating the piecing part, the real part of the piecing, but it's showing up in the background areas and giving it sort of a background fill kind of look there. And so I just play with threads. That's how I choose based on the different weights what I'm doing. I love Microquilter that's a 100 weight polyester thread to do all my in the ditch work because it disappears. It's so thin, it's like quilting with the human hair. So you pick a few colors in that in that thread line. And you can in the ditch and it doesn't show at all.

**Zoey Baggins** 43:58

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Yes, I've seen Microquilter and I have not yet thrown it on my machine because I haven't found a good project for it. A lot of times I like a little bit more visible stitching but I am so entranced by those super thin strands. It's just it's probably one of the thinnest threads that I've really gotten my hands on so far that 100 weight.

**Diane Henry 44:19**

It is it is the it's the lightest weight thread out. And you can you can hand applique with it. You can hand do like English Paper Piecing with it. It has a pretty good application range. It's strong so it can hold the quilt together. And like I said, for doing any kind of custom, it doesn't show like a lot of thread build up if you're doing a lot of pebbling or dense micro quilting in the background. It's not going to it's not going to show that thread build up like a 50 weight would. So it really is. It allows you to do all that fine detail and really look clean and pretty. So I just love it.

**Zoey Baggins 44:57**

And when you're using that thin of a thread on your top for your top thread? Do you use anything a little bit thicker for the bobbin? Or do you keep them both super thin?

**Diane Henry 45:08**

You can use micro quilter and the bobbin. It's very easy. If you know how to adjust your bobbin tension, you totally can use Microquilter in the bobbin. On domestic machines, their tension to the bobbin is tension tighter already anyway. So you usually don't have any problems. If you're hesitant to adjust your bobbin tension on your domestic machine, what I would recommend then is use like a 60 weight or the 70 weight in the bobbin. The only other place I'm going to say use that 100 weight in the bobbin is if you're into machine embroidery, because 100 white thread in the bobbin you can do your machine embroidery, and you're not going to have to worry about it running out of thread it will it will that bobbin will last you forever.

**Zoey Baggins 45:57**

Right, I didn't even think about that. Oh my gosh. But yeah, if if you need that bobbin to last forever, and you don't have like the extra large Bernina bobbins. I sew with a Janome. So I just have a standard bobbin size, but that would you would pack so much yardage on that bobbin with 100 weight thread.

**Diane Henry 46:18**

You really would. And it really it's a game changer for quilting and for embroidery. So yeah, I once you start really thinking through how thread how much it brings to the table, it can be a tool, it can be a you know, it can give you an assist, it can and then and it visually gives you I call it the medium we work in when we're quilting, it's our medium of, of embellishing our quilts and adding to the story that the quilt is trying to tell. I just, I just love it. And I have a huge collection of it. I love thread. I just, if I see a new thread, I'm gonna have to have at least one spool of it. So I can try it to see what it what it does, because there's just so much great thread out there now.

**Zoey Baggins 47:03**

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Right? Absolutely. And I love that you describe it as a medium. And it's it's one of the tools that we paint with across our quilts. And it's what holds everything together. It's, it's so important, and it's so easy to overlook. And all of all of these things to think about are so vital. And I, I cringe at the moments when I was in early sewist, and I didn't take any of it into account. And I had popped seams and I had things that looked wonky. And that dead quilt that you mentioned, Oh man, I've made some dead quilts. But since I've started thinking about thread and started taking into account color more, it absolutely does make such a massive difference. And it's it's easy to overlook. But once you do really take a deep dive and look at it, it makes it makes a world of a difference.

**Diane Henry** 47:55

It does. It really does. I'm always amazed at what thread can do.

**Zoey Baggins** 48:00

Absolutely. And we've spoken a little bit about the the uses of the two machines, long arm and domestic. But when you're going between the two, what things do you take into account? So I guess if you're stepping away from your longer machine go into a domestic, what is your go to thread of choice? Or what things do you take into account when you're just using a standard domestic machine?

**Diane Henry** 48:27

I still use the same threads. I was using these basic threads on my domestic machine when I was quilting just on the domestic. So it's the same threads. But you have to take into account you've got to know what right size needle to use with the threads. That can affect the running of the thread through the machine. And how it how it actually stitches into the quilt. What's that gonna look like once it gets into the quilt. And the process. If your needle is too small, say if you're using a 40 weight thread, and you're using like a size 70 needle, you're going to you're probably going to experience some trouble. You're going to have some fraying of the thread and potentially skipped stitches. So you want to make sure you're you're choosing the right size needle both for both long arming and domestic but especially on the domestic machine. You also want to use a fresh needle that's very important. And like Bernina, in particular because I haven't Bernina, they really don't want when we're moving the fabric under the needle. You want a very fast running needle and a very slow moving hand. You don't want to be jerking that fabric around because it causes the needle to flex. Longer needles are much stiffer and so they don't flex as much but on a domestic machine, you can really flex that needle and you will get skipped stitches and shred thread shredding because of that flexing the needle. And then, you want to think about how the thread is delivered to your machine. So in the bobbin, are you willing to adjust the bobbin and or not? If you're not, then stick with a 50 weight in the bobbin. And just use that 50 weight consistently, play with different top threads.

**Zoey Baggins** 50:19

Oh Cool!

**Diane Henry** 50:19

Yeah, because it's already ready. So that's one pickle, you take right off the table, and I tell all my beginners, "stick with the 50 in the bobbin. Change the top thread," so you get used to adjusting Tension up there. And test. Always test before you just start quilting. But then the other thing to keep in mind is, just as you're when you're testing those different threads, pay attention to how they're delivered. Cones, we buy cones for cross wound cones for long arm quilting, and the thread is meant to come off the end of the cone. On spools, the spool, usually spools are flat wound, meaning they don't have that kind of cross design on them. Or flat wound, the spool has to actually turn to release the thread. So with with the domestic machines you want to pay attention to- is the spool turning? And a lot of domestic machines deliver thread where it comes off the end of the of the spool. And that's because when you're piecing you're breaking thread a lot, but when you're quilting, you're not breaking thread. And if it if a spool delivers off of the end, it puts a twist in the thread. And eventually that will also start to cause problems of shredding and, and fraying. And so you just want to be careful that you keep, that you think about how the delivery system works. And and make sure that spool turns. If it doesn't turn, I just feed it off of the back of my machine and drop it onto into a jar. So that it will it will spin off there.

**Zoey Baggins** 50:33

Oh!

**Diane Henry** 52:04

Yeah, or there are threads stands that you can buy that actually convert to a spool where you can lay it on the table and the spool is held on a post so it can spin off. And yeah, it is really interesting once you once you start really slowing down and thinking about how how things work and, and experiment a little bit you can, you can usually solve the problems for yourself pretty easily.

**Zoey Baggins** 52:30

Oh, absolutely. I love that jar hack. I recently, just a few months ago, I finally upgraded to a grown up machine. While my very basic machine, that I've sewn on for a decade, while it had very few kind of programmable anything, it did give me the option of either laying down my spool or having it sit up. And my new machine doesn't the spools, it can work with cones or spools. It has a nice little thing that extends off of it. But it doesn't have the it doesn't have the ability to lay it down. And fortunately, most of the thread that I use is cross wound, I think is what you called it.

**Diane Henry** 53:14

You're using a cone. And that goes on the cone holder. So you're good there. But if you need a spool, just drop it off the back of the machine in a jar.

**Zoey Baggins** 53:23

Oh my gosh, that's so clever. Or even, I would assume like a yarn. The yarn bowl or something would hold it too.

**Diane Henry** 53:32

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Oh, yeah. That would be pretty, too. I have an old mason jar. And I just drop it down in there. But the Yeah, you just want to make sure it's rolling freely, and then just thread it straight up. Yeah, for domestic machines, if they don't have a, like a thread mast, that they can thread it through, even just a paperclip. Like I've taped a paperclip to the back to my machine. And it acts as a little guide to get it from the jar up to the top of the machine. And then I thread as I usually do.

**Zoey Baggins** 54:03

Yeah, so you're like creating your own little eyelet port for it to go through with the paper clap.

**Diane Henry** 54:08

Exactly.

**Zoey Baggins** 54:10

It's so clever. Sewists do the coolest stuff. You're MacGyver-ing your sewing machine and I love it.

**Diane Henry** 54:16

Well know when you're, if you like a lot of different colors, or if you're thread painting, that kind of thing. You might not want to own a bunch of cones, you might want to buy them in spools. And it's nice to be able to just be able to quickly change in and out and have it be in a manageable size. And so that's where I was when I was doing my domestic machine. And so I just worked it out that way. And also, if you have a cone machine that can't take a cone, you can set a cone on a thread stand beside your machine and thread it through your machine. So if you want to buy your favorite color and a larger quantity for economy sake, you can do that. So yeah, there's a lot of ways to work around that machine.

**Zoey Baggins** 55:01

Absolutely. And there are ways you can work around it without spending a fortune too. We know we invest so much in all of our supplies and our machines. And I love the extra things that you don't have to buy a \$40 adapter, you can just throw it in a jar and put a paperclip on it. And that is amazing. Every time we chat, you change my life. And I'm so excited.

**Diane Henry** 55:23

Well, happy to do it.

**Zoey Baggins** 55:26

Oh, wonderful. Well, I think we kind of touched on most of the basics, you answered all of my questions, and then some. And I think kind of the last thing we'd like to know is if people wanted to connect and find you on social media is there any way that they can kind of hunt you down and follow your journey?

**Diane Henry** 55:44

I am I'm on Facebook. I'm Diane Graf Henry. And my business Facebook is Real Life Quilting. And that is also my, I have a website called Real Life Quilting dot com. And then I'm a handi quilter national

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educator and so you can find me on the Handquilter Facebook page and website as well. And I'm on Instagram is Dianne Graf Henry and also as Real Life Quilting. My Real Life Quilting, I first did it because I kept telling people I like to quilt for real I like I like it for real and not just virtually crate creating designs, I'm really quilting. And now it's more like, I live a real life just like everybody else does. Squeezing my quilting in and I'm figuring out how to you know, make things work, like the MacGyver-ing stuff and all that. So, you know, I do I quilt for real life. And so it, it's, it's a real thing. And it really, it can happen and everybody can do it. And there's easy solutions out there. And I'd love to visit with people about how to make their that's why I like to teach because I like I like helping people be successful. And have fun.

**Zoey Baggins** 56:57

Wonderful! Well, I'm glad that you like to teach because I am stoked to learn from you. And we will absolutely put all your handles and all your contact information in the show notes. So anybody listening, you don't have to jot it down right now just visit our blog. And we'll have everything linked. So we want to make sure that people can find you and learn as much as I have. And I think that about wraps it up. Is there any last minute things that you wanted to touch on or anything that you think that we maybe didn't cover that you were hoping to

**Diane Henry** 57:28

No, I think we got it covered. Those were great questions. And I just hope everybody goes out and has fun and buys new thread and explores and enjoys.

**Zoey Baggins** 57:38

Yes, absolutely. Sew all the things! Wonderful. Well, thank you so much. And I hope you have an excellent day ahead of you.

**Diane Henry** 57:49

You're welcome. And thank you I appreciate it. Bye!

**Zoey Baggins** 57:52

Buh bye! This podcast is hosted by me, Zoey Baggins. This episode we heard from Eleanor Burks and Diane Henry. This podcast is produced and edited by Sarah Nairalez. Robin Head in Sydney Fort make our artwork. Production Assistance by Kelly Fulop. Special thanks to Christina Holding. We recorded this episode while winding bobbins in the Pacific Northwest. A big thank you to our friends over at the Knit Picks podcast and WeCrochet podcast where we're all keeping the craft in crafting. And from everyone here at Connecting Threads, thank you for joining us. The views and opinions expressed in this podcast are those of the individual participants. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions nor views of the Crafts Group, LLC, nor Premier Needle Arts. Inspiration, fabric, threads, and notions for all your quilting needs can be found at connecting threads.com. Rate and review us whenever you listen to this podcast. This really makes a difference and helps other people find us. If you want to connect more, please join our quilting community. We have a blog and we're on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube at Connecting Threads. Subscribe, follow, like. If you'd like to be on our podcast, leave us

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