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All Skill Levels

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Spectacular!**

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Quilts of
Remembrance**

**Feature Teacher
Flavin Glover**

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**Underground Railroad Quilts:
Fact or Fiction?**

Flavin Glover's Contemporary Logs

by JENNIFER ROUNDS



Flavin Glover

There are many top-of-the-line quiltmakers, but among these stellar artists, there are several standouts whose "wow factor" soars off the charts and redefines traditional quilting. Sometimes it is workmanship, other times, it is pure innovation. In Flavin Glover's case, it is a matter of creating a whole new look from standard blocks, particularly the Log Cabin block, a pattern which Flavin challenges with inventive shapes, color use, and placement.

Despite her upbringing as an Alabama farm girl, there are no Barn Raising designs in Flavin's Log Cabin quilts. Instead, there are picturesque fields, grazing sheep, formations of Canadian geese, and, of course, her famous log cabin houses. Flavin's skill for quilted pictures is especially apparent in her quilt, "Row Houses," which appears on the cover of her book, *A New Look at Log Cabin Quilts*. It was also included in *The Twentieth Century's Best American Quilts*, a special publication compiled by *Quilter's Newsletter* magazine in conjunction with International Quilt Festival.

Quilting Heritage

Heritage and avocation brought Flavin into the quilting fold. Her mother, Nonnie Hudson Williams, was a utilitarian quilter who made many string quilts from the Depression years through the 1970s. The youngest of nine children, Flavin had to demonstrate a true commitment

to the craft before Nonnie would teach her. That only happened after Flavin graduated from college with an Applied Arts degree and secured a job as an occupational therapist.

With clients who needed to learn life skills, Flavin searched for low-cost projects to help them. Patchwork was affordable, but Flavin had to overcome her own lack of quilting skills. That's when Nonnie stepped in, and Flavin's quilting obsession began.

"She had me right where she wanted me because I was so eager to learn," Flavin recalls.

Now retired from 25 years in the mental health field, Flavin attributes her career longevity to quilting, which provided her with a creative outlet.

In Love with Logs

For many of her working years, Flavin was quietly productive,

practicing her needlework and exploring quilting traditions. Nonnie's neighbor, Vonda Lee Waldrep, was a great resource. Nonnie excelled at speed, but Vonda Lee preferred a slower pace and more intricate projects. It was also Vonda Lee who introduced Flavin to Log Cabin blocks, little realizing how instrumental she would be in the development of a master Log Cabin quiltmaker.

"The symmetry and organization of Log Cabins immediately appealed to me," notes Flavin.

Also intriguing to Flavin was the Log Cabin block's versatility, which she found that she could control to suit her fancy. Once size and shape variation entered her lexicon, Flavin sailed off to explore the outer limits of Log Cabin design.

During the early 1980s, Flavin stepped into the quilting lime-



Carolina Row, 66" x 47½", 2000. Machine-pieced, hand-quilted. Cottons, polyester batting. (Photo by Sharon Risedorph, from the book *A New Look at Log Cabin Quilts*, C&T Publishing.)

light as a professional with the encouragement of family and friends. Her style was distinct and attracted groups looking for quilters who could teach stand-out methods. She has been teaching steadily ever since.

Tips from the Pro

Tackling a quilt in Flavin's style might be daunting to a novice quilter, but according to the expert, pictorial Log Cabins are ultimately achievable. The key is "simplify and stylize," the mantra Flavin's students use when designing their quilts. Flavin's latest book from C&T Publishing, *A New Look at Log Cabin Quilts*, takes a close look at her inspirations and methods and breaks down her approach in manageable steps.

Flavin's special talents are her skillful use of shaped blocks and deft color placement. She is meticulous with color palettes and pre-cutting logs (thus a need for exactitude in sewing), but a surprising element of spontaneity



Baa Baa (Photo courtesy of Flavin Glover.)

sets in when she sews. Although Flavin controls color tone with her fabric choices, she picks fabrics randomly from pre-cut piles.

Hand quilting is Flavin's favorite step and takes the bulk of her time. "I love hand quilting more so now than when I started because quilting adds another element to the design. I used to outline the logs only, now I also

quilt their surfaces to create texture, shape, or definition."

One of the most interesting and enjoyable things to know about Flavin is her emotional connection to her quilts. Often it is the subject matter that strikes a chord or rekindles a memory. A woman born to the land never quite loses her ties to the open vistas, sensual textures, and rich colors. Add a marriage to a forestry professor whose life's work is the natural world, and it is no wonder why Flavin's quilt-making provides such a novel and fluent interpretation of nature's bounty.

Visit Flavin's official website at www.flavinglover.com for information about her teaching schedule. To purchase her book, *A New Look at Log Cabin Quilts*, contact C&T Publishing at (800) 284-1114 or visit www.ctpub.com. ❖



Hilltop Houses, 37½" x 37½", 1987. Machine-pieced, hand-quilted. Cottons, polyester batting. (Photo by Sharon Risedorph, from the book *A New Look at Log Cabin Quilts*, C&T Publishing.)

