The sewing machine hums along as a needle pushes and pulls thread through the face-to-face fabric pieces, tying them together inch by inch until they become one.

Flip, turn and start again, row after row.

It's a tireless process of stitching together colors and textures in a patchwork of pieces until they eventually become a giant pattern of textile art.

For 88-year-old Harriet Oberg, it's like putting together a fabric puzzle with her sewing machine.

Harriet has been a seamstress most of her life. She says her grandmother likely helped her learn to sew as a child but much of what she knows was self-taught.

"Mostly, I sewed clothes for myself and later for my children," Harriet says. "It was helpful money-wise to make your own things."

Harriet and her late husband, Lavern, had four children and spent years pinching pennies on the farm.

“Sewing was a necessity then.”

Harriet’s stitching has since evolved from hems and buttonholes on the clothes she wears to blocks and patterns of colorful quilts.

Her daughter, Marcia, got her hooked about 15 years ago with a quilting class.

She’s been stitching pieces together ever since: baby quilts, lap quilts, Christmas quilts, full-sized quilts, wall quilts, plain quilts, fancy quilts and everything in between.

“I like to see how the patterns come together as I go,” she says.

Most of the quilts Harriet has made began as a kit and end as a decoration.

“I like to be able to look at a picture and see what it’s going to look like when I’m finished,” she says.

The kits usually include a picture, the fabric and detailed instructions for how to accomplish the designs that have ranged from flowers to trains and practically every quilt pattern ever made: snowflake, Amish shadow, flying geese and, most recently, log cabin.

Harriet measures and cuts the pieces, sews them together and ships the quilt top off to be finished with batting, backing and stitches to hold front to back.

“I’ve done some machine quilting,” she says, “but it’s been few and far between.”

And hand quilting?

“You won’t catch me doing it,” she says. “I’ve never seemed to get the hang of it.”

So instead, Harriet has had some local groups do hand stitching on a few pieces. The rest she sends to a machine quilter in Kearney.

Over the past 15 years or so, Harriet has made well over 100 quilts of all sizes, shapes and colors.

She said it usually doesn’t take more than a month for her to complete a project, even the more detailed ones.

“I spend two or three hours a day in front of the sewing machine,” she says. “I’m always working on something.”

Some decorate her apartment at Stone Hearth Estates, including the first quilt she every made.

Most of the rest have been given as gifts to friends and family.

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