

# QUILTING TERRORIST

by Susan Narayan



Susan Narayan  
Photo courtesy of Susan Narayan

**Quilting can be full of intrigue, especially when taken abroad.**

When my husband's job brought our family to Costa Rica for several years, I met Karen Smith, an Australian master quilter. After she inspired me to make my first quilt, I became a regular at her weekly quilting class. Every Tuesday evening seven women, mostly expatriates, would meet around Karen's large, scissors-scarred dining table to painstakingly cut and stitch under her expert eye. The diverse members included Denise, poised and polite, from the Canadian Embassy; Sarah, witty and fluent in Spanish and Vicky, a cheerful Panamanian American with the U.S. Embassy.

Karen taught us to work entirely by hand and how to use a variety of colorful scraps to create interesting, unpredictable effects. While working, we discussed our lives in Costa Rica and shared anecdotes from other countries in which we had lived. This helped chase away the loneliness that expatriates sometimes feel. (At the end of the school year, four of us

were to scatter to Bolivia, Indonesia, Canada and back to the United States.)

As we were leaving Karen's house one warm Tuesday evening,

Vicky stumbled as she headed to her car and dropped her canvas bag of quilting

supplies. Rolls of thread, tiny scraps of material, thimbles and plastic quilting patterns scattered across the dark street. We helped Vicky pick up as many things as we could find, but she wasn't sure she had everything. In the next morning's light, Karen checked again in front of her house but found nothing more.

On Wednesday, Vicky went to her job at the American Embassy. Security had recently been intensified due to the Oklahoma City bombing. Shortly after noon, she received a call from one of the Marine guards. The conversation went something like this:

"Is your car a white Datsun with the license plate 8499?" asked the Marine.

"Yes, that's my car," replied Vicky.

"Could you please come down and identify it?"

"I'll be right there, but why? Did something happen to it?"

"No, please just come down. It's urgent!"


Thinking perhaps someone had tried to break into her car, Vicky rushed to the front desk. The guard motioned her outside and she walked toward where she had parked the car. It was still there and looked unharmed.

"Wait right here please," the guard said, blocking her with an outstretched arm about 15 or 20 feet from her car.

"Why?" Vicky protested.

He crouched down and pointed to her back bumper. She, too, was now crouching. Although she could barely see it, she spotted a protruding object that puzzled her. It was a round, silver flattened disk with what looked like short, thin wires sticking out from behind it. Vicky leaned forward to get a better look.

Then laughing, she ran forward to remove it from the bumper, despite the guard lunging after her. "My pincushion," she cried out. "My magnetic pincushion!"

Our quilting group certainly got a laugh out of that story at our next quilting class. The pincushion that nearly caused an international incident is probably still being discussed by expatriate quilters on assignment in remote places around the world! 

*Susan Narayan is a writer and quilter who lives in White Bear Lake, Minnesota.*