June 9, 2023

Disclaimer: I wrote this. I am not a robot.

I listened to a rather horrifying story on NPR about using artificial intelligence programs to write stories and generate questions for guests, based upon what the guests had written—like a study on telephone operators losing their jobs.

So the NPR story was about telephone operators who lost their jobs of connecting phone calls, when technology changed that allowed machines to do the same thing. I'm sure you've seen the "old" movies, where a woman sits at a bank of connectors and pulls a plug from one connector and inserts it into another, and says in a very nasally voice, "Here is your party, sir," or something like that.

This process of replacing telephone operators started back in the 1900s. So the question the NPR reporters were examining was how did this affect the women who lost their jobs. As host Kenny Malone stated, "We wanted to see if today's massively disruptive technology, artificial intelligence, could tell you that story instead and possibly take our jobs in the process."

So Malone and Jeff Guo used the ChatGPT tool to write a radio script about this. The GPT started writing, and promptly made up a name of an expert. Malone and Guo called up the "expert," and found a dentist, a jazz musician and a professor by that name, but none had expertise in telephone operators losing their jobs.

It seems like GPT commonly makes up stuff like when creating stories: from term papers, to legal documents, to computer code, to reality shows, to…..

Anyway, Guo and Malone contacted some real experts in the field, and had GPT "read" the 52-page long document that the two experts had written on telephone operator automation and then had it create questions based on the paper. Guo and Malone then interviewed the two experts, using the questions generated by the AI GPT.

At the end of the interview, Guo and Malone revealed to the experts that AI had created the questions, and one of them laughed and said, "You've got to be kidding me. Why are we talking to you then?" And Malone replied, "I mean, this is a reasonable question. This is a reasonable question." And then NPR played the radio story that was generated using the ChatGPT technology.
And I was left knowing that I will never again know whether an actual person wrote what I am reading or whether AI did. And that is scary. And it's, in part, why writers are on strike.

But that's not all AI can do.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," Becca interrupted. Once again she was late to the story. She likes playing hide and seek with Cassidy in the tall grass in the front yard. Cassidy is pretty much blind, and Becca's pretty much short, so the game really isn't a contest at all. Actually, I don't even think Cassidy knows Becca's trying to hide from her. For those of you who don't know, these are my Australian Shepherds. Becca acts as spokesperson for both of them.

"You're talking about AI, aren't you?" she stated. "Well, I am not a robot."

"But you are artificially intelligent," I reminded her. Becca opened her mouth, closed it, opened it, and I said, "Don't hurt yourself trying to figure that out." Becca closed her mouth.

"What I was going to say is that we routinely engage with AI today and generally don't even think about it. Or know. Everyone who has a smart device, especially one that talks to you, contains AI programming. It's amusing when Siri tells you jokes and it's handy when Alexa plays your music.

"It's more disturbing when you realize that the 'chat' person you are messaging with is really a robot. Especially when you are chatting about insurance, finance, or worse, health issues. You're telling the AI/computer about your symptoms and if the computer delivers the wrong diagnosis…."

Becca was hopping from foot to feet, wanting to get in on this. "AI can analyze a songwriter's style," she interjected. "Like Garth Brooks, and then write new hits based around that style. Who then owns the rights to songs that sound like Brooks, but weren't written by him?"

"Excellent question, Becca," I said. "Those are some of the issues the writers' strike is grappling with. Generally AI is defined as a machine that performs a task that previously required human intelligence. But defining what 'intelligence' is, is difficult."

"I'm intelligent," Becca said. "It shouldn't be that hard."

"You've just made my point," I said. Becca opened her mouth, then closed it again. "Hush," I said.

There are three different types of AI: narrow AI, general AI, and super AI. Narrow AI or ANI is what Siri, Alexa and Google Assistant are. This AI doesn't posses general intelligence (whatever that is); it is just designed to carry out specific tasks when asked, like tell you a joke. It also is designed to flag inappropriate content online – which means it looks only for certain words, and if you have ever been flagged on Facebook or other social media sites for inappropriate language (as defined by AI), you've been a victim of ANI. And sometimes it works as it's designed and sometimes its net is way too wide. Depends, of course, on the programming. Presumably done by humans.

ChatGPT is a narrow AI, but when the NPR guys used it, they were able to program it to follow specific guidelines used by NPR reporters in order to generate a very real story – see, it's even hard to talk about this. What is real and what isn't?

Anyway, General AI, or strong AI, allows a machine to perform tasks based on accumulated experience – meaning it can learn, reason and think like a human. Don't worry, this, apparently, is still hypothetical. Although if you have been watching the Marvel movies (I have, in order), you already know that Stark uses general AI. In the earliest Avenger movies, that was Jarvis. Jarvis later morphed into Vision.

The ultimate goal in AI is to create a machine capable of common sense and one with its own consciousness. Actually, I could get behind that if it could create politicians with common sense, but…

"Off track, off track," Becca warned. "You said there were three types. What is the third?" Becca is being sweet right now. That makes me suspicious….

"Okay, the third type of AI is called super AI. Super AI would destroy mankind."

"Oh, I get it," Becca said. "Isaac Asimov wrote about that in I, Robot. And then there was the Borg in Star Trek, and General Grievous in Star Wars."

"To name a few," I said. "But right now, we're just working with narrow AI, like Chat GPT, which, by the way stands for Generative Pre-Trained Transformer. It launched in 2020 and the latest version, GPT-4 has one trillion parameters."

"What does that mean?" asked Becca.

"I have no clue. But if it can write a story after being feed the underlying info, it can generate school essays, theses, medical manuals, IKIA instructions, tv scripts, books not written by James Patterson but read like them…."

"It's all up for grabs," Becca said. "But I'm real," she said, looking a little forlorn.

"Yup. You are definitely not a robot, even though you are artificially intelligent."

Becca's mouth began to open again.

"Go play hide & seek with Cassidy," I told her. "She's been looking all over for you since you came inside."

Becca turned to go back outside and almost hit the door 'cause she was still looking at me with her mouth open.
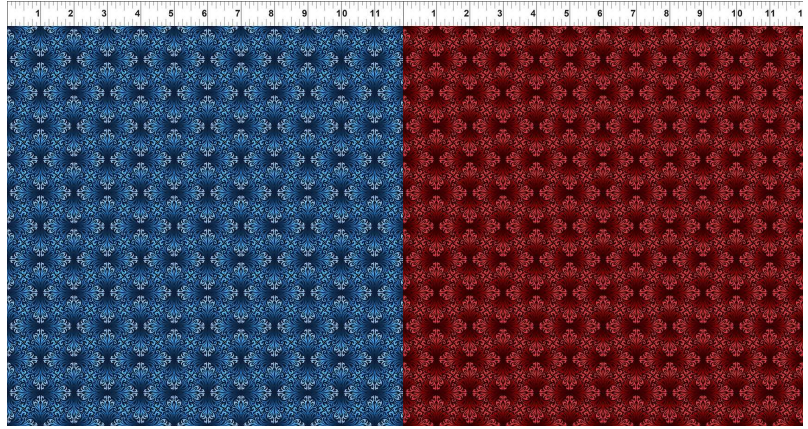

What's New
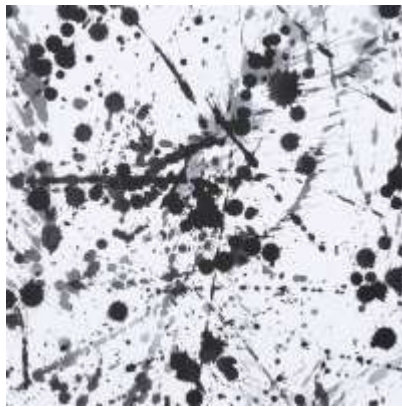

From In the Beginning

From Dear Stella (NOTE The Hedgehogs) & Oasis (the horses)

Plus we got whites in from P & B. I won't put thumbnails in, because they will just look white.

Alexander Henry

From Riley Blake

From Michael Miller
The two florals are overwide, and
the bundle is actually 2 1/2" wide
strips in Fairy Frost--the bundle
just shows the colors better
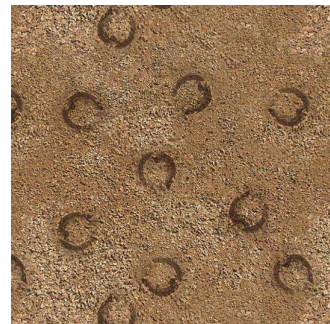
From Riley Blake

From Windham

From Michael Miller
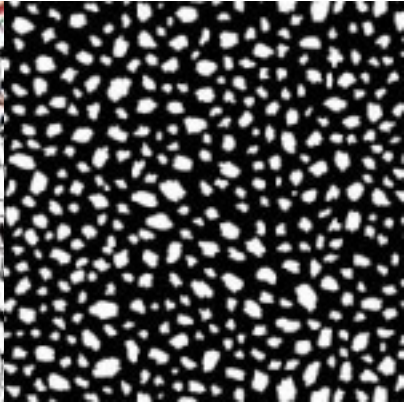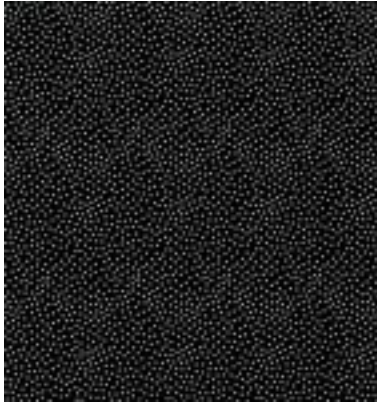
From Kennard & Kennard

PANEL SIZE APROX 24" x 44"

Spring Newsletter

Class Picrures of some of the quilts: Storm at Sea (High Tide); Shakespeare in the park; Two Scoops, Prism; Happy Stripes (Striper); San Marcos, English paper piecing bag (one of several options); Exploding Hearts.

Please look on the calendars above for times and dates.

Ongoing Classes & Clubs

Block of the Month   First Sat of month 10:30-11:15 FREE Barb Boyer
Join at any time. You get a free fat quarter if you come to class with the previous month's completed block. This year the challenge will be Starry Skies. Challenge #1 is to use at least 25 different fabrics in the quilt – should be easy. Challenge #2 is to chose backgrounds for the blocks that aren't the typical cream/white neutrals that we generally use. Instead, we will mix it up a bit, using both traditional backgrounds for some blocks, and then choosing "colors" in both light and dark fabrics for other blocks.

Hand Embroidery Club 2nd Sat. of the month, 10-noon FREE Kathy Sconce
If you want to learn to hand embroider or just brush up your technique, join us on the second Saturday of the month from 10 to noon. You can work on your own projects or you can join the project we are doing, which is Garden Belles. Each block features a lady in vintage costume, in the garden, or similar outdoor setting. These are old fashioned ladies in dresses, which offer all sorts of stitchery creativity.

Knit Pickers' Club 2nd and 4th Wed of each month, 2-5 Carol Moler
Come join our Knit Pickers= Club. We knit 2 days a month every second and fourth Wednesday, from 2-5. The Club is open to all skill levels and, despite the name, includes crocheters as well. We want to share what we've learned, find new patterns, and simply just sit and knit. We may work on some felting projects, fingerless mittens, mittens, and socks. We can even help you get started—teach you the basics.

Hand Sewing Club every Tuesday afternoon 2-5
This club is open to everyone. Bring your hand sewing (embroidery, binding, knitting, crochet, etc) and sit & stitch.

June Classes
Beginning Quilting 8 weeks $65 Barb Boyer Starting Sun June 4
This comprehensive 8-week course will introduce to you almost everything you need to know about piecing a quilt top. Along the way you will learn about color, batting, thread, machines and various techniques to give you the skills to make almost any quilt.

Laura Heine collage quilts Sat June 17 10:30-4 Jean Korber $40
Create your own…..cat? scarecrow, owl, elephant, sloth. Choose any one of Heine's patterns, bring a pile of fun fabrics (flowers, feathers, various designs) and learn how to create your own collage quilt, using fusible fabric pieces. If you can operate a pair of scissors and an iron, you can do this quilt!

Quilt #6, Organized Chaos: Fat Quarter Favorite Quilts Sat June 24 10:30-4 Jean Korber $35 (or $120 for all 6 quilts)
The last quilt is called Organized Chaos. You can work with 22 fat quarters or 11 half yard cuts for a little less chaos. Jean has a great way to keep the chaos organized as you put the interlocking looking blocks together.

Shakespeare in the Park Sat June 10 1-5 $35 Barb Boyer
This quilt is made up of stars and Snail's Trail blocks. The pattern is an old time favorite from the legendary Judy Martin. It is a classic quilt, one of those on the bucket list of "to do" quilts. This is the second session of the class. We will work on the second block that makes this quilt. If you already paid for the class in May, this is part 2 (no extra charge, of course). But if you missed the first class, you can catch up in the final class, as we will go over all the parts that make up this quilt.

July Classes
Fun Ways to Use Your Panels: A strategy and Design Class Sat July 1, 1-5 $35 Barb Boyer

Bring your panel(s) and some graph paper and we will strategize how to design a quilt around your panel. We will work with my EQuilt program for help designing extra blocks, choosing settings, and getting the math right.

Machine Binding Sat July 8 1-5 $40 Jean Korber
This is hands on class. You will need a small project (10" to 40", table runner, small wall nagging, place mat, etc) that is quilted and ready for binding. In class Jean will show you how to cut your binding, press it, and stitch it down (DO NOT CUT YOUR BINDIG IN ADVANCE), how to stitch it down & miter the corners and then how to apply decorative stitches to the edge. In class you will cut your binding, stitch it to your project, miter your corners and then stitch it down by machine on the other side, using decorative stitches.

Elizabeth Hartman Quilts, your choice Sat July 29 10:30-5 Barb Boyer 10:30-4
E.H. Quilts are made using a 45 degree flip & sew method. The trick is in the organization & keeping track where you are in the piecing. These make great kid quilts, wall hangings, ones will all the animals—bed quilts. You can start by making one animal from the quilt, and build out from there.

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CLUBS

HAND EMBROIDERY CLUB FREE!
If you want to learn to hand embroider or just brush up your technique, join us on the second Saturday of the month from 10 to noon. You can work on your own projects or you can join the project we are doing.
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Hand Work Club FREE!
Every Tuesday afternoon from 2-5, join us to just sit & hand stitch, crochet, bind, or knit group. Bring what you're working on, sit up at the table in front by the window and work on your projects for a while.   You can get advice & suggestions from your fellow quilters and share your experiences about your projects.

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Knit Pickers' Club FREE!
This is another get-together class to sit & knit, work on our projects, share information and get some help. We will share techniques, suggest patterns, but mainly we'll sit & knit (or pick).

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Block of the Month Club FREE!
First Saturday of the Month, 10:30-11:15. Join at any time. You get a free fat quarter if you come to class with the previous month's completed block.

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Toad Toters Club

On full moon days (as noted in the calendar) you will get 20% off all purchases (not otherwise discounted) that you can fit in your bag. You must bring your bag to participate.

Full Moon Days: January 6; February 4 (observed); March 7; April 6; May 5; June 4

Discount Policy
 We will honor only one discount -- whichever is largest. You can't combine a 10% with a 25% discount to get a 35% discount. On this we can't be bribed.

Color of the Month
January purple; February red; March green; April yellow; May whites, June blue

June 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	**2**	**3**
				Long Arm Rental Day		**BOM 10:30** **Full moon** Make Your Own Grocery Bag 1-4 Free, with fabric purchase
4	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Beginning Quilting 1-4 **Shop Is now open 1-5!**		**Hand work Club 2-5**	Long Arm class 10:30	**Long Arm Rental Day**		**Embroidery Club 10-noon Shakespeare in the Park 1-5 $35**
11	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**
Beginning Quilting 1-4 **Shop Is now open 1-5!**		**Hand work Club 2-5**	Knit Pickers' Club 2-5	**Long Arm Rental Day**		Laura Heine $40 10:30-4

18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Beginning Quilting 1-4 Dads' Day Shop Is now open 1-		**Hand work Club 2-5**	**Long Arm class 10:30**	**Long Arm Rental Day**		**6 fat quarter quilts: Quilt #6 10:30-4 $35**
25	26	27	28	29	30	
Beginning Quilting 1-4 Shop Is now open 1-5!		**Hand work Club 2-5**	**Knit Pickers' Club 2-5**	**Long Arm Rental Day**		**Color of the month: blue**

July 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 **BOM 10:30** Fun Ways to use your panels: A strategy & design class 1-5 $35
2 Beginning Quilting 1-4 Shop Is now open 1-5!	3 **Full moon**	4 CLOSED	5 **Long Arm class 10:30**	6 **Long Arm Rental Day**	7	8 **Embroidery Club 10-noon** **Machine Binding 1-5 $40**
9 Shop Is now open 1-5!	10	11 **Hand work Club 2-5**	12 Knit Pickers' Club 2-5	13 Long Arm Rental Day	14	15
16 Shop Is now open 1-5!	17	18 **Hand work Club 2-5**	19	20 **Long Arm Rental Day**	21	22

23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Shop Is now open 1-5!		Hand work Club 2-5	Knit Pickers' Club 2-5	Long Arm Rental Day		Elizabeth Hartman Quilts: Your choice 10:30-4
30	31					
Shop Is now open 1-5!						Color of the month: Christmas

Nolting Quilting Machines

Nolting Longarm Machines

Nolting has 5 main machines, each with different reaches: from 17" to 30" depending on the machine. They are sold with or without a frame, but after I saw & helped set up one of the steel frames this week, I recommend buying the frame. All machines, except for the Standard--the most economical machine-- have a stitch regulator. I recommend a stitch regulator. All machines can be equipped with a computer and there are a couple of different ones to choose from. In addition, you can get an extended table base so that you can use rulers, you can get larger bobbins on some of the models and on the frames you can get hydraulic lifts to raise and lower the tables. In the coming weeks, I will print out more information on each model.

The best entry level machine is the Fun Quilter. It comes in
17", 20" & 23" reach. It comes with the Intellistitch Equalizer stitch regulator, standard speed control, needle up/down, and fixed handles in the front & rear. This machine can also be equipped with a computer.

The Pro Machine has the Intellistitch Turbo stitch regulator, single stitch option, standard speed control, needle up/down and customizable handles in the front & rear. The Pro Machine comes in 20", 24" and 30" reach with 10-12" of inside height. There are easy dials on the front to set stitch length and other options. This machine can also be equipped with a computer.

The NV Machine is the newest in the fleet of Nolting machines. This machine has a touch screen with progra mmable stitch regulation. You can stitch in 4 different stitch modes plus single stitch and needleup/down. It also has an adjustable brightness LED work light. This machine can also be equipped with a computer.

Normal Shop Hours:
Monday-Saturday 10-6
Sunday 1-5
Closed first Sunday of month (and some holidays)
New Hours for Winter Time (starting Nov 7-May 22)
Monday-Saturday 10-5, closed Sundays unless a class is scheduled. Then we're open 1-5.
Check the schedule.

Join the fun and come feel the difference of quality fabrics.

 Happy quilting!

Sincerely, Barbara Boyer
Around the Block
307-433-9555
www.aroundtheblockquilts.com