Choosing Thread

For the sake of conversation there are one million longarmers, me being one. Which means there are 999,999 other ways of approaching any method or system to many of the procedures associated with the process. We are, without any debate, varied in our ways and equipment. Edge to Edge, Free Motion, Hand Guided, Computer Driven, Paper Pantograph aided or Digitized Panto’s for those that have the Pantograph system utilized via a tablet, like Innova’s Panto Vision. I’m familiar with one longarmer that does strictly ruler work.

With that said…My approach to thread selection.

I will use whatever thread the piecer supplies. I only stock Superior Omni and Omni Variegated. I’ve used numerous manufacturers…With Superior’s Omni line it is rare that I must make any tension adjustments. Very rare. If it ain’t broke… Also, I believe the poly and poly/cotton blend threads hold up better under use, elements and washing than a pure cotton. I know plenty that disagree.

**Color…does it blend well with the pieced top?**

I’ve never been too concerned with the back. In most cases the piecer’s selection is coordinated with a fabric from the top. So, the thread will usually blend well with the back. When I encounter a dark top and a very light backing it is the piecers call. I’ve used light and dark threads on the same quilt with good success. On those occasions when the top thread wants to peek through the bottom or vice versa the “peeking” has been eliminated after the first washing. If you are not washing it is always best to stay with the color choice for the top to avoid any possible conflicts with thread color. Perfect tension is a myth. Great tension is doable…but peeking is like bleeding fabric…it can happen.

**Color contrast...light thread on dark fabrics or dark thread on light fabrics?**

Considering that many pieced tops have both, this can be difficult. Thankfully, this is worked out during the consultation process. What I strive for is a thread that does not overpower the pattern and fabric selection the piecer has used in crafting the top.

My rule of thumb…Use a darker thread color on the front coordinating with the darker fabrics. Light colored threads on dark fabrics, to me, catches the eye and exposes the longarm pattern before the piecing of the quilt. I want to compliment the quilt. It is the quilt that should be the main focus, not a longarm pattern. Using the darker colors seems to be less attention getting on quilts that utilize dark fabrics.

Yes, I use a lot of whites and cream threads. Pastels, light greens, blues, browns, pale yellows, and the list goes on…but for the most part those quilts use limited choices of dark fabrics.

For the sake of conversation let’s say there are one million quilters. We have now entered into that 999,999 individual considerations regarding thread selection for a quilt, excluding mine. The reason I emphasize the importance of quilter and longarmer consultation. In person is obviously the best. But, welcome to the 21st Century where phones, text, emails and photographs make it possible no matter where the piecer and longarmer happen to apply their craft.

Quilt till you wilt…we do.