

# Your Mother Was Wrong

BY NANCY KIRK

In the July/August 2008 issue of *Quilters Newsletter*, Nancy Kirk provides insights on quilt care. Here, she gives instructions for making a traditional chin guard and provides step-by-step directions for safely washing a cotton quilt.

## CHIN GUARDS

Chin guards, or whisker guards, were added to the top edges of quilts to protect them from wear and abrasion from men's whiskers. They look like a long, skinny pillowcase and simply slip over the top of the quilt, protecting approximately 9" on both front and back. Most were made from white cotton sheeting, so that when the bed was made it looked like a sheet was folded over the top of the quilt. You'll want to select a fabric to either coordinate or contrast with your quilt, and you may even want to consider fleece for a soft, snugly feel.

Cut a strip that is double the width of the top border or top block plus 1", and the width of the quilt plus 1".

Fold the fabric lengthwise, right sides together. Stitch a scant ¼" seam on each short end. To hem the long edges, fold the raw edge up ¼" twice and then stitch by machine or by hand. Turn right sides out.

The chin guard slips over the top of the quilt and is secured much like a duvet cover. Select *one* of these methods to attach the chin guard to the quilt.

Make ties and stitch them to the binding of the quilt and inside the chin guard at the corners, near the end of the short sides, and at several points along the top.

Create tabs with Velcro. Stitch the hook side of the Velcro to the quilt and the softer loop side to the chin guard. Attach the Velcro in the same places cited for the ties.

Use the traditional method of hand basting the chin guard to the quilt with approximately 1" stitches.

The chin guard should be removed and washed separately as needed, normally whenever you wash the sheets.

## WASH DAY

After lining the bathtub with a clean white cotton sheet, soak the quilt in a two-percent solution of Orvus. This is considerably more than what is recommended on the bottle, but for the best cleaning, I've found it's the optimum solution.

Do not agitate—just gently “mush” up and down on the quilt.

Rinse the quilt thoroughly. If the water is dark or foul, repeat washing until the sudsy water is clear. Then rinse three to five times until all the suds are gone. It's best to do the final rinse using approximately five gallons of either de-ionized or distilled water.

With the sheet and quilt still in the tub, drain out the water. Press any remaining water out of the quilt with a lot of terry towels or a clean car washing sponge until the quilt is damp dry.

Then, using the sheet to lift the damp quilt, move it to a large flat surface to dry. Remove the sheet before spreading out the quilt. I use my bed, with an inexpensive comforter under the quilt to protect the mattress.

As the quilt dries, the water wicks to the top surface. For best results, cover the quilt with lengths of unbleached cheesecloth and gently press the cheesecloth into the quilt so that any minerals in the water can be deposited in the cheesecloth instead of the quilt.

Let the quilt dry for two to four hours with two box fans blowing on it.



**LeMoyné Stars,**  
84" x 84", circa 1880s,  
maker unknown. This  
quilt has a traditional  
whisker guard sewn to  
the top edge.