

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

Penny: Greetings, quilters! Welcome to our first October “Eavesdrop on a Telephone Conversation.” Today we’re honored to have Sandy Muckenthaler from Hoffman Fabrics join us.

We hope you were able to download the Telephone Conversation Worksheet so you can follow along with the conversation, take notes, and jot down your questions.

By way of short introduction, quilters and sewers come to Hoffman Fabrics for the best in original screen-prints, hand-dyed batiks and hand-paints. As a wholesale converter of the highest quality cotton and blends, Hoffman annually designs and creates more than 800 innovative screen-printed fabrics and unique hand-dyed and hand-painted batik fabrics.

Sandy has been with Hoffman California Fabrics for 25 years and has been a sewing and fabric enthusiast for close to 35 years. She works in the sales and marketing department.

Welcome, Sandy. Thank you so much for joining us. Feel free to add anything you’d like to the introduction.

Sandy: You did well. Thank you.

Penny: Let’s jump right in. What types of things should a quilter look for in a quality fabric?

Sandy: Start with the basics, 100% cotton. It’s easier to sew, iron and quilt with.

When looking for a quality fabric, you can tell by sight and feel. By sight, you look at the weave. Make sure it’s a nice compact weave that’s preferably even. How does the fabric feel? Does it feel soft, but not stiff? Are the colors rich and vibrant?

I would say it’s visual and tactile. Touch and feel to examine the fabrics and know whether or not it is a quality fabric.

Penny: Is there really a difference between the fabric at a chain store versus the fabric at a quilt shop?

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

Sandy: I can only speak for Hoffman Fabrics. When we sell to chain stores, we sell the same quality fabrics that we sell to our independent stores. We only purchase Grade A, quality gray goods. The same fabric is sold to independent quilt shops all over the world and to chain stores. I do know, however, that some other companies sell lower grade cottons to chain stores.

You obviously have seen them. You really can tell the difference. If you put a Hoffman next to something else at a lower grade, you really can tell the difference.

Penny: We heard on a call last year that a lot of the fabric manufacturers purchased a lower quality fabric to run through their presses first. When they're printing it, they test it out and make sure all the designs line up. It's a little bit lower quality, but then that's what they use to sell to chain stores.

Sandy: I don't know the country of origin that a lot of the fabric in the chain stores comes from. I can only speak for us. We print in the Orient, either in Korea or Japan. There we have the finest gray goods available.

There might be some printing done in third-world countries like India where the quality is not going to be there. It's going to be a fabric that is definitely coarser, rougher and duller. Speaking for Hoffman, we only sell top-quality fabrics and designs.

Penny: How does the thread count factor into the quality of the fabric?

Sandy: It matters very much. The normal thread count of our fabrics is 68 threads. That's 68 threads going in each direction and 68 threads per each inch. It will be 68 threads going crosswise and 68 threads going up and down.

That's the thread count of our regular screen-printed goods done in either Korea or Japan. Then we have higher thread count fabrics which are Bali batiks and hand-dyes are batiked and dyed onto. That thread count is well over 200 threads per inch, combining the woof and warp threads together. It's finer.

For our batiks, we use a combed cotton lawn fabric. That's combed cotton threads. That's why our batiks have a nice, silky hand to them. It's because of that high thread count that the yarn takes the dyes so well, because of the fineness of the yarns and the amount of yarns per inch.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

- Penny: Did you decide to use that quality so you could get the prints?
- Sandy: We wanted the most luxurious look for the Bali batiks as possible. I often say that when showing our fabrics to customers. Being that the thread count is so fine, the dyes are absorbed so much better and take to the cotton fiber so much better. It looks like the fabric is actually printed on a piece of fine silk. It's the most luxurious fabric available.
- Penny: One of the things I noticed is that rarely do you find fabric where the back side looks like the front side. The batiks do. A lot of times you wonder, "Is this the front?" Then you get to the point where it doesn't really matter because they're pretty much the same.
- Sandy: There's a very subtle difference. That has just as much to do with the quality of dyes that we use as the base good of the cloth. It's high-end all the way.
- Penny: It's well worth paying extra for.
- Sandy: Absolutely. Each yard is a piece of art. Our batiks are all done by hand. No two yards are going to be alike. They're exceptional.
- Penny: They are. It's amazing to me how many different batiks there are. I've been quilting for 27 or 28 years now. When the batiks first started to come out it seemed like there were four or five, and now you can't even keep track of them. There are thousands, and they're all beautiful.
- Sandy: Thank you.
- Penny: Is there a way to tell the thread count of a fabric when it's still on the bolt? Obviously, you'd have to pull it off and unwrap it a little bit.
- Sandy: There's no indication of the thread count on the bolts. If you compare a batik and to a regular screen-printed fabric, you can definitely see a difference in the thread count if you want a weave that is compact, tight and taut as opposed to anything that is loose and gauzy.
- Penny: By looking at that, you can see a comparison, but you wouldn't necessarily be able to tell the difference between a fabric that has a thread count of 60 and a fabric with a thread count of 68.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

Sandy: You might be able to tell the difference by feeling it, but the difference in the feel can be attributed to the dyes that might have been used and not the thread count. You just have to go by sight.

Penny: How much does 100% cotton fabric actually shrink?

Sandy: There's an industry standard of 5%. Nobody's cotton should shrink in excess of 5%, and Hoffman is well within that standard. Shrinkage is virtually unnoticeable in our fabrics, especially our batiks and hand-paints because the tighter the weave, the less shrinkage. The looser the weave, the more shrinkage you might experience.

There's also the fact that waxes are utilized on our batiks. Waxes are applied and then the wax is boiled off. If there is any shrinkage, it certainly is going to happen when the wax is boiled off. The fabric is immersed into scalding hot water.

Penny: That makes sense. We also heard that some fabric has an uneven thread count. There's a difference between the number of threads per inch on the straight grain versus the cross grain. You did say that Hoffman doesn't do that. Does it really make a difference in sewing and how can you tell?

Sandy: Ninety-five percent of our fabrics are even weave, with the exception that we do print and hand-dye on cotton poplin. Cotton poplin has been a very popular fabric for us.

I don't have the thread count of how many threads going in each direction. It is still a high thread count for both our screen prints, what screen prints we do print on poplin, and the hand-dyes our Bali watercolors are hand-dyed onto. There's not a big difference between our poplins and our even woven fabrics.

Penny: Is it really necessary to prewash fabrics? We talked about batiks. They're in boiling water, so they're probably not going to shrink. But for the rest of the fabrics, do you think it's necessary to prewash them?

Sandy: That certainly is what everybody says, prewash. I would definitely prewash if I was making a quilt that was ultimately going to be washed.

Officially, Hoffman recommends prewashing. Personally, I don't, especially if it's a quilt that's going to be a wall hanging. That's maybe a little more out of laziness

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

than anything. I don't want to iron afterward, not that it needs a whole lot of ironing. Usually I'm so anxious to dig in there and get started.

Prewashing is definitely recommended. Wash them as if they're going to be washed afterward. Certainly prewash if you are working with hand-dyed fabrics in particular, especially if you are combining bright colors with white fabrics within your quilt.

Wash like colors together. Don't be alarmed if you see that your tub water is discolored. Those are just exhausted dyes being released. Exhausted dyes are done. They're not going to attach themselves to any other fabrics.

If you're going to be making a quilt combining a bright blue with white, then certainly throw in a piece of white fabric in your wash water as you're prewashing. I just did a test washing a couple of days ago. I'm staring at my desk at a couple of swatches of white and bright blue fabric that were washed together. The white came out perfectly.

Don't be alarmed about any discolored water in your tub as you're doing the prewash.

I just use regular detergent. By regular detergent, I'm talking about Arm and Hammer. I usually buy the low-phosphate and more eco-friendly detergent. Those are what I use at home. They're a little bit gentler.

A lot of people recommend Orvus quilt soap to wash their quilts, but it all depends on the ultimate use of the project you're making. If it will be washed ahead of time, you should definitely prewash.

Penny: What causes the colors in some fabrics to bleed?

Sandy: Again, I'm speaking of the very few complaints and issues that have come up regarding some of our hand-dyes and considering how many millions of yards batiks and hand-dyes that we sell. Once in a blue moon, we get a phone call.

I hate to put the blame on anything, but it's almost always the way the person washed it to begin with. Number one, if you're prewashing, don't let the fabric just sit in a wet tub after all the water is spun out. Get it out of the tub and in the dryer right away.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

I've heard of instances where people take a swatch of fabric and soak it in hot water. Then they don't do anything. They just leave it to dry naturally. I'm not a believer in that. I believe that you need to get it in the dryer immediately.

Penny: I'm guilty of walking away and forgetting it.

Sandy: The dyes that we use are wet, fiber-reactive dyes. That goes for our screen prints and batiks. As far as our batiks go, we use the finest European dyes.

The only instance where we did have a problem was because our batik fabrics are created in an outdoor situation. They're made very primitively. They don't have dryers over there. The fabric isn't dyed in dryers. It's dried outside in the sun, laid out on big fields. It's the heat of the sun that actually sets the dyes.

Again, it is heat that is so important to actually setting the dyes. These are all created in Bali. They are prone to rainy seasons and monsoons. If the fabric is picked up too early and isn't allowed to dry thoroughly, then there could be a problem. It's very seldom.

Penny: You mentioned bright blue. Are there certain colors that bleed more than others?

Sandy: It is brighter colors like bright blue, red, and maybe purples. It's the stronger colors. The deeper, darker and more intense color may be more inclined to do so. You might see something. It's very minimal.

Penny: I used to hand dye fabrics. Yellow used to be a problem for me. It was weird. I had ongoing problems with the blues and purples. It seemed like I could wash and wash it and even use Synthropol and wait until the water was clear. I have one quilt with both purple and blue in it. Every time I wash it, it bleeds into the other fabrics and through to the back. It drives me crazy.

Sandy: It isn't Hoffman fabric.

Penny: No, it's one of my hand-dyed fabrics. I can't blame anybody but me. It's one of those things. I look at it and think, "There you go." I like the quilt, but that's the way it is.

Sandy: Products like Retayne and Synthropol are very valid. Fortunately, I've never had to personally use them. In the very rare situations where we do get a phone call

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

about something bleeding, I recommend that they use either Retayne or Synthropol. You should definitely do a pretest, and don't use it on a finished quilt.

Penny: Is there anything you've found that can be done to prevent bleeding? Is it just going to happen or not?

Sandy: Again, this is something that we don't have a big problem with. You can continue to wash in cold water.

That's another thing. I like my fabrics to continue to look the way they looked when I bought them. I believe that the way to do that is to wash in cold water. Definitely washing in cold water will help keep those colors vibrant and dramatic and prevent bleeding.

I don't have any experience using the detergents that are specifically made for bright colors. I can't speak on those. I think a product like Retayne will work. I don't have any experience with vinegar. I know that's often recommended. Personally, I've never tried it.

I do testing here at the office. We just use Tide. When I do a test, I use warm water. I never use hot water. I know Synthropol and Retayne recommend hot water. I don't recommend it at all.

Penny: That could be the problem with my quilt. I've always been told when I'm hand-dyeing stuff to use hot water to get all of the dye out. It could be that is the wrong strategy.

Sandy: I don't know. I think cold is the way to go to keep it bright, fresh and new looking.

Penny: Moving into fading, what causes some fabrics to fade?

Sandy: Direct sunlight is the most obvious cause. Perhaps improper washing with detergents that have bleaching agents or using extremely hot water can cause fading. Chlorine in pools can do it.

I think a little common sense has to come into play. I certainly think most of us don't look to deliberately cause what we're wearing or have made to fade. You need to keep quilts and things you've made out of direct sunlight.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

Penny: That leads to the next question about preventing fading. You need to take some of those precautions.

Sandy: I'm talking about 100% cotton fabrics. Obviously, nylons and polyesters are a different story. We don't deal that much with nylons and polyesters. I'm not that in-tune with them. Those are pretty much fade-resistant.

I think a lot of outdoor furniture cushions are probably made from nylon and polyester fabrics. The specific reason why those fabrics are used is that they are fade-resistant. Watch the sunlight. Have multiple quilts so you can keep changing the décor and prevent constant sunlight hitting the quilts that you've laid on your beds.

Penny: It's an excuse to make more quilts. Is there a difference in the dyes used by different fabric manufacturers?

Sandy: I can only speak for us. We use only wet, reactive, colorfast dyes that penetrate into the fibers of the cloth. That's all we use. There are pigment dyes that are used on other companies' fabrics. I don't think people actually use print with pigment dyes anymore. More of the fiber-reactive wet dyes that are used in our markets.

Penny: What's the difference?

Sandy: The wet dyes soak into the fibers. The pigment just sits on top. When I first started sewing as a teenager, I'd buy my fabric at department stores like JC Penney or Woolworths. Back then, especially old calicos had the print on just one side. If you looked at the back side, you didn't see any of the print. That was a pigment print.

Penny: At the quilt shops I go to, there is a decent amount of fabric that looks like that. I've always wondered what the difference is and why that happens.

Sandy: If you go to the quilt shops and look at the right side and the wrong side, you can tell. There is an obvious difference. If it was pigment printed, it would have the print on one side. It would almost be like a solid natural. You wouldn't see any evidence of the right side of the fabric on the back at all.

Some garment manufacturers that we sell to request pigment printing. It's used more as an accent. If they garment wash their product and some of that pigment

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

kind of fades out, it gives them a distressed look that they actually want. Those instances are few and far between.

I'm pretty confident that everybody in our market uses wet, fiber-reactive dyes.

Penny: What types of soaps or detergents should we use to launder our quilts?

Sandy: As I mentioned before, Orvus quilt soap is highly recommended. We use Tide here. That's probably as heavy duty as you would want to go. You certainly don't want to use anything that has any bleaching agents in it. Again, I recommend no or low phosphates. Those are the eco-friendly brands. Planet is the one that I usually get.

I can't say yes or no on Woolite. I know that name comes up, but I really have no opinion or knowledge of it.

Penny: I heard years ago that it was something to stay away from, but I've never talked to anybody about it. It's really just a rumor.

Sandy: We don't recommend that you dry clean, either. I'm not quite sure what they use in dry-cleaning agents.

Penny: Is there a difference between your batik and hand-painted fabrics?

Sandy: Yes. A batik fabric is anything where they utilize wax to achieve a design. It can be a flower or leaf. We're coming out with some new batik with a peace symbol. The art department starts with a black-and-white drawing. They give instructions to our plant in Bali as far as, "These colors are to go in the black area and these go in the white area."

A batik will often start as a hand-painted fabric. They apply dye with sponges to the plain white cloth and scrunch it up to create the texture that we love, and then let that dry.

From the black-and-white drawing that our artists come up with, someone in Bali creates a copper chop that emulates the design. The chop is dipped in wax and stamped throughout that piece of fabric.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

Once the wax hardens, they will over-dye the fabric again. Anywhere that there is no wax will take that second application of dye. The areas underneath the wax will remain as they were from the initial dye step.

Some of our batiks go through as many as five different steps before we get the finished look we want.

Penny: How big is the piece of fabric they're working with?

Sandy: For the most part, they are working on 16- to 18-yard lengths. It's not like a regular machine-printed screen print where they print anywhere from 600 to 1,000 yards all at one time. Because each yard is made with human hands, they're limited to the piece size.

Penny: Is 16 yards what goes on a bolt?

Sandy: Yes.

Penny: Wow! Those guys are busy.

Sandy: Yes. They are very busy. They're amazing.

Penny: Do the people in Bali have design capability as well, or do all the designs come from California?

Sandy: The majority of the designs do come from our art department. However, the people in Bali that have been producing these gorgeous fabrics for centuries certainly are experts as well. We would be open to any suggestions.

As far as hand-paints go, they are constantly coming up with new techniques and developments. They will often use salt or sodas and different compounds to achieve a different look. Something can have a very grainy look or more of an oilier look. It all depends on the compound they put on the fabric.

Penny: They would put that on the fabric before they put it in the dye?

Sandy: No. I believe it goes on after the dye is applied. They apply the dye, scrunch it, and then apply the salt or sodas. Then you can virtually watch the dyes move as the salt and sodas are applied.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

Penny: Have you been able to go out and watch them do it?

Sandy: I have not. I would love to.

Penny: Could you tell us a little more about the design process? How is it designed? Who designs it? I know you have some quilters that give you input. How does that whole process work?

Sandy: We work with a lot of fabulous quilters. Judy Niemeyer uses Hoffman batiks exclusively. We work with the girls from Fourth & Sixth Designs in New York and Pennsylvania. McKenna Ryan from Pine Needle Patterns has been using Hoffman Fabrics exclusively forever. Letitia Hutchings from Mount Readoubt Designs in Alaska uses Hoffman Fabrics exclusively.

We take their suggestions into consideration, but it is our design department that comes up with the majority of the ideas. It is a collaboration between our design department and the people in Bali.

It all starts from a black-and-white etching or sketch. The copper chops are produced, and then they go to town.

Penny: How long does it take from design to production?

Sandy: Working backward, we always come out with two strong Bali batik collections a year. They're always introduced at our wholesale Quilt Market. We're getting ready for one in the next couple of weeks in Houston.

Today we received all the designs we are going to preview at this market. The design work was sent in five to six months ago. Right now, they are working on the Christmas batiks we are coming out with in January or February of next year. It is a good five to six months for the whole process.

Penny: Once they have settled on the design and print, do they actually start some kind of production or do you wait until the orders come in? How does that work?

Sandy: In the interim, they send blankets. Blankets are small swatches that are about three quarters of a yard. They're little test pieces of our designs and the colors we've instructed them to use. We go through and make a selection.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

We receive 30 to 40 yards of our selections rolled on a tube. We probably receive close to 500 different possibilities that we have to go through and pick out the crème de la crème to sell at Quilt Market. We take 500 possibilities and narrow it down to about 150.

Penny: Some of the designs never see market.

Sandy: Yes, for one reason or another. It may not be the right season. Maybe it's something we want to consider for a later release.

We're going to sell them here in a couple of weeks. The stores that are purchasing the fabrics at Quilt Market and shortly after are going to be given a March or April delivery date. They're buying at the end of October, yet the goods will not be shipped until March or April of next year.

Penny: They're waiting to produce these. They produce X yards of fabric based on the orders. That would explain why if a quilt shop runs out of fabric, their ability to purchase additional bolts is limited.

Sandy: Not really. When we print a screen print, we have to print 3,000 yards. Those 3,000 yards can be broken up into different colorways. It's that we have to print a specific design 3,000 yards.

With Bali, we have a much smaller minimum of 500 yards. With a smaller minimum with our supplier, we can keep on reprinting, rebatiking and redesigning a particular fabric. Our Balis tend to stay in our line a little longer than our screen prints.

We also do a lot of custom batiks for our customers. In the event that they are having a shop hop, they will come to Hoffman and ask us to print. Being that they feel confident, they get a group of stores together involved in a shop hop. They come up with a design that probably relates to their area. For example, we did one for a group of stores in Texas with a blue bonnet on it.

Stores can come to us and easily place an order of 500 yards, divide it by 10 stores, and that goes pretty quickly. That is a custom design that is theirs exclusively. We do quite a bit of that.

Penny: Where do you buy your gray goods?

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

Sandy: The gray goods come from Southeast Asia. The actual weaving of the goods is done right there in Indonesia for our batiks. For our screen prints, Thailand is where the cotton is grown. Korea and Japan are where they are printed.

Penny: Could you tell us a little about the Hoffman Challenge? What is that all about? How does that work?

Sandy: That's been amazing. We're entering our 22nd year. It all started with two very well-known quilters, Betty Boyink and Hollis Turnbow, who were at a show or guild. Even though they lived in separate states, they somehow came together lecturing in a room full of quilters.

There was an undesirable Hoffman fabric that they saw. The fabric was unusual. They challenged themselves and the quilters in there to enter this challenge. It has grown immensely over the years.

Quilters have the option of entering a patchwork-quilted or appliquéd wall hanging, a wearable art garment, a doll or accessories. The accessory category was added a couple of years ago. Each year, one specific fabric has been selected from our line. They do need to use a significant amount of that fabric. You can go to www.HoffmanChallenge.com to get more details.

All the entries come into Kelly Gallagher-Abbott, the curator of the Hoffman Challenge, where she and a crew will pre-jury all the entries. Then certified judges will come in and award first, second and third prizes. Then there are Honorable Mention, Curator's Choice, and a broad range of prizes.

Beyond the prize winners, there are traveling selections as well. Well over 500 entries travel. They are broken up into 10 to 12 different trunk shows that travel all over the US and Canada. Quilt guilds bring a particular trunk in. It can be a store, a quilt show or anywhere where someone would like to see what beautiful and creative things our quilters come up with.

Right now, Sulky has just signed on to be a cosponsor. We're very excited and proud of that.

Penny: You'll have interesting threads now.

Sandy: There's a new prize category, "The Best Use of Sulky Thread." It's quite diversified as far as the prizes go. You have a lot of potential to win something,

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

as opposed to other quilt contests where just a few people win big dollars. Here, you really have a good chance to win something.

Penny: That's very cool. Presumably, they pick not the most undesirable fabric in the whole world.

Sandy: No, not anymore.

Penny: How do they go about choosing the fabric?

Sandy: It gets tougher every year. There's a committee here. We try not to duplicate. We just try to find something in our line that we think will be pleasing to the masses and different from anything we've done in the Hoffman Challenge before.

Currently, we have a gorgeous paisley. It has very intricate designs and is very intricately printed in neutral tones. We've never done anything like that. Usually, Hoffman is known for our brighter, wilder designs and colorations. This is very sophisticated and a bit muted for Hoffman, but it's been very well-received.

It gets tougher every year. We say, "Okay, we've done a butterfly. We've done Asian. We've done kimonos. We've done this and that." It's a challenge to come up with the Challenge.

Penny: What's the timeframe on that?

Sandy: The new Challenge is usually announced sometime in August. The new one was announced just this past August. Our first shipments of the fabric will be leaving our warehouse starting this month and continuing on into December and January. The quilters, doll makers, garment makers, etc. have until mid-July to finish, enter it and get it to Kelly.

Penny: You have almost a year to think about it and do something.

Sandy: Yes, you have plenty of time. It's exciting. It's a great environment here. It's very creative. I feel very blessed to be here in beautiful Orange County, California.

Penny: It sounds like it. How many people work in your building?

Sandy: There are roughly 70.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

Penny: It's a nice-sized group.

Sandy: It's a family business. It's not only blood family, but they treat everybody like extended family. A lot of employees have been here for 30 years or more. We feel very blessed to be in this area and to be around the creativity. It is very creative and very eccentric.

The company is owned by two brothers, Walter and Philip Hoffman. They're characters, very salty-dog surfers. The two of them are just as well-known for their surfing abilities as for their fabrics. Both were inducted into the Surfing Walk of Fame a year or so ago.

Walter is a former world-champion surfer. His daughter Joyce was the first women's world champion surfer. Children and grandchildren surf all over the world. It was actually on a surfing trip to Bali that Philip and Walter came upon the hand-dyed and batik fabrics.

Penny: So they not only run it, but they are there running it hands on.

Sandy: Right now, we have three generations.

Penny: That's the end of our formal questions. The gal from Europe had a question about mixing used fabric with new fabric. This is a general quilting question.

She has fabric that she got at a Red Cross store or somewhere like that. It had been used for curtains, so it's presumably relatively good-quality fabric. When you mix a used fabric like that with a new fabric, is there anything you should keep in mind?

Sandy: Is she making something utilitarian? Is she making a quilt that's going to be on the bed? If it's going to be an art piece, it would be fabulous. The combination would be really unique and dramatic. It all depends on the quality of that used fabric. The quality of fabrics today exceeds where we used to be.

Again, if she's creating a unique piece of artwork, then definitely it would be a fabulous idea.

Penny: I'm going to open it up now for questions from our eavesdropping quilters. If you want to ask a question, speak up.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

- Participant: What do you do with the blankets that are not used?
- Sandy: They're stored in a library area here. We want to hang on to everything. We have a piece of everything we've ever created or offered here at our warehouse in Mission Viejo. We hold on to it because it may not be the right moment at this point, but you never know down the road. We want to hang on to every possible colorway and design idea.
- Penny: Do you store the ones you have used in a separate place from the ones you haven't used?
- Sandy: We have it pretty organized as far as what we're actually selling and what is for consideration later. We definitely have to keep them separated. Our hand-dyes are in one area. Hand-paints are in another area. Batiks are in yet another. It's like many of our closets, although not mine. A lot of people's closets are organized. Their fabric stash is organized. We have it pretty together there.
- Participant: When we go to a fabric store, how would we know what is Hoffman fabric?
- Sandy: I often hear quilters say that they can tell a Hoffman fabric from across the room.
- Participant: I'm new at quilting, so I wouldn't know.
- Sandy: Anything unusual is definitely Hoffman. I don't know your experience in knowing the difference between a batik fabric and a screen-printed fabric, but we pretty much have the market on the batiks. Your quilt store will probably have a majority of Hoffman fabrics in the batik section.
- Penny: Are they all marked in some way?
- Sandy: There is a label on the bolt that indicates that it is a Hoffman. The best way is to say that whatever is unusual, colorful, well-printed and absolutely beautiful is a Hoffman.
- Penny: Their website is fantastic. It has quite large pictures of each one of their fabrics. You might want to take a trip to www.HoffmanFabrics.com and just start looking through there. You'll get a sense of what it is.
- Participant: You made a comment about not dry cleaning your quilt. With the quilts that I have made, most of the material is dry-cleanable because I'm using pieces. I'm

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

new at quilting. I have all this material. I made these fantastic, beautiful quilts. They're on my website. I don't send them to the dry cleaner to have them cleaned.

Sandy: Are they all 100% cotton?

Participant: Yes. I just bought the kit to put them in my dryer and clean them. You don't clean them that often anyway, maybe once every couple of years. They did turn out really beautifully.

Sandy: Different dry cleaners use different compounds and solvents. There really isn't a lot of consistency. You just don't know what can happen. If it's made out of a cotton fabric, it's washable. It doesn't need to be dry-cleaned.

We have had instances, many years ago, where someone did take a garment made out of one of our fabrics that had gold metallic on it and the dry-cleaning solution turned the metallic green.

Participant: I'm doing a baby quilt for this lady. She washed all her blocks.

Sandy: You don't want to wash the blocks.

Participant: I tried to tell her that.

Sandy: Why would she wash the blocks?

Participant: She did cross-stitch on the blocks. She didn't want to leave that marking on there. I told her it would dissolve. I told her the other day not to bring me any more if she's going to wash them. They're all distorted and uneven.

Sandy: Did she do them in the washing machine?

Participant: She said she did them by hand. They're all stretched out. I have a job trying to square them off.

Sandy: She should have at least zigzagged around the edge. Did she think about doing that?

Participant: I'll tell her that. I don't even think she sews.

EAVESDROP ON A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OCTOBER 9, 2008
Penny Halgren with special guest, Sandy Muckenthaler

- Sandy: You definitely don't want to wash your blocks.
- Participant: The blocks were washed, but I didn't wash the rest of the material.
- Sandy: I would recommend that you do wash the rest of the material. If that material is going to be combined with the washed blocks, you should go ahead and wash the fabric.
- Participant: Thank you very much. This is so helpful. It was a wonderful conversation. I loved it.
- Penny: Thank you very much, Sandy, and thank you, eavesdropping quilters. This was a great call with some great information. If you'd like to get your own recording of the call, you can still get it at the early-bird price by going to www.How-to-Quilt.com/eavesdrop-hoffman.

On October 23, Sylvia Landman-Rasmussen, a quilter and copyright expert, is going to join us on our call. Be thinking about what inquiring quilting minds want to know so we can put together a list of questions for her.

Until next time, happy quilting!