

lori mason



Portland, Oregon-based textile artist **Lori Mason** returns to the pages of *What Women Create* with a story that beautifully illustrates the lasting connections creative work can spark. First featured in the Winter 2021 issue for her memorial quilts, Mason reflects on an unexpected full-circle moment when a reader who saved that article for years eventually commissioned a quilt to honor her late husband.



Lori Mason established Lori Mason Design in the late 90s after working as a textile designer for Nike. She found a beautiful studio in industrial Portland, Oregon, set up shop, and launched her first line of contemporary quilts. She later resurrected her paints and brushes to design prints again, and in recent years has come full circle back to quilts, focusing on memorial quilts and quilts that honor life events. The meaningful relationships developed with clients while creating these special quilts reflect the sacred nature of this work.

the work that waited

In the Winter 2021 issue of *What Women Create*, I was a featured artist. The article shared my memorial quilts and how I came to make them, including how I sit with clients, listen to their stories about their lost loved ones, and allow those memories to guide each design. Being featured felt like a meaningful milestone. I didn't yet understand it was also the beginning of something quietly unfolding.

A few months after the issue was published, I received an email from a woman named Tricia Cecil. She told me she had picked up the magazine on a whim at the grocery store. Something about it caught her attention, and she placed it in her cart. Reading my story deeply moved her. She wrote to tell me she had cut the article out and placed it in a file in case she ever needed it.

I thanked her and returned to my studio. As artists, we share our work with the world, often without knowing where it will land. The glossy pages and sense of visibility that accompany a magazine feature feel delightfully significant, and then life continues.

More than four years passed. Then another email arrived.

I had not forgotten Tricia's kind message from years past and was saddened to hear her beloved husband, Allan, had died. She wanted to send his clothing for a memorial quilt.





t here is a steadiness that comes when someone is truly ready for this kind of project.

Grief cannot be rushed. When we spoke, there was clarity alongside her sorrow. She expressed deep trust in me as an artist while also sharing thoughtful preferences about color and design. That combination of trust and participation made her an ideal collaborator. I believe our alignment stemmed, in part, from the fact that she had allowed the idea of a quilt like this to percolate in the back of her mind for several years.

Soon, a large box arrived at my studio. Inside were the garments of a full and layered life. Allan had served as a public information officer in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War, an experience that shaped his professional direction. He went on to build a long career in investor and corporate communications. He was born and raised in Oklahoma, a proud alumnus of the University of Oklahoma, and a devoted Sooners football fan.

As I sorted through the clothing, two distinct stories emerged. On one side were his Brooks Brothers button-down shirts, crisp and pressed, the uniform of his professional life. Many fell naturally into a red or blue grouping, offering fun color pairing options. On the other side were his relaxed clothes: worn corduroy pants, softened denim shirts, favorite jeans, and OU Sooners apparel from games he and Tricia had attended together.

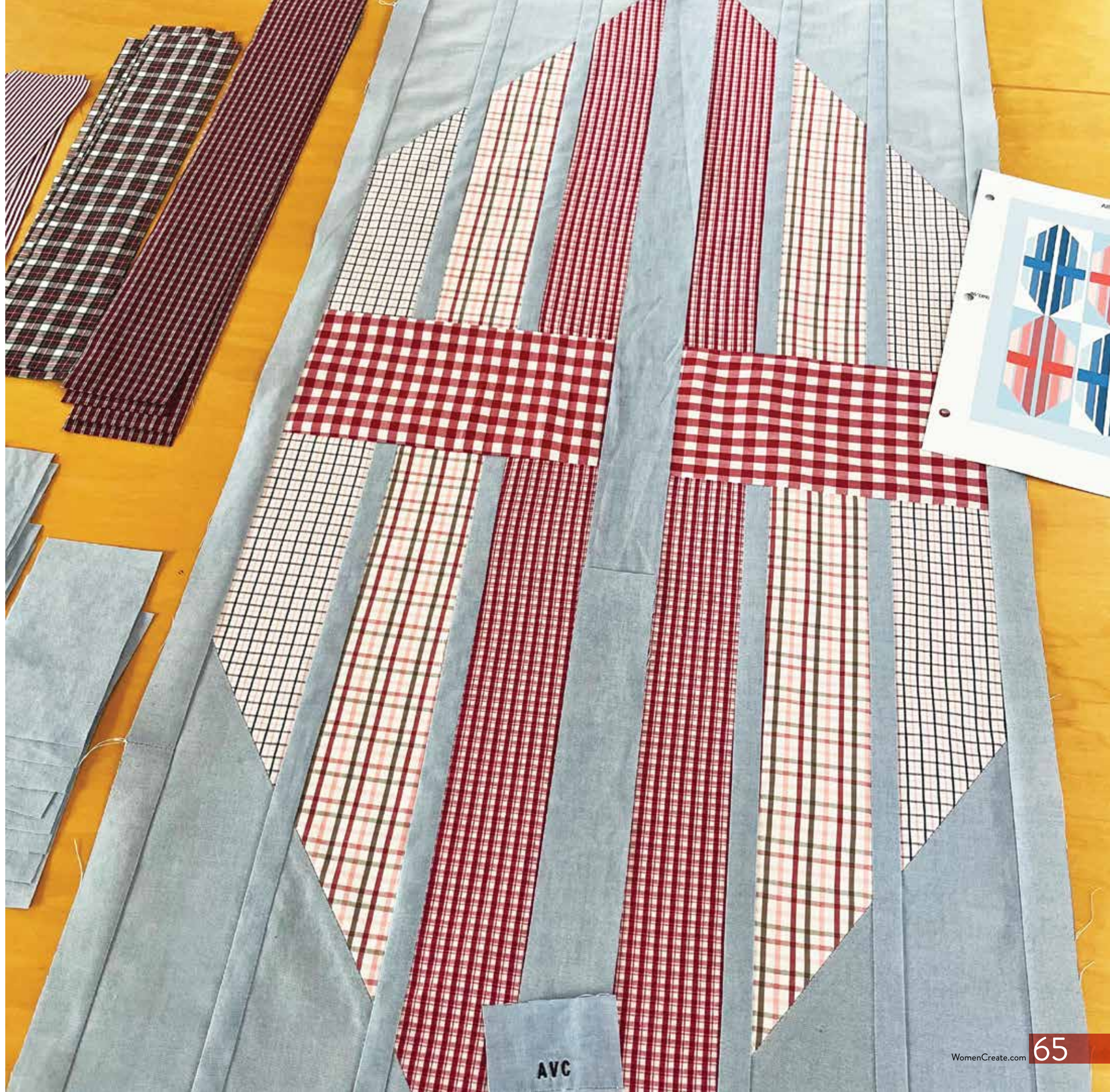
The clothing divided itself into two worlds—public and private, polished and personal. I suggested we create a two-sided quilt to honor both, and Tricia loved the idea.





For the front design, I returned to Allan's Air Force service. Rather than incorporate literal symbols, I studied Air Force insignia and was drawn to the winged emblems both for their geometry as well as their symbolism. I abstracted that winged shape into large blocks to anchor the composition. The result felt ordered and grounded, echoing both his military service and Tricia's preference for symmetry. The reds, whites, and blues of his dress shirts created a nice balance within the design, reinforcing a nod to his service without overt imagery.

Tricia had also shared some sweet personal details that guided my design decisions. She told me that she and Allan both loved gingham. She had sent some of his favorites, and I made sure their cheerful checks held a prominent place in the quilt top. I also carefully removed several of Allan's small monograms from his shirt pockets and resewed them into select blocks, allowing them to remain quiet, subtle markers.





the back of the quilt told another story. Incorporating the OU Sooners shirts required

thoughtful planning; each graphic was a different size, and the knit fabrics needed stabilization before piecing. I combined them with panels of corduroy and denim, preserving the softness of his more relaxed clothing. The underside became tactile and comforting, a contrast to the front's formality.

Tricia told me she planned to sleep with that softer side facing her so she could feel the closeness of those familiar textures. Their dog, Ladybug, sensed Allan's essence there too, curling against the recombined fabrics for her daily nap.

When I finished the quilt, I stepped back and appreciated the way Allan's story integrated with the design. It was not simply a merging of garments; it was the translation of a life. Service and structure on one side, comfort and companionship on the other.

What stays with me most, however, is the arc of time that made it possible. If Tricia had not picked up that issue of *What Women Create* on

impulse, had not torn out those pages and saved them, this quilt would not exist. The connection between us depended on instinctive patience. It depended on a publication committed to sharing the work of women artists. It depended on a reader who trusted her intuition enough to hold onto a story. And it depended on time unfolding at its own pace, allowing grief and trust to meet at exactly the moment they could work together.

Looking back, I no longer attribute that Winter 2021 feature as a stand-alone milestone. I see it as a thread, one that meandered quietly over four years before returning to my studio as a box of clothing, a love story, and a quilt that now wraps around the woman who saved those pages.

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Lori

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