

Mother's quilt blanket - May 2024. (Final draft)

I held that worn-out blanket in my hands. It was frayed and torn in many places. Now how long had I owned this blanket? Maybe thirty years or more. Many times I told myself, *It has served its purpose and can now be discarded.* And just as many times, I washed it again and put it back on my bed.

This worn-out quilt blanket has accompanied me all these years, the cold lonely nights when I cried myself to sleep and the happy times when we children held our pillow fights. And this is one of the most precious handiworks that she left me.

We were very poor then. Mum collected scraps of unused fabric from neighbours and friends, and began the tedious work of joining them together into a quilt blanket for her children. It was a time-consuming task and mum only had the late-night hours to work at it. We had no help and no electrical convenience, and she cooked, washed all the clothes by hand, did everything and anything around the house to take care of four hyperactive kids. Work was hard to come by and dad had to go out daily to find employment to feed us.

When my mum handed me my quilt blanket, I was upset and refused to use it. Imagine a mix of chaotic clashing colours, odd shapes of cloths pieced haphazardly together, no special design or pattern... It was totally ugly. I asked why I could not get a decent blanket like my friends. To me this was a glaring sign of poverty.

Mum did a similar patch work on my uniform. To save money, she took a piece of new uniform cloth and patched over the big hole at the back of my pinafore. It caused me great embarrassment to wear that 'patched up' uniform, because the kids in school and in my neighbourhood would always tease me about my special attire. I had to endure it for a while before I outgrew that uniform.

This quilt blanket together with my patched-up uniform was a stark reminder of our poverty.

And my heart rejected the ugly blanket. I totally disregarded Mum's love and patience in making this quilt blanket for her children. I must have pierced her heart with my insensitive

and harsh words. Her only reply to me was to use it to keep warm. I don't recall her even scolding me for such rudeness.

Over the years, with the wisdom of age and experience, I can fully appreciate the deep love and care of a simple lady who just did what she could to provide and care for her family. And Mum was no ordinary woman, but a strong and resourceful female who left her home in China years ago to journey to Singapore in search of a better life, who had overcome life's difficulties.

Mum is no longer around. Now that I am older, this quilt blanket still keeps me warm.

Ng Lai Lin /May 2024