

*I've been thinking of a new nickname for myself. I'm not quite sure what to use but I like the concept of the fearless quilter. And why am I fearless? Two reasons: 1. is I know there will be other quilts down the road that will be better and 2. because I also believe that with each and every stitch I'm improving and I'm dying to share with you today some cool skills and drills to get you into some free motion machine quilting on like some flames and like some disco dot kind of clamshells. So follow along.*

*If you've never free motion machine quilted before I have to warn you, you will break thread, you will break needles, you will skip stitches, you will shred your threads. And there is a reason why and a lot of it relates to the way your machine is set up and your body mechanics. So we've got a really cool quick tips video that really explains in detail what we've done with our little compass for quilters here. That talks about the way you can control your body mechanics to help you prevent some of those things. Now like I said it happens to all of us, me included. But as I continue to practice, I continue to improve. So today's skills and drills is going to be working through some flames. Check these out. Here. I'm going to teach you how to do these flames. And I don't even know what to call this stuff but I absolutely love it. It's like a clamshell and a swirl and a disco dot all at the same time. And it really focuses on being able to make a nice arc and a sharp point. So we have other tutorials out there that will work you through some of those basics.*

*Now in the description below we have a couple of printouts you can use. This shows how to use both a soft curve and a sharp curve. And that's going to be really important for our flames. And then I also have a really fun one here that is kind of like rainbows gone wild. Maybe that will be the new name of the motif, right? So I'm going to teach you how to make that. But I want to point out real quick. The little triangles are showing you the motion in which you would be stitching or tracing these so that you can practice the skill. And the key to this one in specific is being able to make a sharp point and then a wide point. And I'm going to walk you through that here at the machine in just a second.*

*So first thing we want to do is we want to go ahead and ourselves, oh let's get ourselves a fresh sandwich for that matter because I want to be able to show you this stuff as we move along here. Now a lot of you have been practicing your basic curved motion and that's really important here. And I'm sliding on my gloves. These are the Machinger's gloves that have a nice grippy tip in the finger so it's going to give me the opportunity to control the quilt sandwich with my finger tips, not gripping it and squeezing it, causing my body to fatigue, right? And we are starting on this basic little sandwich but I'm going to show you how to do this on a big quilt here in a*

*moment as well. I'm going to make sure my presser foot is down, my feed dogs are down. I have a cool Sew Slip mat which makes the bed of my machine like butter.*

*And first of all we're going to start down at the bottom where all, remember we're starting on flames. So I'm starting down here at the bottom. I've used a thread cutter so I'm just going to take a few stitches in place to lock in that thread. I need to trim the tail on that on the back later on. And now I'm going to come up here like I'm in my soft arc. And the first thing I want to point out is when you're doing arcs, is it's difficult to find a good start and stop point so flames, the tip where that point comes together is a really good place to stop if I need to trim threads, catch my breath, move my hands. So this is the beginning of our flame. And we're coming right back down. We'll follow that line of that sharp tip. And now we're doing our swirl. And the key is now I'm coming above that first hook and almost the same direction, and again. One of the things I have found out for myself is that flames really require us to be able to stitch both left and right in kind of a uniform mode. So here I'm going to come this way down from the bottom. Make a sharp curve on this side. And now I'm going to follow that stitch. I'm following that stitch line back around. And then I'm going to break wide for another flame tip. Down at the bottom we're going to have a couple of small flames so that we can work our way towards our next big one. And we're going to come up here, another tip. And then like the real flames on a fire, of course they're never symmetrical from flame to flame. Now you can see my stitch length is nice right now it's a little harder for me to talk about it while I'm doing it. But in order to get nice even stitches is a rhythm between our hand speed and the machine speed. So big stitches come from really fast hands. Small stitches come from really slow hands. And there's our machine coming all together, just like that. To the tip of the flame and there we have our flame for the very first time. I'm going to use that thread cutter to pull it out. And there you can see from the top cam angle how uniform but asymmetrical the flames are. And I'm just going to point out, there's the sharp point and the nice long arc. Now let's break down some of those disco swirls, the rainbows gone mad for you.*

*Now for the rainbows gone wild, obviously still working on the name of this motif. The key is, as I was trying to point out earlier, is the sharp points and then keeping it wide as we come to the other side. It will make more sense as I'm actually sewing it. But also a variety of sizes is what I really feel like and a variety of different directions. So this isn't going to be a real linear design. This is a great filler style motif. Where the flames are a great linear design if you're working on borders or in big blocks, something like that. So let's start talking about our rainbows gone wild. I think that's the name that's going to stick with us today here. And again for that, I've used my*

thread cutter so I'm going to have a hard time bringing up the thread tail. If you don't know what I'm talking about though, what you can always do is you can take a single stitch, drop your needle down, pull up slightly. Sometimes if you even move the thread, er excuse me, move your quilt just ever so lightly. I was able to get that bobbin tail there. So now I have both threads on the top there, which is really the best way to stop and start any of your free motion quilting because you can take a few stitches like this to lock it in place. And now I'm just going to come into what will be a point so I can stop. And I can come back and trim out those thread tails like that. Now for this particular design, I usually start on a seam allowance between two blocks so that I have a good start and stop point for my first arch. I could run another arch through this if it was visually bothering me. So that now this becomes my arch. So now I'm a point and I'm coming back around and I'm staying wide. But that becomes a point back around here to what would be wide and maybe another point. I seem to do these in a series of three different arches. And then from here I'm going to go on to shape another direction. Oh I've got this thread that's driving me nuts. That's how good the grip is on my gloves here. Now from here I'm going to point. And you saw me on the first one going around the outside. I don't have to always go around the outside. You saw me jump to the inside here. But I still want that tip. And now I'm going wide. And here's a cool trick if you ever have stitched yourself into a corner, watch. I'm going to follow that motif I already designed back to a good way to get out of here. Now I'm just going to start laying these down. I like the way this creates kind of a three dimensional look. And you'll also notice the pace of the machine here. I'm running a little slower because I really want to keep a nice feeling of symmetry between that point and the wide side. The point and the wide side. And you can see I'm starting to get kind of the same direction, er same size. So watch this I'm just going to throw a big one out. And it's the loft that's left behind in the center that I'm so attracted to. So getting big swoops and small swoops together really help the effect. And now that you're starting to get a feel for the design and a feel for the motif, let me pop my big quilt, that sampler quilt we've been working on for a while, underneath the needle and show you what it's like on a big project. It's no more difficult, you just have a lot more fun space to work in. Oh and another great place, we're talking about starts and stops, this is a great place to stop right in here too. So if I was stopping, I could take a couple of stitches in place. And then I could either bring my needle all the way up and pull this. And if you look really close right here you can actually the white of my bobbin thread. So if I snip that knot, I've actually freed the bobbin thread as well. So that's another neat trick to show you there. So that has a great start and a great stop on this particular piece. And so therefore all of my thread tails are on the top which is a much easier way to do the machine quilting. Now I'm going to lift that presser foot up. Get everything out of the way.

*And now we're going to take our sampler quilt. And I apologize there's no pattern for this quilt, yet. It's just a bunch of fun squares from other tutorials we've done here at Man Sewing such as Three Dudes modified, or this is the Slice a Block right here, ok? And now I have worked this whole quilt I have been quilting on my Baby Lock Jane so that it's a legitimate test. And I'm focusing just in one section of the quilt at a time. I've quilted a lot of this over here. So even though I've got it rolled with my bicycle clips still, I don't need the big roll in the machine right now because I just want to quilt in this area. Now if you look closely, it is one of my favorite motifs. So here you can see all of these swirls and the rainbows gone wild coming together. And a lot of times I actually use it to transition between other quilting motifs as well.*

*So as I seated myself here, I'm getting myself comfortable. A couple of other things I want to point out. I'm working from the areas that I've already been quilting in away from the center of the quilt. And because I've quilted enough in this area, I'm almost to the point where I can pop this safety pin out. The safety pin is holding all the layers together. And I do not want to quilt too close to that safety pin because of the fear of breaking the needle or the machine by hitting the pin. So for this let's do some micro flames just for fun in this gray area here. And then I'm going to go right from the micro flames into the swirls. And you can just sit back and watch along. Here we go. Foot down. Taking a few stitches to lock in. I can pull that bobbin thread up and grab it real quick.*

*And here we go. Stopping at the tip so that I can cut this thread tail so it's not part of the project for the rest of its life. And we're going to go into our micro flames. And a lot of the control right now is just coming out of my finger tips. So even though I have a twin size bed quilt on the bed of the machine, I am only moving a few inches worth of the quilt right now. So I'm not feeling either overwhelmed mentally or physically. I will say though we shouldn't quilt past the point of fatigue. So if my shoulders or my neck was starting to really get sore, I would want to stop so that I'm not making less than attractive stitches. Because once we fatigue, it's all going downhill from there for the rest of the day. So here I am playing with my micro flames, having a blast. But as I come down to this section maybe I want to get into those rainbows gone wild we're calling them. So I actually pulled off a circle out of that flame and now because those rainbows gone wild were on the other side, here we go again. I want a little bit bigger arc so I have my point. That's what I'm talking about with a seam allowance. Back to my wide and here we go. I just absolutely love the zen that I find myself in when I'm machine quilting. It's actually to a point where it's actually just difficult to talk about what I'm doing. So I'm just going to be quiet and let you enjoy the stitching for a few minutes here.*

*So for me in my art work and my design work as a quilt maker and a machine quilter, I love the curves. I love the swoops and the swirls. I think it adds a lot because I do a lot of patch work and there's straight lines there while I'm working so I like the variety of what we're doing.*

*Today's skill drills were really about again the flames and what the flames were important is I want you to start practicing being able to do what you do on one side being able to do it equal on the other. And I don't know that I nailed that information while we were dealing with it. But that's the key in the flames is being able to symmetrically be able to move on both sides of an imaginary straight line. And then again, the rainbows gone while, well does it get any better than that? Super fun, super easy. A great filler. Now make sure you print your printables out. You draw on top of them. You sew on top of them. Do whatever you've got to do to get your skills built up so that we can keep playing along. And we'll see you next time at Man Sewing.*