

HOW TO

Repairing and storing an old quilt

BY JEANNE HUBER

Q I have a quilt that was made by my grandmother and is very old. Parts are frayed. I want to have it repaired. Is that a good idea, or is it better left worn and stored away in my cedar chest? Is there someone in the area who can do this kind of work?

From the Home Front chat

A Quilts from your grandmother's era were usually made to put fabric scraps to good use. If a part frayed, there was no big debate about what to do: The homemaker just mended it. So mending might indeed be the way to go on your quilt, especially if you want to continue using it.

Given your quilt's high sentimental

value, you might want to start by consulting a professional conservator trained in assessing and repairing fabrics. The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works has a "Find a Conservator" service at www.conservation-us.org. It lets you search by area for people who specialize in various fields. The listings include six antique quilt specialists within 50 miles of Washington.


One of them is Julia M. Brennan, owner of Caring for Textiles (202-362-1941, www.caringfortextiles.com), a D.C. company that works on textiles from throughout the United States and abroad. She gives free quotes.


Brennan often prepares antique quilts for use as wall hangings or for display in boxes or frames. "If a quilt is just too

fragile and cannot be left out and enjoyed, then I recommend that it is stored in a cool, dry place in the home," she says.

Avoid the attic or basement. If you use a cedar chest, line it with a washed cotton sheet so acids in the wood don't leach into the fabric. Storing a quilt in an acid-free box or even a drawer also works well. Fold the quilt like a fan and pad the folds with acid-free tissue paper to eliminate creasing, then wrap the whole assembly in a clean sheet or muslin.

You can buy acid-free tissue paper and boxes at the Container Store or online from conservation suppliers such as University Products (www.universityproducts.com) and Gaylord Bros. (www.gaylord.com).

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 **The Checklist** Read Jeanne Huber's roundup of home-improvement tasks you should tackle in May, such as cleaning or buying a dehumidifier, at washingtonpost.com/home.

