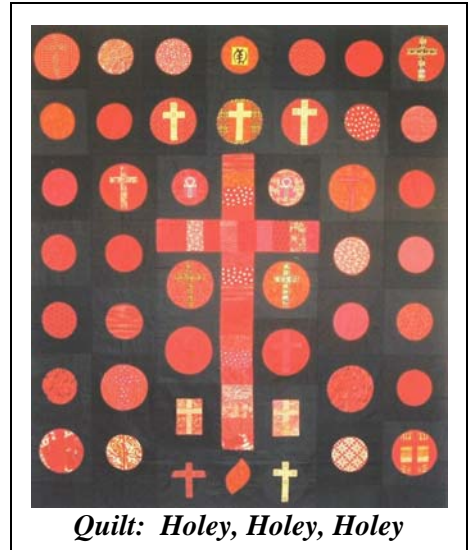




## Sylvia G. Stephens

**Apprentice Quilter**  
to her mother  
**Mozell (Stephens) Benson**  
2001 National Heritage Fellow

Opelika, Alabama



*Quilt: Holey, Holey, Holey*

Born at her aunt's home in Opelika, Alabama, Sylvia Gail Stephens, the oldest of ten children, is a mother and grandmother, a retired military officer, an Alabama inventor and a quilter. She grew up in Waverly, Alabama, and attended Lee County Training and Boykin Street Elementary Schools in Auburn, Alabama, and Opp (Alabama) Elementary School. She began her junior high school years at Woodson High School in Andalusia, Alabama, and graduated from J. W. Darden High School in Opelika.

Sylvia was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from Auburn University, Alabama. She also earned a Masters degree in Public Administration from Troy State University, Alabama.

Sylvia retired from the United States Air Force where she spent most of her professional career as a commissioned military public affairs officer. She served this nation in U.S. and overseas military assignments at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana; Ramstein Air Base, West Germany; Soesterberg Air Base, The Netherlands and at the Pentagon in the Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs.

After retirement, Sylvia moved to Atlanta, Georgia, and worked in the Communications Department for the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games. After "The Games" were over, she returned to the Northern Virginia-Washington, D.C. area where she was employed as the chief of staff for the Corporate Council on Africa and as a technical writer and trainer until 2002 when she moved back to Opelika.

Today, Sylvia resides in Opelika and works to market her home business, **chismo™** Adjustable Bookmarks. She also works as a freelance technical writer and editor. She completed training as an "apprentice quilter" to her mother who received honors as a "Master Artist" for her quilts from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts." She studied as an apprentice to her mother under the Alabama State Council on the Arts, Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program and is teaching other family members to quilt.

Sylvia currently serves as secretary of the board of directors for the Alabama Folklife Association. She is a volunteer with the Lee County Literacy Coalition and served as its board president in 2006.

She is divorced and has two daughters. Her oldest daughter, Kori, lives in Maryland with her husband and four daughters. Stefanie, her youngest daughter, works as a magistrate for the City of Opelika.

Sylvia's hobbies include reading, sewing, quilting and photography.