

THE HISTORY OF THE COACHELLA VALLEY QUILT GUILD BY ROBERT TUCKER

June 2022

The Coachella Valley Quilt guild had humble beginnings which started in the late 70s. Several women met at Hildegard's Fabrics in Palm Springs, some new to quilting and others established quilters. The established quilters belonged to two friendship groups, Stitch N Chatter in Indio and The Lunch Bunch in Palm Desert. Groups of women started meeting in homes to learn and promote quilting. These women and members from the friendship groups eventually started meeting at Creative Expressions and named themselves **Palm Springs We Quilt**. As the numbers of attendees rose, they held meetings at Provident Savings in Rancho Mirage and Creative Expressions.

Ceil Woodward and **Chris Couston**, the founding members of The Lunch Bunch organized several

"search" meetings to discuss the forming of a guild and in 1985 a formal vote was taken and the guild's first home was at Joslyn Cove Senior Center in Palm Desert now known as The Joslyn Cove Community Senior Center. There were 40 members at that time with between 25-30 attending each meeting. It was one dollar to attend a meeting and coffee was provided by the center. Friendship groups were and some say still are the backbone of the Coachella Valley Quilt Guild.

The guild has had many homes since 1985 which include the Edison Facility in Cathedral City, Palm Desert Library on the COD campus, Palm Desert Women's Club, Downey Savings and Loan, Providence Bank, The Carlotta, Hope Presbyterian Church, St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, Doral Desert Princess, Coachella Valley History Museum and currently University of California Riverside Palm Desert Campus.

The first president of the guild was one of the founding members **Chris Couston**. Though she was the president for several years she refused the title. Following presidents were **Jean Brown, Jan Kakola, Eve Salkind, Lynn Boettcher, Emilie Warren, Linda Tucker, Evelyn Brain, Linda Dunn, Lee Spangler, Jane Martin, Audrey Alexander and Cathy Chamberlain** leading up to the Coachella Valley Quilt Guilds 20th anniversary. **Donna Rider** was the president in 2005 for the 20th anniversary and we had 142 members at that time.

Sheri Smith was the president during 2006-07 with a dramatic decline in membership to 60 members.

Self-proclaimed chatter box **Sharon Rooker** was the next president and she worked hard to bring the member count up with the help of **Sheri Smith**. Every place Sharon went during her presidency she praised the word of the guild, at quilt shows, fabric stores, any ear that would listen at any location. When her term was up the membership was at 81. The following membership numbers are taken from membership directories. 2009 president **Laura Fiedler** (95 members), 2010 president **Laura Fiedler** (127 members), 2011 president **Cheryl Jensen** (124 members), 2012 president **Cheryl Jensen** (114 members), 2013 president **Linda Rae Shea** (161 members), 2014 president **Linda Rae Shea** (181 members), 2015 president **Kathleen Herring** (170 members) and 2016 president **Kathleen Herring** (179 members).

President positions are for two years but in 2017 that changed. President **Christina Smithberg** abruptly left the position after one year. **Karon Patterson** graciously took over the remainder of her term and was

the president from 2018 to 2020 (145, 154 then 138 members during her position). **Kathleen Herring** took a second term for the 2021 and 2022 season starting with 138 members. Our current president **Tony DeZego** oversaw Membership before becoming president and worked hard on getting our membership up to 183.

As quilters most of us enjoy attending and/or participating in quilt shows. The Coachella Valley Quilt Guilds first quilt show was in the late 80s and was held at the Joslyn Center. Quilt racks were not available, so quilts were draped over chairs placed atop tables. A small entry fee was charged which provided much needed funds for the guild. The success of this quilt show encouraged future shows in such places as Town Center Mall and the Indio Fair Grounds. These gave birth to what we now know as The Desert Guilds Quilt Show which is a biennial show housed at Palm Springs Pavilion showcasing works from Cactus Sew-Ables, Pass Patchers and the Coachella Valley Quilt guilds. This quilt show has been a good fund raiser for all three guilds and has helped spread the word of quilting.

On the topic of spreading the word, from very early on the guild has had a newsletter keeping members abreast of what is happening in our guild. The original name of the newsletter was PATCHES. The first and longest member involved in the newsletter was **Ceil Woodward**. She was also the guild photographer for many years. Some of the others that have held the newsletter position are **Lucille Schutte, Cathy Chamberlain, Lynn Boettcher, Pat Siegel, Kathy McKernan, Sharon Rooker, Kathleen Russo,** and **Vivian Perez**. **Kelley Bachli** is our current newsletter person assisted by **Patti Reyes**.

Another tradition that has carried on since the beginning of the guild is the monthly block pattern exchange. That morphed into the “ Block of the Month “ and some recent members in charge of that have been **Adele Gieszl, Patricia Paige, Doris Risley, Linda Bucknam, Pat Claytor, Treese Pflum, Robert Tucker** and **Jerrilyn Williams**. Many of these past block patterns can be found on our website.

Not all traditions have been carried on including the Sunshine Person. In the early days of the guild there was a concerted effort to keep the rental fee for the monthly meetings very low. The thought behind this was to use membership dues to go back to the members and not used on rent. The Sunshine Person oversaw keeping the true feeling of community within the guild. This person sent out birthday cards, get well cards, ordered flowers for members that were in the hospital or recuperating at home from illness and things of that nature.

Around 2013 hospitality went by the wayside. This one I was sad to see go. During the break between the monthly meeting and the speaker, coffee, tea, water and desserts were served. If it was your birthday month you would bring a dessert to share, sometimes store bought and often homemade. This warm tradition added to the feel of community and as a new member I felt embraced.

Then there is the Sew What Table. It started out as a table during the monthly meetings of displayed fabrics, patterns, books and notions for sale with the profits going to the members that placed them. Later this became a donation and the profits went to the guild as it is today. In the past **Vivian Perez, Becky Canela, Delfina Gonzales, Claire Victor, Vicki Avast, Kathy Klein, Margaret Copus, Kim Carlson, Camie Copeland** and **Joan Vernola** have held the position of the Sew What Table. Though always

profitable it took a huge uptick when **Pene Owens** was in charge. Our current Sew What person is **Leslie Herbst**, and she has really run with the ball. They are not monthly events now, much larger and fun. A good leader is needed for these events but as any good leader knows it is the helpers that make it a success.

Quilter to Quilter and Secret Pal have also gone by the wayside however Show & Share and Guest Speakers are still with us. Over the years we have had many local and national well-known quilters and designers speak to the guild. **Katie Pasquini Masopust, Joe Cunningham, Jane Tenorio-Coscarelli, Becky McDaniel, Rob Appell** and **Jean Impey** have been a few. Vice President of Programs is responsible for seeking out and presenting possible speakers. **Joanne Hunt, Rebecca Blosser, Karen Patterson, Pat Siegel, Calvin Trimpey, Kathleen Herring, Heather Keenan** and **Annie Houston** are a few that have held this position in the past with **Cheryl Quesnell** and **Nancy Wilhelm** in place currently.

The yearly Opportunity Quilt is another fund raiser for the guild. Tickets are sold to members and the general public for the quilt raffle. The winning ticket is drawn at the guilds holiday luncheon in December of each year. Generous guild members piece and quilt the work volunteering their time and talents. The quilt is displayed in various locations through the year in promoting ticket sales. The current and many of the previous opportunity quilts can be viewed on our website.

The Coachella Valley Quilt Guild likes to give back and in one of those ways is through Philanthropy. Members create and donate quilts for various charity organizations within the Coachella Valley. The Philanthropy committee selects those charities. **Patricia Jackson, Natalie Shonerd, Cheryl Taylor, Pene Owens, Fran Jones** and **Marcia Ulrich** have been some of the members in charge of Philanthropy in the past. **Judi Moran** and **Jackie Mason** currently are co-chairing it.

Since the birth of our guild there have been many enhancements in communications. We boast a very informative website. **Laura Fiedler** and **Debra Pugh** have been previous web mistresses with **Kathleen Herring** being the current. Kathleen is also the web mistress of the Desert Guilds Quilt Show website.

www.cvquiltguild.org

Social media is a big part of connecting with like minded people and in January 2015 the guild created a Facebook page. **Andrea Dooley** was the first administrator creating her first post on January 10th. Andrea remained in charge of the Facebook page for two years. Her interests were far and wide, sadly she left the guild to pursue other creative ventures and is heavily involved with the LaQuinta Art Museum.

Robert Tucker, that would be me 😊, took over in 2017. I post at least once a week and often more updating folks on guild matters. Also, national and international quilt related images and articles can be found. We also have an Instagram page which is not very active currently.

I'm proud to be a member of a guild that has continued to evolve and meet the challenges that time throws its way. No better example is how we have altered our practices during Covid. We discovered that meeting and having classes via zoom was possible and by being possible that has opened the door for us to include our snowbirds even at a distance. We have been able to chat and sew and interact successfully

by phone, computer, tablet, whatever. And now we can get together physically as well. Covid threw us a curve ball but we caught it and came back even stronger. Our guild has grown from a simple desire to share a shared passion to a multi-tiered organization full of enthusiasm, earnest friendship and community spirit. Our history is a shared history from our founding members to us. How great is that.

A special shout out to **Annie Houston** for helping us all zoom. It takes a village as they say and positions on the Board of Directors, Committees and Coordinators make the Coachella Valley Quilt Guild work. It is not possible to name all that have made us what we are but I would like to throw out a few names not previously mentioned, **Sherri Dickson, Linda Blake, Pamela Kimball, Anita Holden, Linda Crowe, Linda DeKlotz, Teri Kirschner, Lucy Jewkes, Darlene Estrella, Leslie Gardiner, Maryellen Mencimer, Roberta Peterson, Patricia Bitter Young, Patti Unterman, Linda McLean, Paula Zillmer, Barbara Lind, Piper Martin, Cathy Griffin, Theresa Lake, Kim Johnson, Luella Grangaard, Stevanna Collins** and everyone who has ever volunteered their time and efforts to the guild, thank you all.

A personal thank you to **Ceil Woodward, Patricia Paige, Joanne Hunt** and **Sharon Rooker** for directing me and helping me obtain information to create this history of our guild.

C.V.Q.G. 2022-23

President: Tony DeZego

Vice President of Facilities: Treese Pflum

Vice President of Programs: Nancy Wilhelm & Cheryl Quesnell

Vice President of Opportunity Quilts: Patti Reyes

Secretary: Kathy Dunham

Treasurer: Calvin Trimpey

Membership : Stephanie Beasley & Marcia Ulrich

Parliamentarian: Janna Calkins

Philanthropy: Jackie Mason & Judi Moran