

NORTHCOAST KNITTING GUILD-THE FIRST FIVE YEARS
BY
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"Dear Knitter,

When a person has a special interest, it becomes even more special to share it with other people who have the same interest." This was the first sentence on a postcard which was sent to knitters in the Cleveland area.

On August 16, 1989, at the Euclid Public Library, an enthusiastic group of "founding mothers" gave birth to the Northcoast Knitting Guild, a chapter of The Knitting Guild of America. Among the participants at that first meeting who are still with us were: Donna Baioni, Marge Beebe, Lisa Beer, Donna Braessler, Karen Campbell, Eleanor Crippen, Lib France, Shirley Nurmi, Rose Schnatz and Jan Stephens.

The idea of starting a guild was in the planning stages for a while before the first meeting took place. In fact, Rose Schnatz used "forming an organization" as a new learning experience assignment for a humanities class she took while working on her nursing degree at Ursuline College. Shirley Nurmi and Marge Beebe put down their yarn and needles and called the organizational meeting together. Lists of area knitters were furnished by knitting teachers Jan Stephens and Lib France, along with area shop owners.

In the next few months, officers were chosen, by-laws were established and by February, 1990, NCKG became an affiliate of TKGA. The first officers were: Shirley Nurmi, president; Marge Beebe, vice president; Donna Baioni, secretary; and Karen Campbell, treasurer. Our meetings were and still are held at the Euclid Public Library, 7-9PM, the second Monday of each month except December.

For early programs, a "stitch of the month" assignment was given to various members who shared their patterns with the group. The first workshop was an original Christmas ornament, Santa in a chimney, taught by Jan Stephens. It featured various sewing methods and a houndstooth check pattern for the chimney.

In the summer of 1990, Nancy Jicha, who has since moved to Florida, became vice president/program chairman. She presented a class on the Pretzel Sweater, a favorite style of that time. She also began our newsletter, our "mortar in the bricks."

We have had many fine classes taught by our members-Donna Baioni, Mari Jane Bartley, Marge Beebe, Sue Crowe, Lib France, Betty Fitzgerald, Sue Hall, Thelma Imm, Shirley Nurmi and Jan Stephens. In addition, we all share our patterns and techniques with each other.

We have had guest teachers and designers for special classes. Marlyn Ibele, from Canfield, Ohio has been with us for her Magic Formula sweater and finishing. We facilitated Lily Chin's workshop sponsored by the Woolly Works. Shop owners Liz Tekus of Fine Points, Gretchen Skeels of the Woolly Works and Jo Ann Clapacs, formerly of Gathering Woole, have presented their yarns to us.

We have an annual holiday party and knitted-related gift exchange every November and a members' competition every June. Winners of ribbons and prizes are decided by members' choice. Honorees have included Sue Hall, Jan Stephens, Carol Porter, Debbie Azlein, Betty Fitzgerald, Bonnie Kovit, Sue Crowe and Lisa Beer.

The Highlands Camp has been the scene of our yearly annual weekend retreats. It is fun to get away from the world and spend the weekend with our yarn and our friends while learning two color twisted I-cord and entrelacs, plus eating Sarah's wonderful food! This year, we joined The Spinners and Weavers Guild at Cedar Hill Camp for a memorable weekend.

In 1993, a monthly daytime knit-in was started. It meets the first Wednesday of each month, usually at the home of Jan Stephens. It is for those who feel that getting together once a month isn't quite enough.

As service projects, we have made contributions of afghans to homeless shelters, caps for kids and preemie hats and booties for hospitals. Donna Baioni oversees this as service chairman and Judy Riga delivers the preemie sets to the hospitals. We have also donated Kaffe Fassett tapes and a subscription to "Knitters" to the library. Our knitting is displayed annually at the library.

In March, 1993, thirteen of our members attended TKGAs national convention in Pittsburgh. Many ideas from this and other seminars have been shared at meetings.

We have a logo, designed by Miriam Plax—the state of Ohio with yarn and needles appearing at the location of Cleveland. It is pictured in blue on the pocket of our guild knitting bags of cream canvas with rainbow striped handles. We also have membership pins, past president pins and membership cards. We encourage our members to knit their nametags; however, that has been a "slow go!"

Jan Stephens has been historian and keeps a record of all data, newsletters and patterns plus photographs of many events. We are on our second album! She also is newsletter editor.

Lynne Kilgore piloted a new project in 1994 with our first annual Rock Day. We invited fiber enthusiasts in all media to meet with us to share their interests. It is named for the day the spinners in medieval England returned to work after their Christmas fortnight holiday. The term "rock" refers to what the spinners sat on back then instead of stools or chairs.

We always love it when Marge Beebe returns from an extended trip. She has such glorious knitting to share with us! Shirley Nurmi probably has knitted the most unusual item—a set of 50 carrots for a carrot collecting friend's 50th birthday! Thelma Imm was accused by her room-mates of sleeping with her yarn at Pittsburgh-TKGA! (or "fluff" as Lynne Killgore calls it.)

We now have close to forty members and find ourselves bonding over our common love of knitting. We have tried to achieve a balance of education, service and fun in these first five years and look forward to many more years of friendship and growth. Happy Birthday to us!

We thank our officers, committee chairpeople and members for all their hard work to make our guild happen!

Past Presidents:

1989-91 Shirley Nurmi
1991-92 Donna Baioni
1992-93 Jan Stephens
1993-94 Mari Jane Bartley

Officers-1994-5

President-Sue Crowe
VP/Program-Judy Riga
Secretary-Thelma Imm
Treasurer-Bonnie Kovit

Other members who have served as officers and chairpersons:

Marge Beebe, Karen Campbell, Eleanor Crippen, Betty Fitzgerald, Thelma Imm, Jean Jacobsen, Nancy Jicha, Lynne Killgore, Bonnie Kovit, Carol Porter and Rose Schnatz.

1994 Competition winners were Debbie Azlein, Judy Riga, Sue Crowe, Fern Braverman, Cassandra Davis, Mari Jane Bartley, Betty Fitzgerald, Jan Stephens. Added to the list of unusual projects is a hand knit uterus made by Jan Stephens for a nurse who teaches childbirth classes!