

Really? I didn't know that!

The Village Quilters:
The story of the Guild's Life

A retrospective look at the journey of
the Guild from a handful of charter
members to the vibrant Guild of today.

By Arliss Barber
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Intro (Slides 1-3)

The Village Quilters will be coming up on its' 30th Anniversary in October 2026. Thirty years! To sustain the group, it is always natural and vital to have new members joining the group. Currently at September 2025 the Guild's membership is comprised of 66% of members (165) who have been here for 10 years or less with 40% (101) of those only 5 years or less. At the other end of the spectrum, only 11% (27) have been members for 21 years or more with only 10 being members 25-30 years. At middle ground are 23% (56) who have been members for 11-20 years. Newer members, quite naturally, may not have knowledge about the past history of the Guild they were now a part of. For them, it just IS what IT IS right NOW! Approaching an anniversary seems the perfect time to gather historical information to learn and reflect on that past. It's important to know what occurred in order to better understand and appreciate how the Guild is today.

You can look at the timeline of anything – groups, companies, a lifetime, a marriage, a friendship or whatever it is – you can pinpoint some pivotal points of change or importance. While reviewing the history timeline of The Village Quilters, there are a number of single years or a small span of years that changed the trajectory of the Guild. There are also single points in time that became important “cause & effect” moments that helped to grow the Guild and build a reputation not only in the Village community but in the larger quilting community as well.

The Start (Slide 4-5)

So how did this Guild start? As with many ideas, it started with 1 person – Carole Spahn (some of us call her the Queen Mum). Back in 1995, Carole took a quilting class from Allison at the Quilting Corner shop in Oak Ridge along with Rita Fritz and Jill St. Yves. Even though it took a year to finish, they had such a good time doing that project together. Carole

wondered if there were others in the village who enjoyed this hobby and wouldn't it be fun to share this activity with like-minded people. She put an announcement in the Tellico Village paper "The Hawk" and on the village Channel 3 to see if there was any interest to form a group. Of course there was – they had their first gathering on October 11, 1996. They ended up with 27 fellow quilters as Charter Members; then added more right away by January 1997 and grew steadily to 66 people by the year 2000.

Organizing was fairly quick work with so many helping hands. Anyone interested in being a board member became one. Carole admits that she didn't even know what a quilt Guild was at first. She was very reluctant to take the President position when encouraged to do so, but she did and held the position from October 1996 through 1997. Ellie Brubaker (dec) became Vice President. She had knowledge and experience about an active quilt Guild so she was instrumental in many organizational tasks.

First a name was chosen. Originally the name TV Quilters came to mind, but Carole and others didn't want to exclude anyone from outside Tellico Village so settled on Village Quilters (as in from many villages). Next, standard Bylaws were drawn up and subsequently revised every so often over the next few years to mirror the group's needs. Meetings were held monthly from the start and the second Friday date was happenstance as that was the initial sign-up date for the first gathering in October so it became "meeting date". The Monday before became Board day only because of initial availability of people to attend. Board meetings were most often held at a Board member's house but occasionally were held at a restaurant – because why pass up the opportunity for a great lunch! They enjoyed that small, close-knit camaraderie for several years time. Following in Carole's footsteps, the other Presidents guiding the early progress of the Guild through 2005 were Marie Decess 1998-1999, Nancy Rein (dec) 2000, Joan

Francis 2001, Barbara Jones 2002, Suzi Dale 2003, Mary Garner 2004 and Harriet Lewis 2005.

The Early Years (Slide 6)

During those early years, even with much smaller membership numbers, the Guild operation was quite similar to today albeit on a smaller, less structured scale. That is until the membership broke 100 in 2003. Many of the aspects of the Guild of today were rooted in those early years: Board Meetings, Guild Meetings with Show & Tell, charitable quilt giving, Workshops, Classes, luncheons, membership cards, challenges, newsletters by snail mail, small groups (which grew into Bees) and bus trip fellowship and fun. Today there is a “member Spotlight” in the E-Bulletins but it wasn’t invented recently – more like revived – as this was something the group did long ago. Long-time member Barbara Jones has the distinction of being the very first to be spotlighted in March 2000 and said “*she very much enjoys being a member of the quilt group and hopes it continues for many years*”. However, Barbara tells the story about being very intimidated on her first day by a beautiful runner Joan Francis showed during “show & tell”. She said it had some wonderful appliqued grapes and she thought “oh no, I don’t belong here!”. It is wonderful she (& the Guild) stayed for a good long time. Then and now, the Spotlight is a great way to learn about a new member of the Guild. Also in 2000, Suzi Dale introduced the group to “Membership Cards” which, at the time, could be shown at many quilt shops for discounts plus all new members were given a “Welcome Letter” – today they receive a welcome email. Beginning in 2001, to promote fellowship on a smaller scale (yes, even with 66 members, connection on a smaller scale was desired), members were encouraged to sign up to attend a small group. Volunteers were recruited to host at their home and 6-8 members were assigned to a small group at a volunteer location. Then members and homes were mixed and rotated so

everyone met more members. Some brought projects to work on or to share. This practice led to the formation of the Guild's original "Bees" which at September 2001 included the very first organized Bee, the In-Betweens followed by 2 nighttime groups, Scrappy Ladies and Cutups. Today there are 8 active Bees; however, throughout the years 19 other Bees were formed at various times and sustained or ultimately disbanded during the years in the timeline. Overall, the group was still fairly small enjoying fellowship – sewing, laughing, sharing and learning from one another.

The Second & Third Decade Years (Slide 7-11)

After breaking the 100 member mark in 2003, membership steadily grew over all the subsequent years to a peak of 410 members at the end of 2019 right before the Covid year. All the original members were from Tellico Village through 1999 but today – and since 2000 – members represent about 24 communities as far south as Cleveland, west to Spring City, Ten Mile and Kingston, north and east to Harriman, Knoxville, Walland and Maryville and southeast to Tellico Plains. There are even a handful of out-of-state individuals that have retained their membership. Still current member Sandra Black has the distinction of being one of the first out of Tellico Village members when she joined in 2000 from Tellico Plains!

The Presidents guiding the Guild's second decade were JoAnn Bergren 2006, Ginny Hatfield 2007, Arliss Barber 2008, Jolie Fischer 2009, Cathie Peterson 2010, Joyce Knauf 2011, Jackie Trombly 2012, Kathy Fisher 2013, Rose Hunt 2014, Sharon Clayton 2015 and Helen Willis 2016. There was tremendous growth and many highlights during these years including some of those "cause & effect" moments. Following in their footsteps and leading the Guild through the third decade years through 2025 were Rita Hollenbacher 2017, Leslie Phillips (dec) 2018, Janice Irving 2019, Barbara Craig 2020, Jane Salmon 2021, Debra Wardell 2022, Terri Rose 2023, Annie Mueller 2024 and

Michele Bresso 2025. During this third decade the world hit a massive roadblock but these leaders navigated through and guided the Guild into our modern tech times.

Meeting Spaces Slide (12-16)

In the beginning, the founding group met at the Chota Rec Center in the small meeting room D. They rapidly outgrew that space within a short time – by 2001 they had already moved to the 5th floor of the Yacht Club. It was a great spot for a number of years. However, membership had more than doubled from 2000 to 2006 to just over 200 members. President JoAnn Bergren was one of the best to lead during this time because she had previous experience coming from a large Guild. She had the foresight to realize continued growth would mean another move would be needed – sooner rather than later. The search process looking for a larger space had already been underway when Sandy Stechmesser, a member of Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church, mentioned to JoAnn that the Fellowship Hall was complete and would open soon. JoAnn, Ginny Hatfield as VP and Arliss Barber as Treasurer were at the church in a flash meeting with Pastor Jim Kirk. He offered up the wonderful Fellowship Hall space free of charge because the Guild met their requirements of providing a community service to the area and because the main focus was education and fellowship for members. There just wasn't anywhere else to be found in or near the village that could accommodate up to 150 people plus the extras without large fees or the uncertainty of having the meeting time bumped. So, meetings were moved to Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church in July 2006 and the Guild has been wonderfully blessed with the space for almost 20 years now. Even though the church space was offered at no charge, the Guild willingly gives the church a monthly offering for the space and all the work they do each month. Over the years, the Guild has also gifted the church with a number of

items. The very first was a podium which replaced a small music stand. It quickly became evident it was needed because during one meeting Ginny Hatfield placed her large binder on the music stand and it slowly sank to the floor as she spoke. Several other items include providing or sharing in the cost for the stair banister, an extra microphone, the pull down screen/projector project, several large tables were purchased to increase church inventory and several bonus monetary donations.

Not only were Guild meetings on the top floor of the Yacht Club but that is also where any workshop or class would have been held; the Rec Center room C or the side room at the old Tanasi Clubhouse may have been used as well on occasion. Windows, lighting and electrical were not really very conducive to the cutting and sewing that happens with this craft at any of the sites. Soon after the time the Guild moved to the Church for meetings, the new Wellness center was going to be completed and opened up so the POA was looking to move their 2010 Vision plan forward. That plan included a Hobby Hall and they viewed the Chota center as the spot to perhaps make that happen rather than building a new building. The POA looked to the 4 largest hobby groups – the quilt Guild, Art Guild, Computer Club and Woodworkers – to see what needs might be met in that space. This was late 2006, early 2007. Back then, it was a bit of a contentious subject but it was smoothed out eventually. Ginny Hatfield, as 2007 President, led the 5-member group including Arliss Barber, JoAnn Bergren, Carole Spahn, Jan Wass and Pat Ziobro – dubbed the “Rec Center committee”. The group worked with the POA developing the layout, design, hard goods and lighting needs that went into the project of transforming Room A from an exercise room with some half walls and poor lighting into the Quilt/Art room that is enjoyed today. That was a year-long endeavor. The final move-in date to the official Chota Room A was April 2008. Everyone who utilizes the space loves it and even the pros who visit remark on the space and lighting – at 120 foot-

candles, a person can actually see! The space is a wonderful environment to develop and hone skills. The space also gave the Guild the opportunity to increase the number of Bees, workshops and Pro classes.

New Monumental Project (Slide 17-20)

That project alone made for a busy year in 2007 but another monumental activity was also being worked on, planned and then carried out for September 13-15 of that year – all spearheaded by President Ginny Hatfield. But first, jump back a little to more than a year earlier to the AQS Paducah quilt show in April 2006 where it started. Ginny and Jan Wass went to that show and Jan mentioned they would have dinner one night with some of “my friends”. Those friends turned out to be Hollis Chatelain, Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry, Laura Wasilowski, Ricky Tims and Ricky's business manager Justin Shults. During a conversation with Ricky, Ginny mentioned that she and Carole Spahn had taught his Convergence quilt project several times at the Guild. Around that same time, Ricky & company were just starting to plan their new Super Seminars and Justin was investigating a number of cities to help them decide the best places to hold those events around the country. Ricky added Knoxville to the list for Justin to check out. Then they actually PICKED Knoxville. So it began, all the preliminary groundwork of finding a venue, date, contacting hotels, advertising, sign-ups and execution. Ginny had placed a “heads up” call to the tourism bureau Director, Kim Bumpus (who is now President) to set everything up for Justin's visit. Ginny and Cindy Buol accompanied them all as they checked out all available venues and hotels. The event was finally set for the Knoxville Civic Auditorium for Sept 2007. This would be a money making event – payment was a percentage of the registration fees of the attendants at the event. It was all on the Guild to do all advertising and outreach to Guilds and shops within a 350 miles radius of Knoxville, Tennessee. That's about 11 surrounding

states. There were many helping hands to call and verify addresses for Guilds, groups and quilt shops so the Village Quilters could get the word out. The event's attendance was approximately 410 of which 130 were Village Quilters members – at that time that was 53% Guild participation.

So what exactly was a Super Seminar? It was a totally immersive 3-day learning experience including 10 class sessions, a mini quilt show, shopping and a music concert. The super stars were Ricky Tims, Alex Anderson, and Libby Lehman. There was also a surprise visit from Bob Purcell, "the thread man", from Superior Threads to demystify thread for everyone. Just as the name implies, there were seminar type classes by the 3 presenters. They were on stage while all enjoyed comfy seats with a giant screen that everyone could see. At breaks, attendees spent time shopping at the many participating vendors (Gina's Bernina was one of them), viewing the display of Ricky, Alex and Libby's quilts including Ricky's very first quilt ever. Many of the attending Guild members were on hand to white glove, help vendors, shadow each of the presenters and much, much more but nobody ever missed anything. All activities closed 5 minutes prior to class start times so all could be present. It was a fabulous experience of learning and fellowship with many quilters from many places. Most members who attended stayed downtown and everyone had a wonderful time. Since the Guild registered as a large group, each individual Super Seminar fee was only \$159 – the best spent money ever! Most have never experienced anything like it before or after! Ultimately, the Village Quilters was presented with a check for \$4300 dollars, a portion of which went to purchase needed equipment for the new Chota room the following year.

Moving Forward (Slide 21-23)

Moving forward, as a direct development of having the Super Seminar here and the success of that event, the base was laid for AQS coming to

Knoxville (thanks to Ricky for his letter of recommendation). The American Quilt Society made the decision to move their August Nashville show to the wonderful downtown Knoxville Convention Center for July 22-25, 2009, July 14-17, 2010 and July 13-16, 2011. The big announcement took place in February 2008 at the Visitor's Center. The Village Quilters worked along with the Smoky Mountain Quilters (SMQ) at the show for those three years. With the announcement coming so early in 2008, this gave Village Quilters a good lead time before July 2009 to get organized as well as splitting and coordinating all responsibilities with SMQ. AQS brought the show and their team to town but the Guild was responsible for scheduling all needed people for set-up and take-down, white glove, package check booth and helping at all seminars, lectures and classes (would have loved to have the current online sign-up system back then). Again, this was a money making event – proceeds were retained (split between the 2 Guilds) from the package check booth plus being paid by AQS for all the work so in total between \$2300 and \$2900 was made each year. As with the Super Seminar, many took the opportunity to stay downtown for several days and enjoy fellowship during and after the show. Another fabulous multi-year adventure co-chaired by Ginny Hatfield and Arliss Barber with help and support from so many Guild members.

Another Move Forward (Slide 24-28)

The year of 2008 was busy enough with regular activities plus planning for AQS in 2009 but another monumental thing occurred as a result of a casual conversation in February 2008 between Arliss Barber and Susan Eaton, Convention Center Asst. GM and Director of Marketing & Sales, which led to a formal request about making a quilt to commemorate the relationship between the Center and AQS. They really wanted to have an artistic quilt using a traditional piecing method made by Tennesseans because

the only quilt in their vast \$1 million permanent art collection displayed at the Convention Center was made by New York artist Michael Cummings.

We weren't about to pass up that opportunity. The quilt is 79" x 89" and was titled "Under Tennessee Skies". It was designed to showcase the Smoky Mountains during the fall color changes. After much deliberation, it was settled, the French braid piecing method would be used to represent the fall mountain landscape; plus many items unique to Tennessee were incorporated in the decorative quilting. Arliss Barber as 2008 President became the project coordinator with right-hand assistant Ginny Hatfield, plus many others had a hand in the project in some way including Linda Arbuckle, Darlene Bakos, JoAnn Bergren, Sandy Black, Cindy Buol, Doris Christensen, Jolie Fischer, Joyce Knauff, Jean Mathews (dec), Mozelle Morgan (dec), Rose Remund, Diane Rhea, Martha Sanchez, Vicki Schwerdt, JJ Shay, Jackie Trombly, Audrey Vonesh and Jan Wass; it was quilted by Kathy Drew. The actual braid piecers were Darlene Bakos, Sandy Black and Jean Mathews (dec) and due to their most excellent piecing skills and Sandy Black's expertise with french braid, an absolutely flat, square quilt top was delivered to Kathy for quilting. A feat that is hard to do when one person is sewing much less three. Kathy did more than deliver the fabulous landscape that was envisioned and articulated to her. She fleshed out all the landscape details with the extensive pictorial quilting, thread painting and small touches of fabric paint and, as requested, to make it uniquely Tennessee, it includes many state symbols and historical buildings. In total, Guild members spent well over 840 hours on the project – just over half of that was quilting time. In addition, the quilt has 17,000 yards (or 9.3 miles) of thread on it – all Superior Threads products donated by Bob Purcell from Superior. This quilt was installed in early July 2009 and unveiled at the opening of the first AQS show on July 22, 2009 and it will hang for years to come to showcase the Guild's artistry and craftsmanship.

Activities Spanning 3 Decades

Other Quilts in The Community (Slide 29-50)

However, that quilt was not the first the Guild did for special display. Before and after, Village Quilters members have created at least 19 other “quilts for the community” which hang in various spots in Tellico Village and neighboring or distant communities. One of the very first was in 2000. While President, Nancy Rein (dec) individually made a small banner for the Loudon County Animal Shelter and presented it to Gordon Harless, the Director of the Center. She also headed up a project to design and make a Tellico Village themed quilt. Tellico Village had a beautification project back then and that committee approved an application by the Village Quilters for a quilt to be funded by the Beautification Team. The Guild believed it to be a great opportunity for them to display their work and create a piece of history for the village. The design format is unusual – it is comprised of four separate panels. It includes applique and piecing which depicts many elements of Tennessee – state symbols and nature as well as the many activities of Tellico Village living. It was presented in 2001 and originally hung at the Yacht Club but can now be found at the Wellness Center. Members who contributed to the project were Lydia Bateson, Ellie Brubaker (dec), Donna Compton, Suzie Dale, Carol Domans (dec), Joan Francis, Yellie Greebe (dec), Carolyn Hampson, Barbara Jones, Jerre Karl, Linda Kaump, Anna Kelly, Winnie Lemmon (dec), Harriet Lewis, Jan Mack (dec), Pat Melcher, Mozelle Morgan (dec), Joyce Pettijean, Nancy Rein (dec), Diane Rhea, Charlotte Soltman, Carole Spahn, Carol Williams and artist Jo Doster.

The next quilt followed soon after in 2002 and it depicts an aspect of Village life – exercise. The 49” x 40” quilt is titled “No Pain No Gain” and hangs at the Chota Center. It is pieced with hand applique and hand quilted. There is no label but it is believed to have been made by Suzi Dale; in addition, 56 members of the Guild at the time signed the back of the quilt.

The next year, a quilt was made for the Good Samaritan Center in Lenoir City for their lobby wall. Details are unknown as to who specifically made the quilt but the label indicates it was made by the Guild in April 2003. It is pieced with some applique and machine quilting. The quilt still hangs at the center in their office.

Another quilt hangs at the Chota Center as well. The "Tellico Village – A Great Place to Call Home" quilt is 50" x 74" and depicts a grouping of houses to represent living in Tellico Village. It is pieced with some applique and embroidery and hand quilted. Again, there is not label but it is believed to have been done by Charlotte Soltman and donated in November 2004.

The Applique Bee undertook a 5-month project beginning in October 2006 to create a quilt for Lenoir City as a gift for their Centennial Celebration. It was accepted by Lenoir City Mayor Matt Brookshire and installed at the Lenoir City Village Hall in April 2007. Frank Kinnear, husband to member Marie Kinnear (dec) and a woodworker, built the wood frame in which the quilt was hung. Recognition to the Applique Bee was given by the POA with an Honor Award in 2007 for Community Service to Lenoir City. The 58" x 71" hand appliqued and hand quilted blocks were made by Linda Arbuckle, JoAnn Bergren, Pat Corda (dec), Suzi Dale, Joan Francis, Linda Garber, Anna Kelly, Toni Manley, Cathie Peterson, Rose Remund, Charlotte Soltman, Carole Spahn, Michael Ann Staggs, Sandy Stechmesser, Sandy VerVelde, Barb Walters and Carole Wysocki; inking on the blocks was done by Rose Remund; quilt top assembly was done by Ginny Hatfield, Rose Remund, Cathie Peterson, Charlotte Soltman and Pat Ziobro; final quilting was done by Rose Remund.

The Newbees Bee group goes to the Carson Springs Baptist Center in Newport for a quilt retreat each year. In 2010, a conversation between Mary Garner and Susan, the Baptist Center director, turned into a group project to create a quilt that could be presented to the center at the next year's retreat.

After much brainstorming, they settled on creating a Tennessee themed quilt with blocks to imitate mountains and incorporating state symbols. Everyone claimed a block or two and when they all were complete, Mary Garner pieced them all together with sashing and Jean Baughman (dec) hand quilted the top. The completed quilt was presented to Susan at the Center at their next retreat visit in 2011. Members who contributed to the project include Jean Baughman (dec), Pat Bilski, Sharon Boehm, Audry Cys, Sharon Clayton, Patty DeLawter, Carole Gallagher, Mary Garner, Carole Green-Weishaupt, Carolyn Hampson, Laura Kimball, Julie Krieg, Mary LeTard (dec), Carol Noonan, Ruth Offutt, Linda Rake, Jane Salmon and Alice White. That quilt was not the only one the Center has on display – they have actually been the lucky recipient of three quilts.

The second one came about seven years later while the Newbees group was there in February 2017. They decided that the quilt they did in 2010 was looking a bit worn and saggy. So it was decided that they would again create a quilt for the center. Laura Kimball designed the quilt which features a bear panel which is so appropriate for the area. It also includes bear paw and log cabin blocks. The group also included the Bible verse, Psalm 121, from the center's stain glass window and that lettering on the quilt was done by Tom Kenny, Kate Kenny's husband. The members who worked on and presented the quilt include Jean Baughman (dec), Pat Bilski, Patty DeLawter, Mary Garner, Carole Green-Weishaupt, Marilyn Hollis, Kate Kenney, Laura Kimball, Julie Krieg, Donna Navratil, Ruth Offutt, Jane Salmon, Donna Weaver and Shari West; it was quilted by Janet Armstrong. When completed, it was presented in February 2018. In addition, Laura Kimball took on the project of renewing the 2010 quilt by deconstructing all the quilting, stabilizing the main quilt and having it re-quilted by Janet Armstrong. It was then returned to the center.

The Center is blessed to have received a third quilt which was created by the fall retreat group, a different group than February. It was done so it could hang in the Center's new expansion area. In keeping with the theme of the area, the quilt features a realistic bear fabric which worked well with the pattern they selected called Highway 2 by Doug Leko and can be aptly named "The Bears Are Back". The quilt is machine pieced and the top was complete by November 2022; Peg Purdue quilted and Pat Anderson added an embroidered label. The completed quilt was presented at the following fall retreat in October 2023. The members who contributed to the project are Nancy Adams, Pat Anderson, Carol Andrews, Sharon Blanton, Linda Bower, Carole Boyer, Cindy Buol, Sharon Clayton, Barbara Craig, Deanna Ferry, Maria Grimm, Rita Hollenbacher, Nancy Hutchins, Sandi Jorgensen, Shirley Kervin, Joyce Knauff, Diane Lipinski, Gail Lyman, Lori McDonald, Donna Moore, Claudia Nicholson, Kathy Orr, Peg Purdue, Rose Remund, Joan Roels, Terri Rose, Jane Salmon, Carole Spahn, Michael Ann Staggs, Pat Schwartz, Eileen Thomas and Barb Walters.

Dropping back a few years, "The Sisters with Artistic Attitude" Bee members worked together to create a colorful, fun quilt called "Once Upon a Hilltop". The 57" x 45" quilt utilized multiple piecing and quilting methods including applique, thread painting, precise piecing, hand dying, beading and machine long-arm quilting based on and recreated from a Diana Ferguson painting. It was presented in 2011 to the Lenoir City Children's Advocacy Center for their lobby entrance. Group members who participated on the project include Arliss Barber, Cindy Buol, Diana Ferguson, Pam George, Christine Glazer, Sandy Kambic, Anna Kelly, Nancy Kessler, Marlys May, Claudia Nicholson, Diane Rhea, Carole Spahn and Marsha Tashenberger. Marsha led a "show & tell" at a Guild meeting as to how the project went from design to finished blocks and quilt.

Still another commemorative quilt was done in 2012 – this one was a 76" x 62" quilt for the POA to mark Tellico Village's 25th Anniversary; it now hangs at the Chota Rec Center. The quilt includes hand applique, machine applique and machine piecing depicting locations or activities in the Village. Members who worked on this quilt include Cindy Buol, Sharon Clayton, Janie Coombes, Kathy Fisher, Ginny Hatfield, Anna Kelly, Shirley Kervin, Joyce Knauff, Judith Kubesh, Harriet Lewis, Toni Manley, Cathie Peterson, Rose Remund, JJ Shay, Charlotte Soltman, Sandy Stechmesser and Pat Ziobro. JJ Shay did the machine quilting.

The Applique Bee was at work again in 2013 when they stitched up a 46" x 65" quilt to celebrate The Public Library at Tellico Village which opened the previous November 2012. Accepting the quilt were Becky Haile, Library Manager, 2013 and 2014 Friends BOD President Carolyn McDermott and Rich Seymour respectively. The group's talented quilters started sewing around June 2013 and completed this labor of love in about six months. The quilt is displayed in the computer room area of the Library and provides warmth and interest to the room with the subject matter befitting a library. The applique and piecing of the quilt "The Alphabet And More" was done by JoAnn Bergren, Nancy Brackett (dec), LouAnn Cherry, Linda Garber, Sharon Clayton, Harriet Lewis, Toni Manley, Cathie Peterson, Rose Remund, Sandy Stechmesser, Sandy VerVelde and Pat Ziobro; it was quilted by Rose Remund. Also hanging in the same room is an individual's TV20 Challenge quilt donated by Pam George after the 2016 challenge was complete.

Two quilts were made for Habitat for Humanity in Lenoir City. The first was the Habitat Women-Build quilt using T-shirts from many years of Women Build projects. The quilt was made in 2014 by Barbara Walters and Caryl Gallagher. It was machine pieced and hand tied with very minimal machine quilting. The second is the Butterfly Women Build Memory quilt made in 2017. Each Butterfly contains the name of a woman to be remembered and

honored. This quilt was also made by Barbara Walters and Caryl Gallagher with quilting by Janet Armstrong. One of these two quilts have been displayed at most fund raising events and Habitat home dedications since 2014. At each home dedication (now well over 100), a welcome quilt is given to the new homeowner - these "welcome quilts" are included in the Guild's Community Service quilt count.

In 2017, a quilt was made for Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church to commemorate the 500th year of the Lutheran Reformation. Sandy Stechmesser designed and created a quilt depicting the Lutheran Rose Circle symbol of Lutheranism. Elaine Deal assisted with enlarging the image with a projector for creating the symbol, Cathie Peterson did the embroidery work and it was quilted by Judy Egan. After completion, it was presented to (then Asst.) Pastor Mark Rhoads at a Guild meeting. The quilt still hangs in the church's fellowship hall.

Another commemorative quilt was made the following year for the Tellico Village Community Church. The quilt named "Gratitude" was for the church's 30th Anniversary; it was presented to the church in July 2018. The quilt is pieced with photos incorporated which were done by photagraher John Outerkirk. The hanging device for the quilt was made by David Brunson. The quilt was designed by Julie Best, pieced by Julie Best, Judy Bland and Pat Schwartz; it was quilted by Janet Armstrong.

Last, a quilt hangs at a local eatery – Rice Kitchen. This wonderful oriental print, 60 x 66½ quilt was machine pieced and machine quilted by Rose Remund on behalf of the Village Quilters. The Rice Kitchen was happy to accept this quilt in July 2023; it is displayed in the main eating area.

Community Service (Slide 51-58)

Of course, many, many more quilts are made every year which are not for community display; instead they are for the people in the community to have, hold and to use to keep them warm. The Guild's Community Service group has done a spectacular job over the years – late in 2024 the Guild celebrated its 10,000th Community Service quilt. What a feat! But wait, actual cumulative recording of distributed quilts didn't actually start until June 2004. Right from the very beginning though, the group made and distributed many quilts into the community – Aids Babies, UT Pediatrics Dept., Loudon Health Care Center, ABC (At-risk Baby Crib) quilts, lap quilts for seniors at nursing homes, Loudon Pregnancy Crisis Center, The Columbus House (a child emergency center), Helen Ross McNabb Center and Knoxville Rescue Ministries are just a few. However, the very first endeavor was for Aids Babies introduced by Susie Hansen in January 1997. It was not an organized effort – members just donated when they had one done. In 1998, Anna Kelly led the charge in the first organized effort for the same cause and Deanna Ferry was instrumental in targeting new charitable outlets and she continued to do so for a number of years. In addition to Anna and Deanna, three of the earliest leaders instrumental in the group's organized charitable efforts were led by Marilyn Rambo with Nancy Rein and Pat Patterson. As to the actual counting of quilts, it was hit or miss. However, in 2001 alone approximately 102 quilts were distributed by November of that year. So 10,000 quilts is a count for 20 years but we know many more were distributed from 1997 through June 2004. Based on limited information, we can only speculate that approximately 450-650 or more may have been made in that span of 7½ years.

The Community Service group also offers a number of quilts each year to other charities to auction as was the practice in the years leading up to 2004 and those are included in the counts.

Community Service didn't spring up one day at Chota but just like other Guild activities, the work took place somewhere else. In the very early days, work happened at the meeting and occasionally a special workshop would be held specifically for the community quilts. Once it became an organized group which happened around 2001 - 2002, the leaders each opened their home to those wanting to help – working out of the homes though was not sustainable. By 2004 the Community Service workday was already dubbed "sweatshop" because Pat Patterson had mentioned in a news article how the work was separated into stations for assembly – much like a sweatshop. By this time, the group was meeting at the old Tanasi Clubhouse side room and had established the 1st Monday of the month for the workday. The final move was to Chota A in 2008. Back in the old days, there was very little fabric inventory – it was literally a few boxes of scraps plus some donations and no money for purchases. Now the group has the wonderful closet at Chota for fabric and supply storage with a budget for purchases.

Community Service quilts are distributed on a routine basis to so many charities but sometimes events occur when extra caring is really needed creating a standout notable event. The first such event was 9/11. The Guild had 45 Brown bags prepared so members could make a "wrap them with Love" quilt – all of which were then sent to New York. Other notables include 18 quilts donated to Hurricane Katrina victims in 2005, 9 quilts in 2006 for ill children to NC Victory Junction Gang Camp founded in 2004 by Kyle Petty and family (part of the SeriousFun Children's Network founded by Paul Newman in 1988), 18 quilts for kids in California due to a 2015 fire disaster, quilts for Athens tornado victims or the 60 quilts delivered to the Phi Beta Phi school in Gatlinburg in 2016 by Ann Davidson and Claudia Nicholson so each child in school who lost everything in the devastating fires would have their own quilt. In addition, over 40 pillowcases were delivered through the Cherry Pit quilt shop in Sevierville for Gatlinburg. When disaster struck again in

August 2019, quilts were sent to the Carolina Outer Banks after Hurricane Dorian and just last year in 2024, 55 quilts were sent to the NC and Newport, TN victims of Hurricane Helene.

The Carson Springs Fall retreat group made a separate donation directly from their group to Hurricane Helene victims as well. Among all their supplies for retreat, they also carried at least 24 quilts for delivery to the center for Newport Church. The retreat participants include Pat Anderson, Robin Baus, Sharon Blanton, Linda Bower, Carole Boyer, Linda Brown, Debbie Doss, Kim Fisher, Carole Green-Weishaupt, Maria Grimm, Diana Harris, Tammy Henry, Mary Hilyer, Rita Hollenbacher, Nancy Hutchins, Sandy Jorgensen, Shirley Kervin, Joyce Knauff, Diane Lipinski, Lori McDonald, Margit McPhee, Peg Purdue, Rose Remund, Cecelia Rivers, Joan Roels, Terri Rose, Jane Salmon, Maggie Scott and Edie Smith.

The Village Quilters even made several international donations. In 2005, 25 quilts and 25 stuffed animals as well as toiletries were sent to the Kapisa Province Women's Center in the Village of Mahmude Raqi, Afghanistan. Member Joyce Pettijean's daughter, Sgt. Major Connie Pettijean, facilitated the contribution. In 2009 14 quilts were sent out to a Honduras Orphange.

Special recognition was given to the Village Quilters in 2006 for the Afghanistan donation in the form of a certificate and an American Flag which had flown in the Guild's honor over Bagram Air Field. Both are displayed at the Wellness Center. There are several other occasions when The Village Quilters Community Service group has been recognized. First with a POA Honor Award for Outstanding Community Service in November of 2004 and 2012; the Caris World Class Award - Volunteer of the Year for 2017 as well as the Caris Outstanding Service Award for 7 years service for donating the highest number of quilts. Caris also presented the Guild with a \$500 award check.

Quilts Of Valor (Slide 59-61)

In 2013 another community outreach program was added – Quilts of Valor. However, it began back in 2009 with the Guild Challenge that year to create a patriotic quilt incorporating a certain fabric and a star. In total, 85 quilts were created. The Challenge coordinator, Kate Meyer, was already a long-arm volunteer for the Foundation and she wanted to have all of the challenge quilts go to benefit the Foundation. The quilts were all shown at a special display at the Yacht Club which the public was invited to attend as well. The highlight for members was having Catherine Roberts, the founder of the Quilt of Valor Foundation, as a special guest at the June meeting and luncheon. Accompanying her was Gail Belmont and US Navy Commander Darren Pontier, an Iraq War Veteran. The threesome started in Valley Springs, CA and arrived in Knoxville on Thursday, the day before our meeting on June 12, 2009. A number of our quilts were handed off to Catherine to add to her “quilt train” traveling to Washington DC where a large award presentation was scheduled for the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines returning from Afghanistan. They ultimately hoped to gather 1200 plus quilts. From that June 2009 until 2013, Diane Rhea and Arliss Barber, with the help of a number of other members, worked mostly through Kate's Townsend group. Then in 2013, the Board fully adopted and authorized a formal Quilt of Valor group with a budget to operate. From that time on, all the work was done here at Chota, awards were done directly from our group instead of from the Townsend group. In 2014 Guild members had the opportunity and honor to create patriotic quilts for Medal of Honor Veterans for when the Society had their annual convention here in Knoxville. Through the organized efforts of Kit Brown from Smoky Mountain Quilters, many from across the state had the opportunity to sign up to make a quilt for a specific Medal of Honor Veteran. The Village Quilters did 18 in all – some created as a group, a duo or individual – all were displayed at the Knoxville Convention Center.

Since 2013, relationships with Veteran and other groups have been established for on-going awards through the years and member participation has increased with the introduction of the Blockhead program in 2021. Quilts of Valor has become a worthy endeavor since that first challenge and the Guild's efforts have been recognized with a POA Honor Award for Outstanding Community Service in November 2012.

Workshops, Speakers, Classes (Slide 62-67)

Workshops of course are very much as they were in the early days. Back then, they were held on the fourth Friday of the month and may have included a day of working on quilts for the community. They may have been held at Chota Room D but usually they were held at Tanasi Clubhouse. There was not an abundance of space at either place and they did move to the 5th floor at the Yacht Club around the same time meetings were moved there and finally to Chota Room A in 2008. At that time, days for workshops switched to Thursday and increased from one per month to usually two per month and are still taught by Guild members. They were a hallmark of Guild learning and sharing in the early years, member to member, and they still are. Workshops are a great way to learn as well as meet other members in a small group setting.

Another very large part of the appeal of The Village Quilters Guild is the wonderful lineup of professionals invited to visit each year to educate through a lecture and classes. In the earlier years outside speakers were few and far between and Guild programs were mostly in-house, done by members at the end of the meeting. There might have been only 1 speaker in a year or at most 2 or 3; they were usually local educators from shops. In 2003 the Guild hosted Katie Cox, an English art quilter, that some members met 2 years earlier at a different quilt gathering. Then 2006 became a pivotal one in the trajectory of program booking. Due to the success of both the 2004 and

2006 quilt shows, a healthy treasury afforded the opportunity to book a number of speakers. Bookings increased from 1, 2 or 3 speakers to 6 in 2006 and 7 in 2007. From then on, the Program Booking Chair has balanced the speaker lineup with 6-9 of the programs being outside speakers covering a range of topics with several more local programs plus the 2 annual luncheons. Over the years some rock stars in the quilting world have come to visit which actually increased membership from as far away as Chattanooga, Crossville and Athens, GA. Some speakers over the years include Caryl Bryer-Fallert Gentry, Holly Chatelain, Rob Appel, Pepper Cory, Sally Collins, Laura Wasiloski, Merikay Waldvogel, Karla Alexander, Cynthia England, Victoria Findlay Wolfe, Angela Walters, Bonnie Hunter, Marti Michell and members Cindy Blackberg and Jan Wass (industry notables) to name only a very few. Visit the website and check the Programs page for the comprehensive listing of all programs over the years.

Another pivotal year was the infamous 2020 covid year. That changed so much! There still was a January and February program that year but the rest were canceled. Barbara Craig, 2020 President, and her team worked hard to navigate the year and were able to set up September, October and November as zoom lectures. That was something relatively new to the Guild. Even 2021 was still a transition year working back to where we left off in 2019. It took several years but it seems most speakers are traveling again with a few still staying with zoom presentations especially some younger professionals with young families at home. Regardless of the method, in person or zoom, the Village Quilters has built a reputation for booking some really great programs and the fees charged are so reasonable – most fees for the same pros at a national show for a lecture or classes would be 2 to 3 times the amount the Guild charges. These classes are wonderful opportunities to learn, whether you actually do the particular project or not.

Non-Profit Conversion

(Slide 68)

A major structural change to the Guild took place in 2013 although some preliminary work happened as early as 2011. The process spanned the years of Presidents Joyce Knauff, Jackie Trombly and Kathy Fisher. This change was moving the Village Quilters from a Guild entity into becoming Non-Profit. Initial work was done by Laura Kimball, Delores McShea and Jackie Trombly and followed up by work done by Jackie Trombly and Arliss Barber. The change involved a 2-step process of reinstating a 501c7 status, then to full Federal 501c3 Non-Profit status. As with anything Federal, it involved a lot of paperwork to file the request but once done it means the Guild does not have to pay tax to the Federal government on it's income. The Federal portion was actually the easy part with one easy filing each year in April and a few benchmarks to stay compliant.

The Village Quilters, Inc. – the correct full name of the Guild – is also a Tennessee Corporation and the Tennessee State aspect is actually more involved. The state requires annual reports to be filed, pay quarterly sales tax on sales of any kind plus a number of other annual reporting requirements; this status DOES allow the Guild to do raffles (otherwise it is a Class B Felony), allows the purchase of goods tax-free if they are to be used by the Guild, consumed (luncheons) or given away (Community Service or Quilt of Valor). Ultimately, the Board must maintain certain standards for both Federal and State compliance by following certain rules and regulations by both the Federal government and the State government and sometimes Board decisions or actions may be made based on those requirements.

The Third Decade

(Slide 69)

The third decade was ushered in after the 2016 celebration of the 20th Anniversary. Then President Helen Willis guided members through the year with an anniversary toast each month. In addition, her Quilt Show Co-

Chairs, Carole Spahn and Judy Egan, guided the Guild through a very successful Quilt show that year. In 2016, as now, it takes a lot of people to coordinate all aspects of the show. Here is a glimpse of shows in the past.

Quilt Shows (Slide 70-74)

The first ever VQ quilt show was led by Harriet Lewis, Joyce Pettijean and June Sedita with help from the 57 Guild members on September 18, 1999. There was no fee to attend but a person could make a \$1.00 donation. That Committee counted at least 259 guests viewing the quilts during that 1-day show but there may have been more. The donation revenue was \$259 with total expenses being \$327, so the loss for the show was \$68. The 2nd quilt show took place the following year on September 30, 2000 led by Harriet Lewis and Jan Mack (dec) with their 66 Guild member's help. Again, it was only for 1 day and this time the show admission was \$1.00 but the financial outcome is unknown. However, post show, the decision was made to do the show for 2 days instead of 1 and only every other year which is how it came to be that the Guild's quilt shows are always on the even years. During that second show the question was also raised about having a non-member enter a quilt. It was firmly decided then that this show was for members only and if someone wanted to enter a quilt they would need to pay the membership fee. So, the "members only show" was entrenched early and with so many members, there has never been a shortage of quilts to show.

In the timeline, the 2004 show year became a pivotal one. The Guild didn't really have any source of income other than dues and the treasury beginning balance in January 2004 was only \$2376. The shows to this point were strictly a showing of member's quilts and Challenge quilts. While they had 97 wall quilts, 28 bed quilts and various clothing and household items for viewing, 2004 was the very first time the Guild had tables in Chota Room C

with a very small amount of silent auction items for sale to make just a "little bit of money". The income from that small enterprise was \$1400 – the modern day Boutique was born. Plus, it was the first time for an opportunity quilt which added another \$1800. Between the 2 endeavors, it was quite an addition to the treasury which more than doubled. That experience was repeated in 2006 but moved from Room C to the larger Room B; this brought another income influx of \$4200 between sales plus the introduction of vendors. Both are still a staple income maker along with the Show Sponsors introduced in 2016 and fees for judged or non-judged entries introduced in 2018. The quilt show is the primary income source for the Guild which supports a lot of its activities over a 2-year period especially the stellar lineup of program speakers.

Luncheons (Slide 75-76)

Who doesn't love a lunch out? Evidently lunch and quilting must be linked somehow because the group has enjoyed luncheons right from the beginning. The first documented one found is December 1999 for a festive Christmas lunch at the old Tanasi side room which was the perfect size for 35 of the 56 members gathered to celebrate. As membership grew, the luncheon venue changed to the Yacht Club to accommodate size. Both the Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church hall and occasionally Tellico Village Baptist Church hall was used as well when extra room was needed. Early on the luncheons were strictly fellowship time; however, in 2007, a new charitable element was introduced. Suzi Dale from the Cutups Bee issued the guild challenge that year which was to benefit Loudon County affiliates of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library – their focus is to encourage reading in small children. The challenge was to make a quilt based on a children's book on the Imagination Library list. All quilts were displayed at the luncheon after judging had been done by Sheila Rauen (Knoxville quilt artist, designer and

author), Christie Crouse (Regional Dir. Dollywood Foundation) and Debbie Henry (Exec. Dir. Loudon Cnty Health Improvement Council); all 3 were guests at the luncheon. Afterward, all the books and quilts were donated to local affiliated Loudon County libraries and schools. From that time on it was not unusual to link a spring or Christmas luncheon with Guild challenges and/or some type of charitable giving. Over the years members have donated in this way to Newborns in Need (2 times), Child Advocacy Center, Quilts for Kids or food for local food pantries to name a few. The first time Newborns In Need was designated for a June 2011 luncheon, it turned into the largest “baby shower” ever with the charity counting over 2000 items from small quilts, clothing, diapers and other needed nursery items. Overall, luncheons have been a hallmark in the Guild's timeline whether linked to a charitable cause or not – it's a great time of fellowship as well as a pause before jumping back into other learning and working activities.

Bus Trip Fellowship (Slide 77)

There is nothing like a bus ride to create fun and fellowship while rolling along to a fabulous quilting destination. Members have enjoyed many bus trips almost every year up through 2017; then we dropped to every other year to be off the quilt show year. The very first organized bus trip was coordinated by Carole Spahn for a excursion to Nashville for the AQS Show on August 31, 2000. A fun time and the bus fare was substantially lower back then at only \$18 for the day trip. Many more Nashville bus trips followed almost annually in the next years until AQS moved here to Knoxville in 2009; however, the coordinators are unknown. Sandy Swan took the helm in 2011 and organized a trip to Marietta, GA for the East Cobb Quilters Guild Quilt Show plus several area quilt shops like *Little Quilts* which is now gone or *Tiny Stitches* in Marietta. A few years lapsed before the group traveled again when Barbara Craig coordinated from 2015 through 2019 and led a total of 8

bus trips during that time. Scheduled trips included AQS Paducah 3 times, AQS Chattanooga 2 times and 2 different NE Tennessee shop hop excursions including Tennessee Quilts plus different area shops each time. These trips to date were all a “one-day-there-and-back” type until the most famous of all trips in April 2019. That was the 5-day Missouri Star Quilt Company “Quilt Town USA” trip to Hamilton, MO. A number of other shops were wonderful stopping points on travel days both coming and going. On that trip, probably everyone spent to their last penny. The awful covid years were skipped over. Then in 2023 another great overnight trip was organized by Linda Brown where members traveled to Greenville, SC for QUILTFEST. Linda planned several stops at shops along the way including *Five Little Monkeys* in Weaverville, NC where a spectacular lunch was enjoyed in town. That left the full 2nd day for exploring the show and return trip. There is nothing better than enjoying quilts, quilting friends and fabric shopping.

Website (Slide 78)

One last item of interest. In the beginning of the Guild, the internet, email and browsing on-line was not really the thing it is today but email and some websites were starting to become more popular. Board members at the time were savvy enough to realize this was something they needed to pursue. The Guild's very first website was created, setup and taken live late May 2001. About the same time, the Guild changed from 6 annual paper “newsletters” received through the snail mail to posting on the website and sending “E-Bulletins” that were emailed to those who had an email address (there weren't many). The website content was maintained by Diane Rhea from the beginning and for many years after with a major face lift and domain change in 2008. When she moved away in 2013, Kathy Fisher upgraded the platform, enhanced the content and then turned it over to Barb

Gothard, who maintained the site for almost 10 years minus one or so covered by Kathy.

Fast forward another 10 years to 2023, the website went through a dramatic change when the Board approved a move to Google for Nonprofits – it is a full suite of applications, or “Workspace”, offered free of charge to eligible nonprofit organizations like the Village Quilters. Not only is it a platform for the website but this allowed the Guild to provide custom email accounts like those assigned to the Officers and some Committee Chairs. It makes it so easy for a member to contact someone from the Board even if the exact person's name is unknown as well as making the transition to the next officer or committee chairperson seamless. Other tools included are those used to maintain the Calendar, on-line sign-ups and payments which were introduced in 2024, YouTube and more. Kurt Szeluga took the Guild through the transformation and continues to maintain the site. The Guild is fully into a modern day on-line presence like so many other entities which allows members to do on-line sign-ups, view a meeting and much more even when not attending a meeting – they can stay up to date. The Guild also entered the Facebook world in 2018 which added another element of sharing with other Guild members.

Conclusion (Slide 79-82)

Growth and change is always inevitable. The further you go from a beginning point to a future spot, things will be somewhat similar but different. Hopefully though, it will never be to the extent where the past history is lost or the founding vision and contributions are forgotten.

A fabulous foundation was laid as the Guild has wonderful, deep roots of learning, sharing fellowship, caring outreach and challenging all members to improve and share skills of the craft. The Guild will depend on all the new

members as they join to take point in leading the group into the future for another 30 years of life.

Years ago in 2000 when Nancy Rein (dec) was President, she made mention of a quote she had found and really liked. It does seem appropriate for the Guild. The quote is attributed to Nietzsche – "There is something almost mystical about seeing something you have conceived in your mind flowing from your fingers, highlighting the joy and satisfaction of creating something that is a joy to behold". Everyone's work is a joy to behold, for ourselves, our fellow members and all those we pass our works to for viewing or to keep.

Thank you Carole for planting the seed! It was nurtured through the years with guidance from each President, the Board & help from all the members. Here stands the Guild today – a wonderful, vibrant, busy Guild coming together from many communities with lots of talent to share with each other!

We salute Carole along with the Guild's current 25-30 year legacy members: Sandra Black, Deanna Ferry, Barbara Jones, June Kaspar, Harriet Lewis, Toni Manley, Ruth Offutt, Carol Williams and Sandy VerVelde, who, along with Carole, helped steer the Guild in the first 5 years of life. Over all these past years, the Village Quilters has given so many a tremendous amount of JOY.