

CELEBRATING SILVER IN 2010

WHAT 25 YEARS HAS MEANT TO TKGA



In the year that Reagan and Gorbachev held their first arms control summit, MacGyver sold millions of Swiss Army knives, Madonna was Desperately Seeking Susan, and the Live Aid Rock Concert raised over \$600M for African famine relief -- who would have thought that knitting was beginning to organize!

But organize it did! And now, more than 10,000 members and 25 years later, The Knitting Guild Association (TKGA) is going strong, its conferences are thriving and Cast On magazine continues to impart knitting wisdom and education the world over.

The Association celebrated its silver anniversary

on July 9-10, 2010, at TKGA's National Conference with recognitions, awards and reflections. The August-October 2010 keepsake issue of Cast On magazine is dedicated to the TKGA Anniversary and will feature designs by 25 designers who have appeared in its pages since the magazine began.

TKGA founder Carol Wigginton could not have fully envisioned how far her original organization would come. With the name The Knitting Guild of America, the vision was to unite knitters from across the country, but in 2001 the name was changed to The Knitting Guild "Association" to include scores of members from outside the U.S. The first 1985 national gathering for knitters in Dallas, Texas, with a few teachers, retail exhibitors and a couple hundred attendees, has grown into annual conferences of thousands, where tickets regularly sell out for 300-400 hours of classes taught by 12-20 professional teachers, including some who have grown into larger than life "knitterati" – knitting stars like Nancie Wiseman, Laura Bryant, Lily Chin, Margaret Fisher and Melissa Leapman. A 20-page two-color association journal titled Cast On has evolved into an 86-page full-color quarterly magazine filled with lessons, quality patterns and TKGA news. The internet has made www.TKGA.com a reality and makes it possible for TKGA to be "home" to knitters around the world.

Knitters seldom let their needles idle. They're always eager to learn and improve their skills or tackle a new project. Nearly 25 years of TKGA correspondence courses have kept the learning going between conferences. Honorary TKGA member Barbara Scott presented her popular "Basics, Basics, Basics" course in 1990 (a course now taught by Arenda Holladay for TKGA). Barbara now teaches "Swatch to Sweater" to help students customize sweater sizes and styles. Other popular correspondence courses are "Professional Finishing Techniques" by Dixie Berryman, "Mosaic Knitting" by Evie Rosen, "Certification for Knitting Judges" by Janet Johnson Stephens and "Machine Knitting-Getting Started" by Jennie Merritt. The goal of every knitter is to create hand-made items that don't look "homemade". TKGA is the best resource to accomplish this goal! The pinnacle of knitting accomplishment is to earn the title "TKGA Master Knitter" by completing a three-level evaluation program. To date more than 195 knitters have received their TKGA Master Knitter certificate, pin and official listing at https://tkga.site-ym.com/?MHK_Grads, and thousands of others are enrolled in the Program and working toward that goal.

In addition to national “bonding” through TKGA, knitters love to mingle locally and share what they know. From the beginning, TKGA members have organized themselves into local guilds. The guilds affiliated with TKGA number more than 290 and have anywhere from 12 to 300 members. TKGA helps them stay connected nationally through a quarterly newsletter, special guild web page, and opportunities to meet other guilds at conferences. The very first TKGA guild to form – Western Reserve Knitting Guild in Ohio – is still active!

When asked what she has seen change or remain the same about knitting over the past 25 years, TKGA Advisory Board Member Laura Bryant of Prism Yarns said: “Access, access, access... in so many ways. Knitters can connect and learn from one another so easily through the internet and events such as the TKGA Conferences. No more stitchin’ in the dark, not knowing what might be wrong. Knitting information is at the fingertips of everyone with internet connectivity. Also, the Guild network has been fantastic in forging community. Despite technological leaps that have made communication and our community/mentoring/learning much easier, knitting is age old and still takes just two sticks and some string!”

EARLY MEMBERS HONORED AT 2010 TKGA CONFERENCE



Photo by - Alex Iannelli

Early members of TKGA were honored to wear “in the Beginning I was There!” buttons and were invited to blow out the candles on the TKGA Anniversary cake. (L-R) Beth Brown-Reinsel, Joan Schrouder, Gertrude Soncrant, Barbara Scott, Lois Mitchell, Marlyn Ibele and Mary Blackwell (not pictured is Bernadine Weeks).

SILVER STARTERS AND A LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP AWARD

Silver Starters who were recognized through a PowerPoint presentation included TKGA founder Carol Wigginton who retired in 2001; Marlyn Ibele who chartered the first TKGA guild – the Western Reserve Knitting Guild, OH which is still active; Barbara B. Scott who served on early Journal Committees and Master Knitting Program Committees and who developed and still teaches TKGA correspondence courses; and Shirley MacNulty who chaired the first Master Knitting Committee, contributed regular articles to the then fledgling TKGA magazine *Cast On*, and continues to design, write about and teach knitting. Designers Dixie Falls and Joan O’Steen who appeared in the first issue of *Cast On* magazine in the fall of 1984 sent their congratulations to TKGA. Silver Starters who continue to contribute to TKGA as correspondence course instructors are Evie Rosen and Janet Johnson Stephens.



The officers of Western Reserve Knitting Guild: Palmer Manchester, Treasurer; Susan Post, Secretary; Connie Bartels, Vice-President; Marlyn Ibele, President.

Marlyn Ibele, was presented by TKGGA Executive Director Penny Sitler with a Lifetime Membership in TKGGA in recognition of her work in the early days of the Association. Marlyn not only chartered the first TKGGA guild, but also taught at TKGGA conferences, authored the original TKGGA Professional Finishing correspondence course and helped to establish the TKGGA Memorial Fund. Marlyn's husband had said, "Weren't you lucky to have your hobby do so much for you!" And Marlyn's reply was: "Yes, I've truly been lucky, and my thanks goes to this wonderful organization, TKGGA. May it continue to grow and inspire other knitters as it did me!"

*Pictured right: Left, Penny Sitler;
Right, Marlyn Ibele
Photo by - Alex Iannelli*



Carol Wigginton with Helene Stegall of The Knitting Connection in Middletown, OH, outside the White House Gate.

Carol Wigginton of Lexington, KY founded The Knitting Guild of America in 1984 and began publishing Cast On magazine that summer. In 1999 Carol penned a note to Cast On readers that included these words: I want to thank you all for being part of the Guild ... I will always treasure the wonderful memories you have given me ... Remember, TKGGA is your Guild, so get involved, share your ideas, enjoy it and teach someone to knit!" Carol retired fully from TKGGA in 2001, and Offinger Management Company of Zanesville, Ohio became its new home. With the move, TKGGA became a not for profit organization and gained a more globally inclusive name: The Knitting Guild Association.

Where would TKGGA be without its local guilds? Marlyn Ibele understood very early the value of TKGGA guilds. She wrote: "The idea of forming a club or guild of knitters in our area really belonged to Sue, owner of The Knitting Corner of Ohio. Unfortunately, Sue was dying of cancer. Before she could get a club going, information about The Knitting Guild of America came to Sue's shop, and her son shared it with me. I immediately became a TKGGA member – and my member number to this day is #60. From TKGGA I learned that if we formed a guild that July it would likely be the number one charter for TKGGA, and I thought "I can do that as a tribute to Sue." The Western Reserve Knitting Guild was formed and given the TKGGA Guild Charter Number One!"



Barbara Scott



Shirley MacNulty



Dixie Falls

In 2008 Barbara B. Scott was recognized by TKGGA with a Lifetime Membership for her contributions to TKGGA. An original member of the TKGGA Journal Committee (along with Jude Martin and Margaret Hall), Barbara served from 1984-1990, was also on the Master Knitting Program Committee in its infancy from 1991-1994 and served as co-chair of the Committee from 2000-2003. She also served as Cast On magazine's technical editor for many years. Barbara has taught at TKGGA conferences, and is the original author of the TKGGA Basics, Basics, Basics correspondence course and the new TKGGA Swatch to Sweater correspondence course. She remains a long-time member of The Knitting Guild of Santa Cruz.

In the Summer 1985 issue of Cast On Shirley MacNulty first appeared as a member of the TKGGA Education Committee, along with Zina Mae Chesley (the chair), Katherine Mahon, Scott Payne and Sara Jane Treinen. MacNulty was Chair of the Master Knitting Committee that formed in Fall 1988, and served with Gini Dillon, Justine Eakins, Audrey Talley and Nancy Wilt. Shirley started and wrote the first "On Your Way to the Masters" articles in Cast On, and was a frequent contributor to the magazine with a series of articles called "The Stitch of the Season". She was an instructor at the first TKGGA Conference in Dallas with an afghan class. Shirley continues to design, write and teach.

Featured in the premier issue of Cast On magazine in the Summer 1984 issue were Jude Martin, Ferne Geller Cone, Dixie L. Falls and Joan O'Steen.

Dixie Falls of Turner, Oregon, taught at the first TKGGA Conference in 1985. A talented knitter with a specialty in Norwegian, Aran and advanced techniques, Dixie is no longer able to travel but marvels at how the computer has enhanced knitting and the knitting community.



Joan O'Steen, then



Joan O'Steen, now

Joan O'Steen, whose article "Knits Won't Fit? - Elastic Thread Does the Trick" in the first issue of Cast On magazine turned her love of art and knitting into a lucrative business venture, designing and knitting one-of-a-kind sweaters for wholesale to specialty shops. Her daughters acted as her agents. Joan attended early TKGGA events. Joan's multiple sclerosis and other difficulties led her to teach herself new techniques for maneuvering her needles. In recent years she has been creating colorful garlands and hats, plus knit or crochet wire baskets.

Author of "Teach Yourself to Knit", Evie Rosen is an early member of TKGA (with member number 68). Evie taught at the second TKGA Conference (Milwaukee 1986) and continues to support and contribute to TKGA members by teaching the TKGA "Mosaic Knitting" correspondence course. In June of 1996 Evie became known nationwide when her photo appeared in Time Magazine in recognition of her work in forming Warm Up America.



Evie Rosen



Janet Johnson Stephens

Janet Johnson Stephens taught at the second TKGA Conference and was a frequent contributor to Cast On magazine with articles and patterns.

As winner of more than 300 ribbons at fairs and exhibits it was natural that she would pass along her expertise by creating and teaching the TKGA correspondence course "Certification for Knitting Judges". Janet is a member of the Northcoast Knitting Guild in Cleveland, Ohio as well as the Atlanta Knitting Guild since her move to Georgia. Janet has served on the TKGA Advisory Board since 2005.



Gertrude Soncrant, one of the first three TKGA members to earn the widely respected TKGA Master Knitter title for hand knitting in 1989, was able to attend (pictured left). The other two hand knitters were Gini Dillon and Janet Mysse. Among the first two machine knitters to earn the title in 1996 were Marian Reed Getty and Brenda Williams. The first to earn the title for Passap knitting in 2004 was Katharine Seaman.

Barbara Scott (in the glasses right) shared that because the first TKGA Conference (Dallas, 1985) was held at the Airport Hotel and there was about "a quarter of a mile" between the towers for various events, knitters would hop on the airport shuttles.

Barbara recalls wondering what regular airport passengers must have thought when they boarded and found it full of giggling, knitting women!



FIRST CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

Getting together for the first time, it is no wonder that every knitter who attended the first TKGA Conference in March 1985 in Dallas, Texas, wore their best knit fashions for the fun of showing what they had been creating. Approximately 250 excited knitters gathered for the event. Knitters participated in a variety of classes taught by nationally known teachers Alice Starmore, Ferne Geller Cone, Anne L. MacDonald, Barbara Walker and Shirley MacNulty.



Attendees participated in a variety of classes taught by nationally known teachers. In the Traditional Fair Isle Knitting Class, Alice Starmore, of the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, gives a helping hand to Anne Macdonald, teacher of the Argyll Knitting Class.

Alice Starmore

Design Competition Judge Carla Patrick of Vogue Knitting was present to announce winning entries during the very first TKG Awards Banquet. First place winner was Dixie Falls and second place was Barbara Scott.



Members of the North Texas Machine Knitters Guild and The Texas Machine Knitters Guild modeled informally during dinner. The Conference came to a close with a Sunday Retail Market.

REMEMBRANCES FROM SOME OF TKG'S EARLY MEMBERS

Marlyn Ibele (TKGA member number #60) - On my way home from visiting a son in Midland, TX, I attended the very first TKG Conference. The first evening I met Gini Dillon -- we immediately became fast friends. In 1985 I was to teach at the first regional seminar in Baltimore, MD. We stayed at a college dorm, no air conditioning. As a teacher, I was given a private room. No! No! I wanted to be Gini's roommate. Besides, she had a fan (and it was hot!). I always wondered if her roommate knew why she got a private room.

Gertrude Soncrant (TKGA member number #401) - As one of the first two TKG Master Knitters I vividly recall enrolling in the first Master's Program -- a new experience for me and for the Guild. There was so much snail mail after I joined the Masters's Committee, and such a thrill when a Committee colleague went out of her way to visit me and my severely handicapped husband! (I was unable to attend any functions.) Letters, boxes of notebooks, early Journal columns trying to redefine instructions, promote the knitting arts -- all an amazing web of sharing expertise and friendships in a very unique way.

Rae Schwartz (TKGA member number #636) - I saw an ad for The Knitting Guild of America in a knitting magazine, and immediately reached for my checkbook! At the time we were living in upstate New York, in an area without any knitting shop. This was before computers, so I was knitting on my own and getting all my yarn from mail orders. The chance to learn more and be part of a knitting community was irresistible, and I was proud to be member 636!. I have gotten through Level 1 of the Masters Program (1989), and hope to continue on when I get more free time. Over the years I have so enjoyed the technical articles, great patterns, and have even been part of a couple of service knitting projects. Here's to another 25 years for both of us!

Debbie Francis Cardiff (TKGA Member number #828) - I was able to attend the first five conventions in Dallas, Milwaukee, Tyson's Corner, New Orleans and Denver. My fondest memory of the first one in Dallas was the Knitter's Market. It wasn't very large with only a handful of vendors. One gentleman arrived late and started to unpack some beautiful hand-dyed yarns. He was pulling skeins out of plastic bags and trying to make a nice arrangement, but once the TKGA members caught a glimpse of the yarn, they couldn't wait for him to get it unpacked. The ladies just started digging into the bags and helping themselves. I was able to get a few skeins of a pretty pastel blend and made a vest that I wore for years.

KNITTING: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE LAST 25 YEARS?

"More young people, both male and female, are knitting. The styles are more trendy and high fashion and the yarns are more interesting with all the different fibers. People are a little more willing to invest in the more expensive yarns to get better quality garments." – Janet Johnson Stephens

"Access, access, access...in so many ways. Knitters can connect and learn from one another so easily through the internet and events such as The Knit and Crochet Shows that TKGA sponsors. No more stitchin' in the dark, not knowing what might be wrong. Knitting information is at the fingertips of everyone with internet connectivity. Also, the Guild network has been fantastic in forging community." – Laura Bryant

"When I was knitting 25 years ago, there wasn't a local yarn shop in my area and I used to go downtown in Toronto to the Simpson's department store for yarn. Other than my Mom and Grandma, I was the only person I knew who could knit! It wasn't considered the sort of hobby a young career woman would have." – Deborah Knight

"I'm delighted knitting has finally caught on with all ages of people across the globe. I only hope that the fear of using multi-colour will be overcome." -- Kaffe Fassett

KNITTING: WHAT HASN'T CHANGED...

"The enthusiasm of dedicated knitters has not changed, nor has the enjoyment of both the process and the product. The giving nature of knitters is still there with charity knitting and gifts, as is the pride in creating something beautiful." - Janet Johnson Stephens

"Despite technological leaps that have made communication and our community/mentoring/learning much easier, knitting is age old and still takes just two sticks and some string!" – Laura Bryant

"I think the joy of creation and the thrill of completing a project remains the same. With all the new yarns and patterns available, knitting provides unending challenges in acquiring new skills and creating unique garments and accessories." – Deborah Knight

