

Hands Across the Water

Memories by Sheila Scrase
Submitted by Verna Power

The COMOX VALLEY SCHOOLHOUSE QUILTERS GUILD hosted a very successful *Hands Across the Water – Gathering of the Guilds*, in October.

Sheila Scrase recalls the very first *Hands Across the Water* held in 1989:

I was recently taking a trip down memory lane and I was inspired, once again, by my affiliation with such a wonderful pursuit as quilting. Our guild, in its infancy, realized there were many fellow quilters out there seeking information and inspiration regarding quilts. Our own guild members met at the Lake Trail Jr. Secondary school and were producing wonderful quilts. We began to wonder what other groups were doing; so one day I suggested we invite Powell River over for lunch and a Show and Tell. They were delighted and accepted the invitation. We provided the main course and they brought the cookies. There was no cost involved as I could open and close my rooms as the need arose. The display was in the textile room and the lunch was served in the foods room. It was great. Everyone was picked up and returned to the ferry; so from the moment they stepped foot on our side and the ritual handshakes took place, what has become a tradition was born – *Hands Across the Water*.

The only formal plan is that each of the larger guilds takes a turn at hosting the event. Entertainment has been added and the menu has expanded. So, year after year, we pack up our stuff and catch a ferry to repeat once again the ritual of greeting and

Note from the Editor: Because the *Hands Across the Water* pictures were low resolution pictures, we were not able to print them here. We have, instead, some recent pictures of donations made by the hosting group – COMOX VALLEY SCHOOLHOUSE QUILT GUILD.



The Ladies of the COMOX VALLEY SCHOOLHOUSE QUILT GUILD have been spreading a little Christmas Cheer by delivering quilts to four places.

sharing both our hospitality and inspiration for each and everyone. May it continue to inspire and compliment our endeavours as quilters.

This year, the theme was travel and we had 250 members in attendance from the following Guilds: CAMPBELL RIVER, COMOX VALLEY, DENMAN ISLAND, GOLD RIVER, HORNBY ISLAND, PORT MCNEILL, POWELL RIVER, QUADRA ISLAND, SUNSHINE COAST and TEXADA ISLAND. Each “traveler” received a luggage tag to be used as a name tag and a needle case as a goodie, all made by our guild at work bees.

Our guest speaker was Pippa Moore, who presented a slideshow of a trip to Africa. She showed how they trained women to use

treadle sewing machines. When the women finished the course, they received the machines to help them make an income for their families and their village. Pippa also had a kiosk where we could purchase African fabrics and crafts.

There were nine merchant kiosks, with items ranging from fabrics, hand dyed fabrics, beads, threads, yarns, to DVDs. We had a quilt challenge, fat quarter draw and a block collection. The block was an Aviation block and there were enough blocks turned in to make ten or eleven “Nap Quilts” (single bed size).

We had great entertainment supplied by a “Corny Fairy” (Ardythe Chambers), “Flight Captain” (Marie Trimmer, our past presi-

dent) and “Our Fearless Leader” (Barb Messer, Co-coordinator of HAW). The “Flight Attendants” (Table Hostesses) marched in, sort of, and formed an almost straight line. They Saluted the Captain and bowed to their Fearless Leader, as a poem of introduction was being read.

Our current co-president, Joan Fentiman, introduced a member from each guild who told us a little about their guild and what they were doing. All in all, it was a great and busy day with talking, shopping, eating, laughing and winning many prizes supplied by local merchants. To quote my husband, as he noted when he accompanied me to an out-of-town Quilt Show, “I have never seen so many happy women in one place!”

Next year, Quadra Island will be our host for three days. For three days we’ll be a really happy group!



ABOVE At St. Joseph’s Extended Care, Director Brenda Phillips, Ann Wild, Resident Rep and May Perry received the quilts from Joan Boyle and Betty Forsythe.

AT RIGHT Margaret Burns, Stephen Shaw and Len Miles admire a wall hanging and quilts from Joan and Betty.



Joan and Betty made their last stop at Cumberland Lodge where Molly Shepherd accepted the quilts.



Quilters Gail Abel and Gladi Lyall of COMOX VALLEY SCHOOLHOUSE QUILTERS present quilts to Cathy Batho, Coordinator, and Norine Lanyon, Manager of the Young Parents program at Vanier, for the Teddies N’ Toddlers program. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT Cathy Batho, Gail Abel, Norine Lanyon, and Gladi Lyall.

Hands Across the Water

by Barb Round, BC Coastal Regional Rep

Quilters tend to reach out to others for ideas, inspiration and friendship. Back in 1992 Dar Vignal was President of THE SUNSHINE COAST QG (Sechelt, one ferry ride north of Vancouver) and Yvonne Turner was her counterpart at TIMBERLANE QG (Powell River, another ferry ride north of Sechelt). The two Presidents brought their guilds together for an afternoon of potluck, friendship building and fundraising, so both could start their libraries. Timberlane had previously rendezvoused with the SCHOOLHOUSE QG (Courtenay-Comox, another ferry ride away, on Vancouver Island). The three guilds joined the following year for the first *Hands Across the Water*. From a modest picnic, this one-day annual fall event has grown, to include many guilds on both sides of Discovery Passage. The complexity of the event also expanded to include quilt challenges, block or fat quarter swaps, prize draws, a merchant mall, sponsors, show and tell, trunk shows, guild updates and even classes. One year it featured “quilt olympics” in which teams of cutters, pressers and sewers raced to produce log cabin blocks, which were later put together as a raffle quilt. The heart-in-hand symbol has become the logo for this event—one year portrayed by blown-up surgical gloves with hearts forming a wreath around the entrance to the event. Each year a different guild hosts, choosing a theme for the day’s events. Because of the ferry connections, billeting is usually offered, and helps to cement additional friendships.



Founding Presidents, Dar Vignal (L) and Yvonne Turner (R) still attend *Hands Across the Water* after 20+ years.

When I arrived on Vancouver Island just over a year ago, I heard many fond references to *Hands Across the Water*, and finally experienced my first event, “Life’s A Beach” in October 2007, hosted by CAMPBELL RIVER FRIENDSHIP QG. Despite the chilly weather, everyone came in summer togs, complete with sandals and sunglasses, and the challenges and exchanges were all based on summer and beach colours and ideas. When I became the BC Coastal

Rep and started receiving newsletters from 32 Coastal BC guilds, I was surprised to read about a *Hands Across the Water* event in the COWICHAN VALLEY QG newsletter...and that is when I learned that the event had been cloned for guilds further south on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. To prove that quilters cannot have too much of a good thing, following are accounts of the 2008 *Hands Across the Waters*.



2008 HANDS ACROSS THE WATER—NORTH

by Barbara Evans

SUNSHINE COAST QG

It was a beautiful sunny day on the Sunshine Coast—just what we had ordered for all the quilters who were arriving to share a day of fellowship in Sechelt, October 25, 2008. There were 200 women from 11 different guilds coming together for one day of friendship, sharing, shopping, playing and, of course, eating! Each year HATW is held between the following various guilds; ISLAND'S END QG (Port Hardy); GOLD RIVER; QUADRA ISLAND QG; Port McNeill; CAMPBELL RIVER FRIENDSHIP QG; Cortez Island, SCHOOLHOUSE QG (Comox Valley), TIMBERLANE QG and the FINE ARTS GUILD (Powell River), TEXADA ISLAND QG and my guild, SUNSHINE COAST QG (Langdale to Egmont and every little community in between). This year it was our turn to host this event.



Each year the host guild puts their own flare on the basic agenda. We chose a Harvest Theme so everything we did was Autumn inspired: the colours of the decorations, quilt block draw, a goody bag of treats for each participant to take for their journey home and even some of the food.

On arrival, we tried to keep people busy while milling about—the “Literal Blocks” game was a hit! There were 15 blocks made up by the Off the Wall group from Gibsons. They “literally” took the name of a fairly well-known quilt block and created it into a fabric picture block (e.g. one block had a little scene



with a Holly Hobby-like gal near a quilted wall hanging, and down in one corner was a cat, thus: Puss in the Corner). The idea was to name all of the traditional blocks and there was a prize for the one who got them all right. It was a lot of fun! Some of the wrong guesses were so funny; we entertained the crowd by reading them aloud.

The only criteria for this year's Challenge was that it had to be Autumn related. There were some beautiful designs and it was viewer's choice voting. Margaret Yells from SCHOOLHOUSE QUILTERS in Comox won the challenge.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 66



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 65

We added a hat challenge this year and asked everyone to decorate a hat in a Fall theme. We had some fabulous hats! Two ladies went all out and actually made the hats first and then decorated them. All the hats were beautiful and imaginative and everyone enjoyed checking them out. It was hard for our judges to choose the winners.

Our guest speaker was Judy Farrow, a lovely, gentle soul from Parksville who had lived in the Northwest Territories; she had some exquisite quilts to show us that she had made with the North as an inspiration. She was an inspiration to all of us!

The day goes so quickly once everyone arrives and lunch starts. Some of the ladies had taken two days to get to our event. We don't exactly have the easiest access for any of us to get to each other; we all have to take at least one ferry and some must take two or three! But, I think it's worth it. It was a fun day and I'm looking forward to next year in Cumberland!



2008 HANDS ACROSS THE WATER—SOUTH

by Reen Lloyd
COWICHAN VALLEY QG

In 2001, Nanaimo hosted a Gathering of the Guilds. It was at this time that we “southerners” heard about an annual event in the northern Gulf Islands that was called *Hands Across the Water*. The purpose of the gathering was to share ideas, which we certainly did.

Elaine Marlon-Lambert (from Mayne Island) and I met at this Gathering and decided that we would like to start our own *Hands Across the Water*. The first gathering included only Mayne Island and the COWICHAN VALLEY HERITAGE QG (CVHQ). It was held in Duncan in the spring of 2002 and was a great success.

In 2003, Mayne Island hosted the gathering and the inclusion of quilters from Pender and Galiano Islands broadened our experience. A very special event took place on Mayne Island. School children brought in the quilts they had made for “Show and Share”. In 2000, Irene Harvalias of the MAYNE ISLAND GUILD started a quilting program with the Mayne Island School. Since then the young quilters have produced some wonderful work.

Since 2003, the gathering has rotated from guild to guild. This year's gathering was on Pender Island and what a time we had! Twenty-one of us caught the 8:35a.m. ferry and had a delightful (and direct!) sail to Pender Island. Upon arrival at the church hall, we were each given a fat quarter and

told not to get too attached to it! What did they have up their sleeve? We were also given a ticket for the door prize draw.

A lovely spread of muffins, fruit and beverages greeted us along with a hall that was beautifully decorated with Pender Island quilts! During the day, draws were made for a vast array of delightful door prizes. They ranged from pot holders to chocolate scissors!

And what became of the fat quarters? Well, a story was read and each time the word “right” was mentioned, well, we passed our treasure right and, you guessed it, when the narrator said “left”... None of us ended up with the one we started with!

Once we were settled (that took a little doing!) CVHQs showed our quilts. Lunch was served after our showing and was followed by the Mayne Islanders showing their quilts. A short break brought us all back, and the Pender Island Quilters told us about their quilts which decorated every wall in the hall! What variety!

Sadly, it was time to go and catch the ferry back. On the trip back, everyone was content after spending a day of fun and inspiration.

Next year, Mayne Island will be hosting *Hands Across the Water*. Each year we look forward to another meeting with quilters we seldom see, to share ideas and quilts. Each year, the quilts become more beautiful and meaningful.



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