

My Quilting Bio Gretchen Young

Even after more than 40 years in the DC area, I still think of myself as a Californian. I was born and raised in Sacramento and went to Pomona College in the Los Angeles area. Graduating with a major in Government, I spent the next several years in New Haven with my then-husband, followed by a couple of years in Sweden. After Sweden, we moved to DC because we drew a Venn diagram, and that was the only city in the overlapping area. Almost my entire career, first in the government and then in private industry, has been spent in the area of benefits – most notably, retirement and health. After working for several years at the IRS and the Department of Labor, I went to work for PricewaterhouseCoopers and other consulting companies, shifting to a technical focus on pensions and then later to health. My last ten years I ran a health policy shop for a trade organization, focusing almost exclusively on the Affordable Care Act. My colleagues often described this time as drinking out of a fire hose, and I have no regrets about retiring five years ago.

I have a daughter and son-in-law who live a mile away in DC and a son and daughter-in-law in Seattle. My lifeline during the pandemic has been our grandson, Oskar, who is just turning two. Oskar will be joined by a new sister in November. I have a stepson in Los Angeles and a stepdaughter who also lives here, courtesy of my partner, Jon, whom I met 16 years ago swing-dancing in Glen Echo. He and I moved from our house in Silver Spring to an apartment in Northwest DC just months before the pandemic. Much of our free time together is spent fly-fishing or sailing, and for many years we have been mentors to a family of Syrian refugees.

My quilting career should have gotten its start many decades ago, when I first knitted “sweaters” for my five kittens. By the time I finished, the kittens had grown, however, and the mother cat had to fetch my own mother so that she could rescue the kittens from my effort to stuff them into their new clothes. Alas, this put the kibosh on my tailoring efforts for about six decades, despite the best efforts of my mother, who sewed and gardened and knitted and needlepointed and quilted and did everything beautifully. My interest in quilting developed quite abruptly one day about seven years ago when I visited a long-time quilting friend who showed me her fabric stash; I was hooked immediately. It’s been a little bit of a slog since then as I had to learn how to sew as well as to quilt. (Thank goodness for the Internet and YouTube!) I was thrilled to join NeedleChasers several years ago as I have been completely inspired (actually, blown away) by the creativity and skill of our members. Everybody here has been unbelievably generous with their time and advice, and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Sit-and-Sews, where I think I learned most of my sewing and quilting skills.

I don’t think I have yet developed a quilting “style”, although when and if it comes to me, it will definitely fall along the modern and improvisational lines. I completely love to look at traditional quilts as well, although I know that will not be where my path leads. Actually, I sometimes feel like lying about how long I’ve been quilting, especially when I listen to teachers who describe learning to quilt and then two years later find

themselves winning first prize at an international quilt show. Mostly I am happy to quilt along at my own snail's pace, however, just smelling the clover and feeling so grateful that I have found NeedleChasers and a hobby that has given me so many hours of pleasure.