

## **My Quilt Bio**

### **Phyllis Jaffe**

My life in crafts began when I made a popsicle stick jewelry box the brownies, at McKenny Elementary in Detroit. I went on to the wonders of lanyards and clay ashtrays with Detroit Recreation and summer camps. I learned to sew on a machine in eighth grade home economics, however I was more interested in clowning around than making a skirt! I still like to entertain the troops, but now I love to sew as well.

My mom painted when her lack of confidence did not stop her. My older sister pursued painting as well. I avoided painting, because I wasn't sure I could be as good as them. Stupid, I know. I got into calligraphy, however we called it lettering, then. About this time my sister and I decided to knit vests. I got frustrated thinking I had to tear out eight inches of knitting when I noticed a dropped stitch! If only I'd known that there were ways to fix or compensate the mistakes! I did find my way back to the sewing machine in high school and made some A-Line skirts and a dress. I might have sewn more, but the machine was in the smelly dark basement.

I went to under grad at Eastern Michigan in Ypsilanti for a Drama degree. I picked up crocheting and made money making those crocheted vests that were big in the sixties. I moved to DC for my graduate work. My degree was in dance and arts management at American University. I did an internship with Twyla Tharp's Dance Company in NYC. I did not stay on after. I found that living in a crazy city while working in a crazy business was too much.

When I returned to DC I stayed in the crazy business, production coordinator at Wolf Trap, freelance stage managed at Arena Stage, Washington Opera, Kennedy Center. It was fun, fast, and exhausting. Yet, as much as I thrived in this world, my desire to return to teaching grew stronger. So I went from working in the theatre to teaching it. I taught theatre arts at Langley High School for thirty years. It was more exhausting than my theatre work, but far more rewarding. I loved working with the students, watching them grow and see their joy when they mastered something they thought they could never do. I miss the students, I miss teaching, but do not miss being a teacher.

One day at Wolf Trap, a stagehand was knitting during a break. She was using this beautiful tweed yarn, and my desire to play with those gorgeous tweeds took over. I was obsessed. I knit everywhere, even in the bathtub, but it was too much trouble to keep it out of the water when I was lying in the tub. My yarn stash blossomed. I knit every minute I had. My students still ask me about my knitting.

Then one day a work friend at Langley, showed me some quilting she had done. That was it, the thunderbolt struck me, I was electrified. She took me to Jinny Beyers shop in Great Falls after work, and walking into that palace of color was like a kid walking into FAO Schwartz. Teaching in McLean, we would sometimes do a drive-by to Ginny's on our lunch break! My first project was a French braid table runner. I was hooked for life. I took many classes there and at Capital Quilts, learning techniques and meeting *wonderful* people. I went to my first retreat with some people from a class and I was in heaven, three days of quilting with friends, food and laughter.

As I discovered more about modern quilting, I went to Camp Stitchalot in 2014. It literally changed my life. I had walked into a whole new world. One I never knew I was looking for, but knew I had found it. Hosted by Pink Castle Fabrics, at a small inn near Ann Arbor, about 24 people. She brought in designer/teachers each session. At mine Tula Pink, Katy Jones, John Adams (Quilt Dad) and Kristie of Schnitzel and Boo.

The participants were loud, funny and boozy, my kind of people. One night, we decided to make a sew together bag. Everyone finished it that night, except me. A full day later, Phyliss had her bag! That's how I got my Instagram moniker, @sewtogetherphyliss, which really meant sewnotttogether! I left Ann Arbor with a ton of fabric and some lifelong friendships. Seven years later, I've gone to QuiltCons, retreats, an Alaskan Cruise with Tula Pink, even a retreat in the Scottish Highlands. I jump at the opportunity to take a workshop or attend a retreat even if I don't know anyone. In my experience, quilters enjoy quilters.

While I was teaching, my sewing was limited to weekends and summer. Since I have retired I have time to do so many things. I have a lot more energy and time for sewing, I have been taking art classes at Montgomery College, I may even take a painting class! I now belong to three guilds! And my fabric stash has overtaken my yarn stash!

Best of all I have been able to travel to see family and friends throughout the year and not just on summer break. I would not have survived this pandemic without my sewing. During quarantine I made many projects and even finished some ufo's! I would like to say that I organized my sewing room, but that didn't happen.

Quilting and quilty friends have enriched my life with friendship, comradery and creativity.