

**Meet RITA JACQUES** | *A chat with Rita in her lovely, colorful home, with the green hills of Fort Ord framed in the front windows, and those surrounding Mount Toro rising in the back. Rita is currently the president of MPQG's Executive Committee (and may have room to quibble with her title as shown on our website: "President, Odd") so you will definitely see her—and have opportunity to know her better—at any one of our guild meetings.*

*Q. What inspires you to make a quilt?*

A. Color. I love color. If I see something that's a specific color or combination that I like, that gets me going. I like the cooler colors: blues and greens and aqua. They make me feel calm and I enjoy sewing with them. On the other hand, I just finished a Mariner's Compass with a black background and bright, bright fabrics.

*Q. Do you come from a family of makers?*

A. I was not raised by makers. All the women in my family were involved in nursing. My grandmother—I grew up with her—ran a nursing home for psychiatric patients. I grew up with them being my babysitters. It was wonderful for a kid. If you've got someone who is obsessive-compulsive, they'll sit there and play cards with you forever and never get bored. And my mom worked at the local psychiatric hospital; my sister did the same. So, that's the family legacy. I'm always amazed at people being afraid of folks who are psychiatrically ill. They're just people...with little quirks. As I got older and got educated, [I understood] that many of the women ended up in our home because they had a hard time going through menopause and were put away by their families.



*Rita, her Bernina, and her muse (Shannon, a.k.a. the Velvet Brick)*

*Q. Tell me more about your childhood.*

A. I grew up in Rhinecliff, New York. It's a little railroad town on the Hudson River, about 90 miles north of New York City. It was kind of an idyllic childhood. I lived on a chicken farm with my Grandma. I had an egg route where I delivered eggs every Saturday morning, in my wagon, 25 cents a dozen. I worked at the Dutchess County Fair every year to earn some extra money. We looked out over the Catskills: I called them the purple mountains majesties because that's what they looked like to me. When I was 17 years old I went away to nursing school all of 20 miles from home. Then I met my husband and we left, and I never went back.

*Q. Where did you go?*

A. Stan and I married in 1966 and started the military tours. Between us, we did 33 years in the military and moved 26 times. We lived in Germany, Stan did a tour in Vietnam, and because of assignments we traveled to Central America and to Bolivia. In the U.S., we lived in North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Colorado, Washington State, California and Hawaii. This is our second time in Monterey: we had been stationed here from 1983 to 1988. Both of our daughters graduated from Salinas High; I was head of the Nurse Practitioner [education] program at Fort Ord.

#### ***Just the Facts, Ma'am***

*Q. When did you make your first quilt?*

A. It was in 1999. My daughter was getting married, and the fellow she married was Jewish. They used it for the chuppah they were married under, then hung it in their house.

*Q. Do you prefer piecing or art quilting?*

A. I love listening to people like the speaker last night (Rosalie Dace), but I'm more comfortable following a pattern. I do whatever strikes me at the time: paper piecing, standard piecing, quilt-as-you-go, appliqué.

*Q. Any technique you'd like to try?*

A. I'd love to be able to paint on cloth, but it intimidates me. I tend to go a little wild: everything ends up looking like brown!

*Q. Do you call yourself an artist, craftsperson, maker?*

A. I call myself a dilettante: I like to do a little of everything. I'm not expert at anything, but I love to do it all.

When I retired in 2002, we literally lived out of our car for a year. We spent three months in Europe, and the rest of the time going around the states, visiting family and friends and trying to decide where we wanted to live. We came this close to buying a place in Steilacoom (Washington): it was up on a hill, windows overlooking the water. When I'd been working full time [as Chief Nurse of Madigan Army Medical Center at Fort Lewis], the weather never bothered me. But when I stopped working, I could just feel it. I'd find myself crying for no reason. Ultimately, we moved back here in 2003.

And you know, every place we lived was good. Every place had its charms. It's just been a delightful life.

*Q. Do you have other creative outlets?*

I like to play out in the garden, and I dabble on the piano. And hiking. I hiked the Camino Santiago several years ago, starting in France, across the Pyrenees, down into Spain. I did 220 miles [of about 550 total]. It

was a wonderful experience. And I did the first part of the John Muir trail with my daughter and her friend. We had 40-pound backpacks! I hiked from the base of Yosemite up to Tuolumne Meadows. Also, we've been sailing for...gosh, 40 years. Our sailboat is up in Bellingham (Washington). It's in a charter fleet so we let other people rent it, but we spend about a month on it every year, in the San Juan Islands and the gulf area. Last year we went to an island called Sucia. It's shaped like a horseshoe, with several places where you can get a mooring or drop anchor. You can look back at Mount Baker and the snow on top: it's just *there*. It's amazing, simply wonderful.

*Q. Why do you continue to quilt? What does it bring to your life?*

A. Friends. Friendships. While you're in the military, you all have that thing in common, but it's very difficult when you finally settle someplace to make new friends. Quilting gives me that thing in common with others in the community. It was when I stepped up and took the position of Quilt Show Chair that I got to really meet a lot of the people on a more personal level. Such a diversity. Such incredible people!

<b><i>This or That?</i></b>	
<i>Lucille Ball or Carol Burnett?</i>	Carol Burnett
<i>Rock concert or symphony?</i>	Symphony
<i>Beethoven or Philip Glass?</i>	Beethoven
<i>Morning person or night?</i>	Morning
<i>City mouse or country mouse?</i>	Country mouse
<i>Books or movies?</i>	Books. I like historical fiction—I've been into World War II books about women recently—but I do like a little sci-fi now and then to spice it up.



*l to r: Sizzle block, mariner's compass, Sizzle block.*

*(Sizzle, by Becky Goldsmith, is presented as a block-of-the-month quilt at <https://thequiltshow.com/learn/bom/bom-2019/>)*

(Part of an occasional series in which a MPQG member, chosen at random, is interviewed about her quilting journey. You can find all of the series interviews at <http://www.mpqg.org/member-interviews.htm>.)