

Phoenix Chapter of the American Sewing Guild

The Early Days

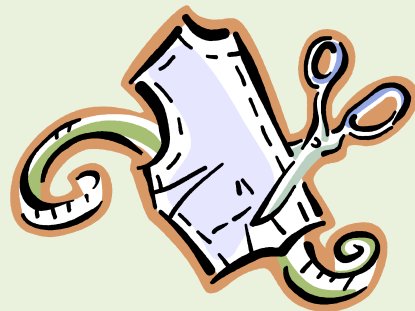
In early 1986, Belva Barrick attended a professional meeting of the American Home Economics Association. Their program was, "Sewing by Satellite", a live simulcast from New York. Edie von Kameka, the national director of the American Sewing Guild, spoke about the American Sewing Guild. Belva had heard about a sewing guild previously, thinking it would be a great thing to have in Arizona, but didn't know any details. After that presentation, she wrote to Edie to see what was required to start a local chapter ASG. Edie responded with a list of Arizonans who had also inquired.

Seeing a Peoria address on the list in close proximity to her home, Belva contacted Nancy Tokarz. They met and discovered that Janice Cacioppo of Mesa had already begun organizing a chapter. Janice was searching for someone to take over because of an increased work load. Nancy and Belva agreed to meet her in central Phoenix. She brought all of the materials that she had and transferred them to Nancy's station wagon. Since Belva had a two-year old and was running a home custom dressmaking business, they decided that Nancy had more time to devote to the organization. She would be president, and Belva would be the treasurer.

On September 11, 1986, the first annual meeting was held at the House of Fabrics on Indian School Road and 320d Street, with Mary Ryan presenting the program on "color". About a month later, approximately a dozen interested ladies attended an organizational meeting. The first Advisory Board was formed from volunteers at that meeting. That day, Joanne Allen (the first newsletter editor) named the Phoenix Chapter's newsletter "Sew Far Sew Good."

The first Advisory Board consisted of:

Nancy Tokarz – President
Donna LeGat - Secretary
Belva Barrick - Treasurer
Joanne Allen - Newsletter Editor
Marcia Lopatynski - Neighborhood Coordinator
Carol Foster - Retail Liaison
Eve Mathis - Special Events
Aggie Lee - Member at Large
Ann Kay - Member at Large



The neighborhood workshop groups were organized immediately and began servicing the membership. Other activities were planned to gain new members, totaling almost 300 members by the end of the first year and grew to over 800 members within the next few years!

Only a few months after organization, a group of members flew to Los Angeles to shop all day! What a fun day of treasure-hunting! (Later, national headquarters discouraged such trips because they wanted members to support local businesses. Therefore, there were no more out-of-town trips!)

The Phoenix Chapter's first big special event was held on October 6, 1987, with Clotilde presenting the program. Members also modeled garments from a Burda Patterns trunk show. That program stretched the group's resources because the hotel check and Clotilde's fee left less than one dollar in the treasury!

During the first year, Nancy Tokarz and Joanne Allen represented the Phoenix Chapter at the American Home Sewing Association's trade show and raved about the event. The next year, ASG planned its first general membership convention in San Francisco. Several Phoenix members attended, met designers from the sewing industry, and began plans to bring a few of these "sewing stars" to Phoenix for special events. One of the highlights of the trip was a visit to the four story Britex Fabrics in downtown San Francisco!

All of the special events programs and neighborhood workshop groups have been well-attended since the onset because the members have always desired to learn more about sewing from professionals as well as each other. Fundraiser fashion shows, the ever-popular "Sew-In", neighborhood workshop group activities, fabric yard sales, charity sewing and other events have helped our members to learn more about sewing while making lasting friendships as they work together. One fashion show, an early-day fund raiser for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, featured ASG "members, their families, friends and clients modeling their creations. The commentator was Lin Sue Cooney (Channel 12KPNX). Our very own Jeannine Heller made Lin Sue's outfit for the day!

Over the past twenty years, the Advisory Boards have had good leadership and a strong commitment. The Phoenix Chapter has grown and changed over the years, which shows that members are willing to change with the times to meet the needs of the chapter. Some of the members have assumed even greater leadership responsibilities. Marge Boydston, one of the former presidents, served on the national board of directors for a few years. Other members have also taught at the national conventions. ASG members have been willing to volunteer for the many roles needed to plan events, organize projects and reach out to the community in charitable ways. Some of these include the Make-A-Wish donations, Breast Cancer Research contributions from quilt and doll clothes' raffles, Head-Start Program's nap quilts, Salvation Army Christmas stockings, hospital preemie gowns, baby burial gowns, neonatal "snakes", incubator covers and Hurricane Katrina victim's quilts.

Being a part of the American Sewing Guild can provide personal pleasure and pride. It is an organization that helps those who have an interest in the sewing arts from beginner to professional through providing education, utilizing individual sewing and leadership skills, reaching out to the community and just having fun!

Thanks to Belva Barrick, C.F.C.S. for submitting this history of ASG.

