

Spotlight on Elaine Fitzgerald Faflek

Born and raised in Southern California, I am a true native of the Golden State. Although I enjoyed a quiet, sun-loving youth, in later years, I sought adventure.

After graduating from Azusa High, I spent two years at the University of California, Riverside. Transferring to UC Berkeley in 1963, I encountered the Free Speech Movement and massive campus rallies. Bypassing the demonstrations, I graduated with a degree in Psychology. Entering graduate school at San Francisco State, I discovered that the chaos followed me. Through whiffs of tear gas and continuing student unrest, I attended classes and earned a teaching credential and a Master's degree in Counseling.

I entered a very "safe" elementary teaching career in the Bay Area in 1967; life settled down. However, that desire to explore the world could not be subdued, so I grabbed a Eurorail Pass in the summer of 1968 and headed off solo for the "continent." I tested the Iron Curtain by traveling to Berlin and crossing through no man's land at Checkpoint Charlie. Exploring Europe for these three months was not enough, so the following summer I booked one of the first American tours into the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. That's why, standing on a busy street in Leningrad in 1969, I watched Russian TV show American astronauts imprint man's first footsteps on the Moon. This tour included stops in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. (Little did I imagine that a Czech would become my beloved husband a few years later.)

Returning to my elementary school job, I continued my adventuresome summers with more trips to Europe and to the South Pacific. Tahiti became one of my most favorite destinations on earth. The remoteness of Tahiti provided an idyllic refuge from the regimented classroom!

Many Kiowa classmates have met my charming husband, Al. After attending the San Francisco Opera on a memorable evening in the fall of 1972, I met Al at a local gathering place. We have been together ever since. Al worked in the hotel industry in San Francisco and in the casinos at Lake Tahoe. In Tahoe, I learned not only how to snow ski but how to water ski under his patient, but demanding instruction! I left the San Francisco Bay and returned to Southern California in the early 80's when Al accepted a management job as the flour milling superintendent of the largest mill in Los Angeles. This career-changing event, prompted me to explore new options in private industry.

After a few years as an independent contractor, an administrative position with Ball Aerospace provided my transition into the aerospace industry. When the Ball facility closed, I migrated to McDonnell Douglas in Huntington Beach where I quickly landed a fantastic job supporting the production team on the International Space Station. Shortly after McDonnell Douglas merged with Boeing and the major structural segments of the Space Station were completed, I joined the Materials & Process Engineering organization. As the business, IT, facilities and administrative liaison for the Director, my days were filled with activities supporting a dynamic group of engineers and technicians who worked material issues on many complex Boeing products: Delta rockets, the Shuttle, International Space Station, military aircraft, commercial aircraft (including the 787), Phantom Works products, and research and design projects. Exposed daily to all of this advanced technology, I now wish that I had studied to become an engineer!

With such a varied career, I was afforded many opportunities to develop leadership skills. In 1989 I joined the Huntington Beach Management Association (HBMA) at McDonnell Douglas and was eventually elected to the Board. When the HBMA merged with the Boeing Chapter (BALC) of the



National Management Association (NMA) I was responsible for membership. After holding several key board positions, I was elected President of the BALC in 2003. That year I was also selected as the NMA Member of the Year. In August of 2007, I retired from Boeing; however, I still enjoy meeting with current employees and retired friends.

Elaine was elected President of the Boeing Aerospace Leadership Chapter in January of 2003.

Travel has always been a passion in my life. Al and I traveled frequently to Czechoslovakia during the 1980's to visit his family and friends. Our visits always included medieval castles and historical sites that shaped history. Political and social changes over the past 20 years have been startling – pre- and post-Soviet occupation. A subdued population under communism has emerged into a modern, technology-driven society. Prague has become the “Paris of Central Europe.” We travel to the Czech Republic frequently so I am learning the basics of the Czech language! My stepson, daughter-in-law, and grandson are frequent visitors at our home in Westminster. Visits from our 18-year-old grandson, Radovan, highlight our summers; he is an avid sportsman, enjoys home improvement projects with Al, and is becoming quite an accomplished chef.



*Elaine & Al – Old Town Square
Prague 2009*



Elaine & Al – Kauai, November 2008

On Christmas shutdowns in the aerospace industry, we started traveling to Hawaii. Now that we are both retired, we find even more time to visit the islands. Since retirement, we have also become cruisers! In 2008 we booked a cruise/land tour of Alaska. What a wonderful introduction to the independent Alaskan spirit! This winter, we explored many countries on our cruise to the Panama Canal. Viewing the technological wonders of the Canal amazed us. Learning more about the culture and history of Columbia, Panama, Costa Rica, and Mexico kept our minds busy. The most “adventuresome” tour of this trip was the Zip Line down through a tropical forest in Costa Rica. Planned for January of 2011 is a cruise of New Zealand, Australia and a land tour to the interior of Australia. Plans for future “adventures” are being formulated.



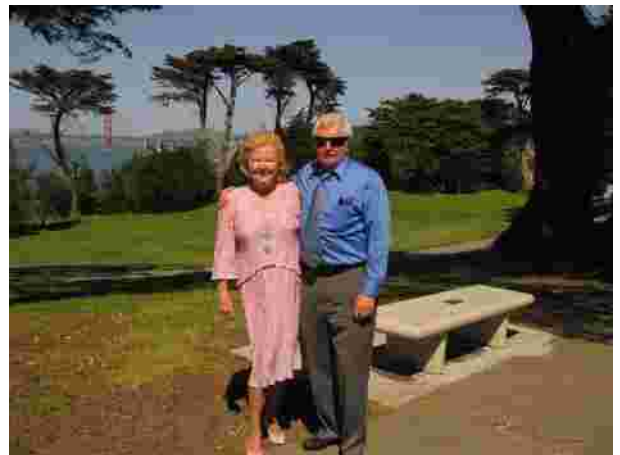
*The Fafileks enjoy the wineries in Temecula -2009
Jarmila, Radovan, Jr., Radovan, Sr., Al & Elaine*



Seeking more adventure, Elaine donned the safety gear and flew down the Zip Line in the Costa Rican tropical forest - 2010.



The Fafileks toured Acapulco while on their Panama Canal cruise – 2010



Elaine & Al rekindle memories in the San Francisco area – where they met and lived for over a decade - 2010