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Tom & Peggy Keesecker - Seldovia, a place to call home *by Charity Winters*



Tom and Peggy Keesecker may have finally found a place to call home – for a little while at least! Always looking for a new adventure, this couple has spent most of their life together moving from place to place in Alaska . At each stopping point they worked long and hard to make a particular vision come alive. Their endeavors make for a very interesting life story!

The Keeseckers began their adventures together very early and very quickly. They met at a parochial high school in Oregon called Salem Academy when Peggy was a junior and Tom a senior. After what must have been a whirlwind of a courtship, the two were married during Peggy's senior year while Tom was on boot camp leave from the navy. Shortly after, Tom was called away to duty in Vietnam and Peggy spent 9 long months alone, waiting for her man to come home. They have now been married for almost 37 years.

“Insanity” is how Tom labeled it all. Yet they had bought the business because the romance of having an Alaskan lodge appealed to their sense of adventure. Even though they burned themselves out in 4 years, they don't regret the choice.

After the business was sold, the Keeseckers headed to Valdez for a summer to work and then back to Glennallen to stay until their second daughter graduated from high school. During this time, Peggy used her working knowledge of accounting to begin her own business called Alaska Accounting Solutions, Inc. The business is still going strong today, run by their two daughters with Peggy now as the silent partner. Peggy also began working as a grant writer at this time. She wrote grants to find money for a small village called Christochina. Amazingly, all of her grants were awarded money and the little town didn't have any idea what to do with all the money. Peggy and Tom moved to the village for a year so Peggy could help organize the proper means

In 1976, Tom got out of the navy and was ready to try something new. Alaska was on his mind and Peggy encouraged him to check it out. In 1981 he and a friend flew to Valdez to “look for a job” and spent the whole week fishing and falling in love with Alaska . He went home and told Peggy to pack up, they were heading to Valdez ! In response, Peggy says she is “always ready for an adventure”. She took it all in stride as they sold their home, packed up all their belongings, their two daughters, Julie and Jeanie, their dogs and their bird, and started off for Alaska . They began their journey by renting a Uhaul truck that would have been the very first to drive up the Alcan Highway – I say “would have” because the truck never made it! A few days into the trip, smoke began billowing from the tires, indicating that the brakes were gone. A new truck was brought to them and their belonging haphazardly tossed inside. Once they reached Seattle , they decided the truck just wasn’t going to make it. So they placed everything into a sea-land tote and had it shipped to Alaska . The only problem was, they were heading to Valdez and their belongings were headed to Anchorage ! Unfortunately, they didn’t realized this until they reached Valdez . They ended up spending their entire savings to have it all shipped down from Anchorage . Fortunately, Tom got a job the very day he began applying. He worked for Copper Valley Electric as a power plant operator for four years.

In 1984, the Keeseckers bought the Sourdough Roadhouse on the Richardson Highway . An established business since 1903, the Roadhouse was 40 miles outside of Glennallen and was the kind of place that met every imaginable need for the weary Alaskan traveler. It contained a restaurant, grocery store, gas pumps, rental cabins, and was open from 6am to midnight . In the summers business was crazy. They hired high schoolers from Glennallen to help out. However, since town was 40 miles away the kids stayed in a bunkhouse – so the Keeseckers became temporary guardians on top of everything else! Jim Girth was their right hand man. A local man and an amazing baker he would make 30 loaves of bread, 30 pies, and homemade hamburger buns everyday! On top of that, they made their own soups and burgers to serve their customers.



to use the funds. Tom spent his time volunteering his carpentry expertise here and there around town.

Finally the couple ended up in Anchorage for 10 years. Tom began his own business called The Home Remodeler while Peggy continued with her accounting business. I’m sure you’re beginning to wonder when and how Seldovia comes into the picture! Peggy had been working as an accounting consultant for the Seldovia Village Tribe. SVT offered a package deal to Tom and Peggy – Tom would work as the construction manager for three building projects in town and Peggy would go to work as the Chief Financial Officer for the company. They said it was the perfect timing for a life change. Peggy turned her accounting business over to her daughters and they left for Seldovia in April 2003.

The Keeseckers keep up with their work at the tribe and are now the proud owners of the beautiful Harbor’s Edge Bed and Breakfast. Last summer they bought an old duplex and worked their magic – Tom as carpenter and Peggy as decorator – to put together a gorgeous haven for visitors to Seldovia. The B&B has a magnificent view of the harbor and offers one full bedroom and bath for a couple and a small apartment that sleeps 6 for a visiting family. Each visitor is provided with a meal voucher for the Tidepool Café for every morning they are at the Harbor’s Edge.

The Keeseckers seem happy where they are for now. They have settled into Seldovia and each finds that it meets their needs in a variety of ways. Tom enjoys the “quietness” and the close fishing grounds. Peggy likes to feel that she can contribute to the community in a meaningful way. Both are members of the Chamber of Commerce and Tom is on the City Council. Peggy describes their attachment to Seldovia as an “emotional” one – both feel more deeply connected to the place and the people of Seldovia than they have anywhere else. Perhaps that means this will be the final stop on their Alaskan journeys!



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