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Mary Fitzgerald . . . a great lady with many good stories *by Mary Glover*



Mary & Dog Blue

This week, Mary Fitzgerald graciously allowed me to interview her for our spotlight page. The spotlight last week was about Alta Colberg, Those of us who live in this community know Mary is the other grandmother of a few children in our community. Unknown to me at the time of the interview, Mary and Ken Fitzgerald moved to Seldovia because of Alta Colberg. When Ken and Mary were looking to relocate their home from Fairbanks to another location below Anchorage, they came to Seldovia because Mary wanted to meet Alta. Alta is the other grandmother of Leslie Peterson. Mary said, "I liked the place, it was interesting. I like small cities." Mary met Alta who was living above the bar at that time. Alta invited her upstairs and they had a very special first meeting. The rest is history because Ken and Mary contacted Carol Stavik (a former realtor in Seldovia) and rented a big house. They later purchased this house. Like some of the other men in our community, Ken works on the North Slope and commutes home.

Mary was born in Ft. Worth, Texas. Last year she went back to Ft. Worth for a family reunion given in honor of an uncle who was turning 100 years old. Much had changed since she was a

Mary and Ken Fitzgerald have been married 28 years. Ken has also been previously married and he has two girls by that marriage. They met in Valdez. When they were first married, Mary worked on the pipeline. (Mary told me that once in her lifetime she owned a florist shop and has done many floral arrangements and flowers for weddings.) They later moved to California and bought a desert home near Palm Springs. Sometime thereafter they moved to Del Mar, California where Ken had his own ceramic tile installation business. One of his major customers was Carl, Jr. food chain. Later, Ken and Mary moved to Hawaii where they bought a mango farm. Across the street from them was a coffee farm. Mary speaks of Hawaii with many fond memories. She was involved with a civic group named "Outdoor Circle" (about 700 members within all the islands) and they were responsible for many beautification projects. One project was getting legislation passed so that no large advertisement signs could be posted on the islands. Mary grew many flowers and plants. Ken returned to working on the slope and the farm got too much for Mary to run by herself. That is when they both returned to Alaska.

child growing up there. Her mother, Leoma, was a primarily a homemaker, although she periodically took classes at the local college. Her father, Frank, worked for the county. Her mother was 24 years old when her father married her. Frank was 50 years old at the time. Mary's father's first wife was the sister of the famous Will Rogers. Will Rogers kept in touch with Frank even after Frank's first wife's death and after he was married to Leoma. Once Leoma made Will Rogers one of his favorite meals---white beans---only the beans turned out very runny. After that Will Rogers would always tease Mary's mother if she was going to serve him some "runny beans." As a young child, Mary can remember Will Rogers picking her up and throwing her around in the air. She also remembers his wife, Betty. She remembers when he died in an airplane crash with Wiley Post in 1935 at Point Barrow (then the Territory of Alaska, USA.)

Leona and Frank had three children together: Lillian, Mary and Joann. Lillian is now deceased and Joann is Mary's sister who lived in Seldovia for a short time. (Some of us have met Joann.) Frank and Leona moved from Texas to Santa Barbara, California when Mary was about seven years old. She grew up and graduated from high school in Santa Barbara. Mary's mother and father divorced and her mother remarried another man also named Frank, who was the owner of a men's clothing store. Mary's mother "rented rooms out" in the three story house they owned. Once during wartime, Mary remembered when 21 coast guard men stayed with them. She was only 12 years old at the time, but she said, "they spoiled her rotten!"

Mary stated, "I married very young. I met George at a dance and ended up marrying him." Mary is the mother of seven children: Tony who has one of the last homesteads in Fairbanks; Terry is deceased; Daniel lives in Yucca Valley, California; Lawrence lives in Anchorage; Cecilia lives in Hawaii; Cindy lives in California; and Seth is deceased. Of these seven children she has fourteen grandchildren and "my great grandchildren are up in the 20's." Mary showed me a photo album of all her children and some of her grandchildren. (She certainly has beautiful children in her family.) One of them, Rachel Myers of Brentwood, California, is a professional model. I even saw some pictures of Ruby (who lives in Seldovia) when she was a very little girl. She was such a cute little child!

When Mary and Ken moved from Hawaii to Alaska, they brought their dog, Blue, with them. Many of us remember the great dog Blue. Blue was a greeter. He did not know a stranger. Mary tells of the story about a tourist who came to Seldovia by a tour boat and was greeted by Blue. Casually, the visitor was talking to Blue and jokingly asked him where the bar was. Blue took the visitor to the Linwood! This is one of those "Believe it or Not" stories. In 1999 when Mary and Ken got the big house they are currently living in, Mary and Ken also began raising their grandchildren, Ruby, Jennifer and Leslie. This past August, Leslie and Jennifer went to Hawaii to live with their mother. Mary tells us that they will be coming back for Christmas (December 21st through January 12th). Mary now only has, in her own words, "two white brats". She is talking about her dogs, Spike and Cheyenne. Spike is definitely an alpha dog and according to Mary is not very kind to Cheyenne. Mary would like to find a good home for Cheyenne, so if anyone reading this article would like to have a very nice dog, give Mary a call. Cheyenne is a very sweet female and Mary has mixed feelings about giving her away.

Mary is known in Seldovia for the candy that she makes. Mary calls it her Mac Nut Crunch. It is a macadamia nut candy that just makes my mouth water to think of it. Mary will make some batches up and give them to the Booster Auction or to a bake sale. It always brings a good price---and the recipe is a secret! Mary has also been a big help on the July 4th Festival for several years. Mary has been the chairman during the 4th of July cake/bake sale auction and raised many dollars for the Seldovia Chamber of Commerce to help fund the next year's July 4th Festival. She has solicited many cooks in town for donations of various delicious bake goods, organized the display, set up the tables and helped during the auction. She has done a great job! Mary also likes to cook and to garden. She loves growing plants, actually more than cooking. When asked what Mary thought was most important in life, Mary responded, "Love is the most important thing. To love and be loved by someone." What a good thought this is for all of us to hold.



Mary relaxing in Hawaii a few years ago



Mary & Ken attending granddaughter Britney's graduation from a Texas high school in 2006



This is Cheyenne - note she has one blue eye and one brown eye.



This is Spike, the alpha dog.



Mango tree on the mango farm in Hawaii



Poinsettia - one of Mary's favorites in Hawaiian garden



Hibiscus that Mary grew from a small plant. Note how large it was compared to the pie tin.



2006 - Alex, Emilie and Leslie, Mary's grandchildren in Texas. Leslie went to Texas with Mary.



Mary & Ken



**Mary's candy "A Touch of Aloha"
(It looks even better when opened!)**

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