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Suzie Stranik - Enjoying the Golden Years

by Tamara

Blodgett



Enjoying the "Golden Years," one moment at a time...

The Straniks' have made the leap and sold their main residence in Anchorage to pay homage to the lifestyle of peace and quiet afforded in Seldovia. Suzie Stranik and husband Jerry, have made Seldovia their part-time residence at a time of life most would be thinking of retiring to a spot that has "all the conveniences." For Suzie, however, life is more about experiences and living than having everything orchestrated. Definitely filled with an artistic bent, Suzie finds herself playing in the mud more days than not, "Gardening is my gift. I would garden round the clock if I could," she declared. Each year, Suzie makes a little more progress at the bend which marks the midway point of what's left of our historic boardwalk. In this spot is a little-known city park, nestled like

Having lived in Alaska for three decades has been a life experience they do not wish to give up. Suzie remembers fondly her children racing back and forth on the boardwalk on weekends, every summer and the holidays that allowed a freedom and safety not found in the big city. Although her children are grown now, her architect daughter Dakota, will help the beautification committee with a planned gazebo design. A newer interest of Suzie's, [this committee] she is motivated to see some much-neglected parks and related projects finalized. These needs have inspired her to spearhead the effort to clean up Main Street and the surrounding areas. These projects include weeding, planting, new trash cans, benches and eventually streetlights. She and a few other ladies have taken the "bull by the horns;" throwing up their efforts for public consumption and

a jewel in our coastal crown which overlooks Seldovia Slough. This small park is a perfect complement to the last little bit of old boardwalk; a construction feat of the 1930's.

More than a gardener...

Although Suzie's passion is gardening, she is an accomplished gourmet chef who studied under Martha Stewart in the 1970's, with subsequent training under a lead chef who cooked for the white house during Ronald Regan's presidency. But it was in France that Suzie feels she learned the big lessons on using commercial grade cooking appliances and polishing the skills already acquired. France was the icing on top of the cake of exacting instruction she received during this time. These were critical skills which facilitated the successful longevity of her Anchorage B&B for eighteen years.

Why Seldovia...?

Back in the early seventies, a mutual acquaintance turned the couple onto Seldovia. They took advantage of his offer to lodge at his place on the weekends. Flying down on the Cessna 185, they could be in Seldovia in an hour's time. Suzie can still remember the first time they caught sight of Seldovia from the ferry, she (a little seasick) and Jerry viewed what would be their new home with awe. Suzie said for Jerry it was, "Love at first view." They never looked back. Eventually hearing that the cottage they now live in was going to be coming on the market. They snatched up the steeply pitched tiny house, built on pilings in 1952. They have been making it into their dream nest ever since.

The Straniks' have plans for an adjacent dwelling which will mimic the architecture of the surrounding homes and affirm that "old fishing village" look and feel that is their aesthetic goal. The diminutive cottage has served them well all these years and is darling inside. Driftwood style wallboard and rustic flooring lend to the feeling of age while efficient built-ins are well-placed throughout. A loft, accessed by ladder-type steps makes its steep way up to a broad and light-filled loft area with a bedroom on either side that holds skylights that frame the stars, so visible where we live.



pleasure.

What next...?

The Straniks' are fiercely close to their three children and spend whatever time they have with their family. As this article goes to "print," the Straniks' will have enjoyed an extended vacation with their children in Italy . Suzie laughed that her daughter Chelsey will be their personal guide as she speaks four languages fluently besides English; French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Middle son Tyler, was born here in Seldovia when the old hospital was still in operation. They will take advantage of their travels and visit the kids on their way down to their winter residence located in Palm Springs .

While in Seldovia...

Suzie wears many hats and often works alongside Jerry as his dentistry assistant. There are so many things to keep her occupied that she has to *make time* for herself! Her "retirement" will be choosing the things she wishes to do instead of life's chores necessitated in a mindless stream before her. Gazing about the evidence of her handiwork I couldn't help but be caught up in her excitement for the life-affirming possibility offered here in Seldovia.

Seldovia will never be a place that "entertains," but rather, is a place of introspection. *Thanks for sharing Suzie...*





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