

THE VILLAGE VOICE

Rocky Mountain Village Estates • July, 2019

Meet Valerie Walker

One wouldn't detect an accent, but Valerie Walker says her "first language was Boston.... Then we moved to Corpus Christie, and I learned English all over again!" That was before they settled in Virginia. Her dad was in the Coast Guard, which caused the family to relocate frequently, meaning Valerie attended eleven different elementary schools in three different states. In retrospect, it was like three different languages, she adds.

All that moving around stimulated an interest in geology and a lifelong love for travel. "When you move every two or three years, you get a kind of itch," she says while reminiscing about "that station wagon with a bunch of kids...."

For college, Valerie wanted to leave Virginia, but "it was too expensive to cross the Mississippi," she recalled. She earned her degree at Miami of Ohio and then worked for the federal government in naval intelligence training and the Bureau of Mines; she officed near the Watergate Building when it was the center of attention during the 1970s.

"DC was an amazing place – all the ethnic restaurants and influences." While working in the nation's capital, she observed tremendous political upheaval and protests. Military service was a tradition in that geographic area, she noted. Her recollections of the time during the Nixon/Ford/Carter administrations included "the military grandfather who was bitter about seeing the military son getting the military



grandson killed in Vietnam."

Valerie's résumé might not reflect it, but her work history enabled her to learn different interpretations of the same things.

She's been in Colorado since 1978 when she began attending the School of Mines in Golden, gaining a degree in petroleum geology. Her career as a petroleum geologist with Mobil Oil concentrated on the Western United States.

Valerie called Golden "home" for 30-some years before relocating to Evergreen a few years ago. She's only been a resident at Rocky Mountain Village for a little over a year, finding it a place that makes it easy for her to do what she loves – hike and travel.

She married a man also in the oil business who'd worked in Libya. They had two sons and later divorced. This winter she'll be in Kenai, Alaska helping with the arrival of her second grandchild.

Since retiring at age 58, Valerie's focused on traveling for fun, sometimes with friends, sometimes on tours, but oftentimes by herself. "I quit working to go hiking," she says.

The dots on the map show she's been to Peru, Costa Rica, Belize, Mexico, Guatemala, Switzerland, Ecuador, Spain, The Netherlands, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Tanzania and various places in the US. She's trekked the Inca Trail to Machu Pichu and the Colca Canyon in Peru, biked the Great Allegheny Passage in the Appalachians, kayaked in Belize, and climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. Hiking is her passion.

Besides the athletic endeavors, she makes time to explore the artwork and architecture as well as the botanic gardens of the countries she visits, with Pompeii, the Alhambra, and the Guggenheim being examples of sightseeing stops along the way.

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"A life without love is like a year without summer."

- Swedish Proverb

Memo from the Manager

Outside window washing will be done on both buildings the week of July 15. All screens will need to be removed. Workers will be accessing your decks to reach the windows there.

Please don't feed the wildlife — especially white bread, which is harmful to birds. Thanks.

-- Kathy

Word from King Soopers on grocery carts

The District Manager of King Soopers has informed us that our letter-writing campaign has made a difference! He estimated that he'd heard from about 80 percent of our residents at Rocky Mountain Village with regard to wanting to preserve the privilege we've enjoyed over the years taking carts back and forth through the back gate. He also said we would not be expected to purchase carts to keep up the practice.

While King Soopers has labeled its carts with notifications of possible electronic braking, those in Evergreen will not be activated to brake when they leave the parking lot. Theft of carts is a serious problem elsewhere in the metro area but not in Evergreen.

Carts WILL, however, brake if someone uses one within the store and does not pass through a checkstand before leaving the building; apparently there are problems with some shoppers in all stores choosing to leave without paying for what they've accumulated in their carts.

As long as we remain honest shoppers, there shouldn't be a problem. Thanks for all who sent letters to King Soopers!

WELCOME!

David Harker 206-G

Doug & Gerri Holtz 201-B

Joan Ball 208-B

Robert Mattes 209-B

Valerie Walker continued

"You meet yourself when you travel," Valerie says of traveling alone. "You end up so far out of your comfort zone that you find out who you are." She's learned that one needs to be hyper-alert, and she relies heavily on her ability to judge body language. "I appreciate the Travel Angels along the way."

"I'm famous for getting on the right train going in the wrong direction," she confesses. One time Valerie found herself as the only passenger on the train at the end of the line. She recalls spending five days and four nights in the same smelly hiking clothes until her delayed luggage caught up with her. Two-star, family-run hotels are her preference.

Biking and barging through Holland Valerie marveled at the many ways mothers carry kids while biking. And while exploring the Tatra Mountains, she was fascinated by the salt mine with a church carved into it. She found the Galapagos overrated and expensive and rates them her least-favorite destination.

When her son married a woman from India, Valerie journeyed there as well for the wedding, learning women don't travel by themselves in India, finding herself exploring the culture instead.

What next? Besides trying out the new kayak she just purchased, New Zealand and Patagonia are two places still on her list of places to visit.

Valerie attributes her strong sense of individualism to her mother, an operating-room nurse-anesthetist whose earnings supported the family while her father was hospitalized for a long period. Her mom had coached Valerie with effective messages about the importance of a college education, never getting married until you've had all the fun you want, and always being able to support a family at the level you'd like to live. "Don't eat your education" was the mantra of her frugal family growing up.

"My time in Colorado is the longest I've ever spent anywhere," she says. And that says a lot about the person who's traversed the globe a time or two.

Profile and photo by Linda Kirkpatrick.