

JOYCE (HALLETT) ABBATE



Here is my attempt at filling in the past 50 years. But first I wish to thank the organizing committee for the opportunity for us to share our experiences and our contact information. Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the reunion. But I am sure It will be a fantastic success - and I look forward to seeing all the photos.



From 1965 to 1969, I attended UVIC, while living at home in Oak Bay, and graduated with a BSC in Biochemistry. In 1969, I moved to East Lansing, Michigan, to attend graduate school at Michigan State University. I lived on campus, and met Joe Abbate who was working on his PhD in Biochemistry. I graduated with an MS in Biochemistry and we returned to Victoria for our wedding in August 1971. We then moved to Tallahassee, Florida, where Joe had a postdoc position at Florida State University and I worked in a lab. There we became active in international folk dancing.

In 1974, we went to England by ship, bought a van, and camped our way through the Balkans. We attended folk dance festivals and workshops in Yugoslavia, and toured Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon then back to Greece and Germany. In Freiburg, we met a colleague from Florida State who invited us to share a postdoc position for 6 months each in his lab at the University. We stayed in a nearby village in the Black Forest. My parents came to visit for over a month during the next summer. We camped for a few weeks, mainly throughout Germany, then took the train to tour Switzerland, France, Italy, and Austria. After they went back home, Joe and I returned to camping through France and Great Britain, then back to Florida.

In 1976 we moved to Riverside, California, where Joe had postdoc position at UC Riverside and I worked in a lab. While there, we really became involved in international folk dancing, joined a performing group and danced up to 5 nights a week in Riverside, Claremont and Los Angeles. After Riverside we took a 10 week train trip through Scandinavia, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France and Spain – mostly to places we had missed before.

In 1979, we moved to Culver City and Joe went to Library School at UCLA. I joined a job shop company that sent me out as a clerk typist to a local aerospace company that specialized in flight control computers. Within 6 months, I was offered a position as “Junior Engineer” in the Engineering Department. During the next 20+ years, I continued to work in Engineering at the same location, but with differing organizations, bosses and owners. I started in Systems Engineering, then went on to Software Engineering and Management. It was an exciting time with many interesting programs with evolving technologies, including both new aircraft and upgrades, for both commercial and military customers. Most programs included embedded real time software for flight control, navigation systems and sensors. My work involved proposals, presentations, meetings, and of course designing, writing, testing and documenting software as well as supervision and management. I went on a number of business trips throughout the US and to such countries as Israel, Sweden, Germany, Italy, England, France, and even India. I also worked closely with the FAA.

During this time, Joe became business manager and dancer with the Gypsy Folk Ensemble, a professional folk dance performing group based in west Los Angeles. I danced part time with the group. He is also the owner of a local dance studio at which we rehearse and which includes a store for such ethnic items as records, tapes, books, costumes, and gifts. Over the years, we went on a number of buying trips to Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, and selling trips to festivals throughout California and Utah. Also during this time we moved to a townhouse in Mar Vista, close to the Santa Monica airport.

In 2003, my company was taken over, our facility sold and our offices and labs moved a few miles away and I returned to Systems Engineering. There were waves of layoffs – mine was in February 2006. It was quite a shock after so many years. After a few weeks, I started to work in Torrance at another aerospace company, one that specialized in actuator control, and again I worked in Systems Engineering. Many colleagues from my old company also joined me over the next few years. At this time I became quite active in networking - helping to manage a Yahoo Groups page and a LinkedIn page specifically for past and present co-workers and organized twice yearly reunions which continue to be very popular. Then in 2010, after another layoff, my next and final job was in Van Nuys at a company specializing in radar systems. I returned to Software Engineering as the software manager for a new development program for an embedded radar system. It provided a great opportunity for me to use my experience and knowledge in a new environment.

I retired early in 2013. I found that retirement has many advantages such as sleeping in, fewer deadlines, much less stress and I quite enjoy it. I keep busy sorting through the piles of memorabilia that I accumulated over the years. I also spend much of my time scanning, organizing and documenting thousands of prints and slides, including most recently my father's extensive photo collection. Joe and I are still active with our dance group, both socially and in occasional performances and tours. I am still active in networking and reunions. Joe and I continue to travel, mostly on road trips, and every few years we come up to Victoria to visit family and friends.

I am on Facebook and LinkedIn (on both as Joyce Abbate) and my email address is jabbatey@yahoo.com. Also for pictures, links to videos and information about our dance group, please check our website for the Gypsy Folk Ensemble.

