

FEDEX RETIREES AND THEIR PASSIONS PRESENTS SUSAN HOPKINS

By: Susan W. Hopkins



My name is Susan Hopkins (emp # was 27513). I retired after 36 years on Jan 1, 2020. I started with FedEx in Atlanta in 1983, then transferred to Southern California in the fall of 1987. In 1983 there were only two stations in all of Atlanta!

The summer before I retired, I entered a pageant in Anaheim—the Miss Tall International pageant. It's part of a

week-long convention held annually by Tall Clubs International. To join the club, women must be at least 5'10", men must be at least 6'2" and all must be 21 years old or older. There are clubs in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

When I found out that our local club, the Tall Club of Orange County, didn't have a contestant in the pageant, I volunteered. I thought since we were hosting the convention, we should have someone running for queen.

The judging included a five-minute interview with each judge, a two-minute maximum personality skit, evening gown competition, then answering two questions—one serious and one humorous.

During the interviews, the judges asked questions like why you think you are qualified, if you are able to travel and promote the club, and how involved you have been with the Tall Club.

The personality skit replaced the swim suit competitions in the 1980's. You have two minutes to talk about your home town, your job or a favorite hobby. I dressed like a jester which I felt highlighted my jovial personality. I was the first of the entrants. I bounded on stage in the auditorium of the Hilton Hotel when, after saying my first couple sentences, I realized my microphone was not working! People were yelling, "We can't hear you!". So, I signaled to the sound guy who was in the back corner of the room. What an awkward moment. Everyone was staring at me while I waited, so I broke into a 20's style soft-shoe shuffle and kind of danced a minute saying, "Well. This is what happens when you go first." After the mic was fixed, I wondered, "Do I pick up where I left off or start all over again?" I began again.

Next was the evening gown competition. Six months of daily exercise on my elliptical paid off. The gown looked great! I did my walk and turns and then

went to the Master of Ceremonies for my two questions. First one: Name two things that money can't buy. I immediately said "Health" and briefly elaborated on how money doesn't mean much if you can't enjoy it and do the simple things you love. Second question: Name something you've done that you would never do again. Gosh! There were many, but I said, "Skydiving". I added that I'm glad I did it once, but that was enough for me. That was my one and done. The next contestant had a great answer to name something money can't buy. She said "Height". Dam! Wish I had thought of that!

After the other ladies finished, there was a brief intermission while the judges' votes were tallied and then double checked.

The winner is....drum roll...Miss Tall Orange County, Susan Hopkins! Wow! I immediately heard someone scream in the audience! What was that? Then the president of our club ran from the back to the stage to give me a big hug and said I had made history! What? What history? I was the first lady from our local club to have won Miss Tall International in the over 70 years the club has had pageants! Some people said they were impressed how I handled the malfunctioning microphone—by not getting upset or appearing rattled. Another said I seemed very poised



Recognize these ladies? Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin



Anderson Cooper



Verdine White—
Earth, Wind & Fire



when answering the questions. I was just trying not to have a long pause, nor use the time-delaying tactic of asking her to repeat the question.

The next day was July 4th when an annual parade is held in Huntington Beach, CA. Our club had a classic Volkswagen Beetle convertible for us to ride in, complete with banners.

It was lots of fun. Unfortunately, we didn't get TV coverage because, just as we were about to round the corner to where the television cameras were, a big earthquake hit! News coverage immediately changed to the earthquake.



I looked for opportunities to promote the club and did get to travel to the Paramount Club of Chicago that January. But travel and promotional opportunities stopped soon as COVID hit. It was a struggle to get any publicity during that time. We did not have a convention in 2020, so my reign was extended by one year. That broke another record—the first queen to have served for two years.

It was a wonderful experience. I met many nice people and tried my best to promote Tall Clubs International. My friend asked me to promote the Surf City Splash held annually on January 1st. The proceeds help fund the Huntington Beach Surfing Museum. I agreed to do so, the news photographer was there

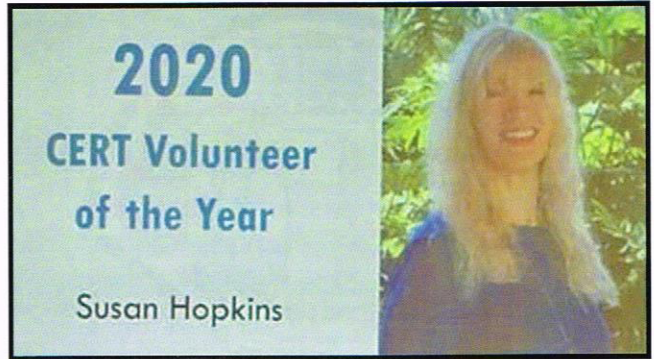


and I was elated to find I made page two of that Sunday's newspaper.

The club offers scholarships to tall seniors going to college in the fall. We

also have fund raisers for a charity called the Marfan Foundation. Marfan syndrome affects the connective tissue in the limbs, heart and other areas. Our web site is www.tall.org. We are also on Facebook at Tall Clubs International.

After my reign, I continued to volunteer in Orange County for the City of Irvine. I was recently awarded "C.E.R.T. Volunteer of the Year" for 2020. C.E.R.T. stands for Community Emergency Response Team. The banquet was delayed the past two years due to covid. I also deliver for Meals on Wheels once or twice a week. It seemed right up my alley since I was a courier before going into dispatch.



I hope to use my retiree travel benefits soon now that things have reopened and I shall continue to volunteer where needed.

FROM THE EDITOR: Susan submitted her story in response to my request in the newsletter for our members to tell me their stories. After receiving this, I called Susan and we had a great get-acquainted time together. She was born in Maryland on a farm, went to college in Ohio, got a job with Braniff Airways in Kansas City and transferred to Dallas where the company went bankrupt. She moved to Atlanta with Republic Airlines and received notice of her upcoming layoff. Friends on her softball team worked for FedEx and reported to her that it was a great company. She took her resume to one of the two stations in Atlanta, expecting to drop it off. The station manager, Johnny Smith, interviewed her right then. Next day she was leaving for work at 8:30 but delayed departure to take the call from Johnny Smith who asked if she could come to work at 3:00 p.m. She said yes. When told three jobs were available—she took the courier position. She said, "I just loved being on my own outside every day—it was hard work but I loved being physical and working with the public."

A very special thanks to Susan for volunteering her story and making my job so much easier. Late congratulations, Susan, from your FERC family!!