

Drum roll; please . . . meet “Miss March” also known as **Annie Fedora**. Her husband, Kenny, teasingly gave her this name after he heard that Annie was selected to be featured in an employee profile.

The petite, blue-eyed blonde Italian is the Assistant General Manager and Executive Chef at Albuquerque BioPark, which includes the Albuquerque Aquarium, Rio Grande Botanic Garden and Rio Grande Zoo.

Annie brings more than 20 years of catering experience to her current role. And experience she has. Annie has catered events on the Santa Barbara beach, private dinners for the Ronald Reagans and the former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev to picnics for 6,000 at the Rio Grande Zoo. She said the bad thing about catering parties for governmental officials was having to endure security checks for all staff, including servers, and not being able to make needed last minute additions to the staff. Annie also shared that working with Nancy Reagan was somewhat difficult as she was very demanding in what she wanted and how she wanted it organized.

Ray Darnell, Director of the Albuquerque BioPark, speaks highly of Annie. He said the first thing that comes to mind is that Annie always gets projects done in the best, most efficient manner. He added that her efforts always exceed his expectations. “She’s truly a great, hard-working person,” he said. “She’s also very creative; she shines the most when preparing for a special event, and when she’s given a free rein with the menu.”



Snapshot of Annie Fedora

- Married to Kenny Degarmo, they have two children: Demi (15) and Kya (11)
- Big Monty Python fan
- Her favorite zoo animal is the polar bear and favorite aquarium exhibit is the shark tank.
- Her favorite book is, “*Interview with a Vampire*,” by Anne Rice. Annie stopped writing “because no one could write a better book.”

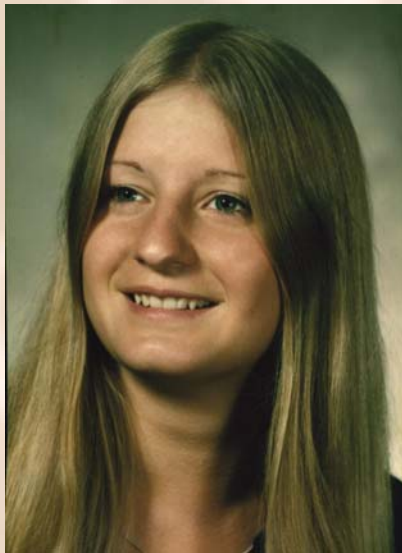
One of the most memorable parties that Annie has catered at the Aquarium was a sit-down plated dinner, in front of the 285,500-gallon tank where stingrays and shark swim together. While the staff served dinner, the stingrays gave birth – and suddenly the



Annie has been proud to cater to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, among others.

sharks went wild and began eating the pups. The guests were appalled and demanded that something be done. One of the bartenders, who also worked as an aquarist, refused to perform a rescue dive when the sharks were that frenzied. (He valued his body limbs.) As a result, the guests were mad at the catering department even when Annie tried to explain it was “the circle of life.”

Raised in Springfield, MA, Annie left home when she graduated from high school to go to college at Washington State University in Pullman. After three years, she moved to Santa Barbara and earned a degree in English and journalism. Then, Annie decided to go to culinary school, and she earned another degree as a certified Executive Chef. She interned with White Star Catering for two years, and



then continued working for the company as Executive Chef and Director of Operations. In this role, she did it all -- met with clients, set tables, staffed, did ordering and even occasionally served guests.



Annie, age 4

During this time, Annie lived on 32-foot sailboat in the Santa Barbara Bay. To relax from her day and night job, she and her friends would sail to local islands, including Catalina.

Annie's HS Senior Photo Since her internship with White Star was unpaid, Annie managed a nightclub to earn money. (It's rumored that she's also an excellent bartender.) Her boss, Kenny Degarmo, became her husband. A justice of the peace married Annie and Kenny, as she was "so sick of weddings." She recalls catering one wedding where the food alone cost \$25,000. Annie decided to save money and not have a "big production" at her wedding.

As a basketball fan, Annie catered one party that she won't forget. She was preparing a luncheon for 25 people and didn't look to see whom the client was. She went out to see how things were going. When she looked up, she saw a plateful of food dwarfed in a man's hand. Annie quickly realized she had prepared lunch for the L.A.



Touring the California wine country

Lakers. And just as quickly she realized, she needed to prepare more food to feed the hungry team.

Another party that Annie recalls was a clambake beach party. The clients insisted that the low-to-the-ground Japanese-style tables be set at a specific place on the Santa Barbara beach, refusing to listen to other suggestions. When the tide came in, the catering staff had to rapidly move the tables to prevent their party guests from getting wet.

After several years in the catering business, Annie and her husband opened a restaurant in San Luis Obispo, called Fedora's. She said she thought they were very clever in using fedora hats as part of the décor. The menu featured grilled fresh seafood. She added, "Sometimes it was too fresh, we had to kill it." The restaurant quickly became popular, but after two years, Annie decided she wanted to spend more time with her two small daughters.



Annie outside of her restaurant "Fedora's" with a friend.

The family moved to Albuquerque in 1995 when her in-laws decided to retire there. Annie went to work with the Marriott Company in its catering operations at Lovelace Hospital. She "went back to school" at the Marriott University and learned a lot more about the catering business. After two years, she quit because she wanted to have time to enjoy her family. Her "retirement" lasted six weeks before she joined a local catering company/restaurant. When this company took over the Aquarium Restaurant at the BioPark, Annie was asked to work "two hours a day" to help out. She said that lasted one day. The next day she was the Catering Manager/Chef and "had keys to the joint."

Then SSA received the contract to manage the concession operations at the BioPark. Annie said she was apprehensive when she heard that the SSA staff was flying in to meet with the local employees. She was expecting to see stuffy corporate characters wearing suits and ties, carrying briefcases and hurriedly working their palm pilots like she saw when working with the Marriott. However, she was surprised when the SSA team walked in, some wearing polo shirts and shorts, and another wearing a brightly-colored Hawaiian shirt, jeans and cowboy boots. Annie praised the team for making her and her staff feel welcome in the KM/SSA family.

She said her job involves more than preparing food, it also entails "walking the fence to make sure everything is being done to meet expectations, yet having to keep everyone happy."

Out of the catering kitchen

Since Annie doesn't cook at home, it's fortunate that her husband does. Her children do not like anything with flavor. They prefer roast chicken and mashed potatoes. She prefers anything with pasta. As a chef, she says there's nothing she wouldn't try. Her rationale -- as a chef you have to try anything and everything.



Annie, Kenny, Kya and Demi on the beach at Santa Barbara



Annie's oldest, Demi

Wine is an Italian staple, found in many households – including Annie's. She's a wine connoisseur and usually enjoys a glass of wine every night. Annie said that a great evening for her is a glass or two of wine and being able to watch a basketball game on television. She loves the game even though she didn't play in high school – girls didn't have the opportunity to play back then.

Besides wanting to visit Italy, especially Venice, Annie wants to visit Africa, including South Africa to enjoy the wines.

When not working, Annie enjoys watching her daughters play sports. Her 15-year-old, Demi, plays competitive water polo. As a sophomore, Demi now has a learner's permit for driving – sending a shudder down her mom's spine while adding a few grey hairs. Demi's equally talented in academics; she's on the school's honor roll and a member of the mock trial club.

Her 11-year-old is a star athlete as well as an honor roll student. Kya is already being recruited by in-state and out-of-state high schools to play basketball. She's one of New Mexico's best point guards in her age group. Kya's also a star on the soccer team, which has been undefeated for three years. She plays football and runs track, too.

Annie and her daughters like to take "girl trips" where they hop in the car, take off for the weekend, and go nowhere in particular. And they don't take dad. Some of the trips have taken them to Mexico, Colorado and through New Mexico. One of their favorite trips was to Durango where they went horseback riding during the day and dined at an elegant restaurant at night.



Kya, the athlete

Her dad was a semi-pro golfer. Annie said she wished she paid more attention to his suggestions while growing up so she would be a better player. But she said she was a "stubborn child" and wouldn't listen. She does take her daughters to driving range where they hit balls. While Annie hasn't played in several years, she's feeling the "pressure" to play by her peers.

Her husband, Kenny, is an artist. He "loves bugs," said Annie. She proudly shared that one of his sculptures of a praying mantis received the highest bid recently at a charity auction. Kenny also worked with the Botanic Gardens in creating the light sculptures to be used in the annual River Walk light festival.