



LEISURE WORLD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Preserving Today for Tomorrow



DIORAMA DOMINATES AREA

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The Leisure World Diorama dominates the Historical Society reception area. Visitors ask about its origins, its cost, and why certain things are not included. Rob Ring speaks to these issues in his "Presidential Musings." He credits one man's dream and one man's generosity with making the impossible possible!

The "Wall of Honor" shown behind the Diorama carries the names of all persons, clubs and businesses who contributed to the building, plus names of others who have contributed since the building was completed. Our major donor is named on the left hand top center plaque. The wall plaque to the left of the board (not shown in the picture) also credits the donor and his wife for the entire reception area.

PRESIDENTIAL MUSINGS

The Historical Society's Diorama is the centerpiece of our building's lobby and we have many questions about it. A diorama is defined as "a three dimensional miniature scene with modeled figures and a painted, realistic background," in short, a three-dimensional scale model of Leisure World. Notice, I said Leisure World, not Laguna Woods Village or Laguna Woods. In order to properly depict either of these entities, our diorama needs to be updated to reflect the many changes that have taken place in our city since January 1998.

BOB RING



The Dream



Gene Conser
He had a "dream."

The diorama was made possible by a dream and a gift. The dream was that of Gene Conser, a member of the Historical Society Board from 1987 until 1995; member of the Building Committee and advisor to the board until the completion of the building. Gene and Helen Conser moved into Leisure World in 1979. An active member of the community, Gene served two terms on the GRF Board. He was managing editor in the production of our 25th anniversary book, Fulfilling Retirement Dreams. I know that Gene was proud of the community. Based on the events of that time, (namely the controversy over the conversion of the El Toro Marine Air Base into a commercial/cargo international Airport) I can only speculate that he believed a diorama would be an effective way to illustrate the geographic importance of Leisure World.

The Money

The money came from Donald and Florence Davis who donated over \$140,000 which allowed our building to be completed and furnished. The Davises supported Conser's dream and inclusion of the design and construction of the diorama was included in the gift.

Donald and Florence moved to Leisure World in 1981. He served as a member of the GRF Board, and was treasurer 1985-86. He was president of The Towers (Mutual 50) for two terms. In addition, he was a director of Saddleback Kiwanis Club, Saddleback Hospital Associates; California Club, and treasurer of Opera 100.



Donald W. Davis
Donor

A Unique Group

The Davis Gift made them a member of a very unique group that includes among others: James and Rosemary Nix, Bill and Louise Meiklejohn, and Jack Sylvester. Because all of these people made significant gifts during their life, they were able to witness the benefits of their gift.

The Davises were present for the grand opening of our building and the unveiling of the diorama.

The Nixes have participated in the design of the Nix Nature Center and will be present for the Grand Opening scheduled for November 4th.

Every day, the Meiklejohns witness the wonders of their gifts to Saddleback Memorial Medical Center.

Jack Sylvester named the Florence Sylvester Senior Center in honor of his wife. Those of you who use the Center can attest to its value to our community.

Your Dream

Your Historical Society is seeking donors for several important projects in addition to updating our diorama. If you are interested in funding a project, please call Holly Williams, Executive Director, or me.



ARCHIVES CORNER.....FRAN LINDBERG

Ever wonder how we handle club material? It is a process that insures materials will be carefully stored and available if needed by an authorized representative of the club.

When club material is submitted, whether it IS in book form, clipping, video or CD tapes, a ***Gift Agreement Form*** is filled out, designating whether it is to be loaned or given to the Society for safekeeping. An ID# is given every item, computer input follows, and then filed alphabetically. These materials may be viewed in the Historical Society, or may be loaned out to a representative of the organization. A ***Loan-OutForm*** must be completed and a return date designated.

Questions from residents are varied and include such items as history of their manor, Mutual meetings, Leisure Worlder of the Month, Veteransd project, Photos and "people of renown." Here again we have a simple ***Research Request Form*** to be filled out. Our files are laden with requests that have been fulfilled over the years.

We have the Leisure World News dating back to March 1965 and all of the Laguna Woods Globe issues. These are a great source of information for residents.

We invite residents to come by the Historical Society and view our Archives. We will be happy to show you our holdings and answer any questions you may have.

Gene Conser, third from left, talks with friends at the Historical Society Open House.

GENE AND THE DIORAMA

**The true facts revealed for the first time!
Shopp shares deep secrets.**

Inasmuch as I am the only living person who has full knowledge of the Diorama and the dream that made it possible, I have decided to let the facts be known. I hope you will find this as intriguing as the headlines of the National Enquirer!

About 1995 Gene Conser was given the title of "Director of Development" and began seeking grants for an Historical Society building. He was not successful, but he did come up with some great ideas. One of those was for the library and the Historical Society to share an enclosed entry where people could come, check bulletin boards and visit.

The main feature of the area would be two dioramas, one a depiction of Leisure World and the other of the South County area. With no funds available, it seemed unlikely that this would ever come to pass, but Gene was not discouraged. He brought up the idea at every opportunity.

When the decision was finally made to "go" for the building, Gene, as a member of the Building Committee, developed a list of prospects that he was willing to contact for money. It was obvious that he intended to find some one interested in his Leisure World diorama.

By this time, he had decided there was no way there could be enough space for two, since the enclosed entry was not approved. He prepared sketches of the diorama and started investigating possible construction firms. learning, incidentally, that it was a lot more expensive than he thought. When he felt sure that it could be done for \$30,000, he went to

see his old friend, Donald Davis, who very much approved of the building and the diorama, but wanted no publicity of any kind.

So Gene met with me, as Chair. of the Building Committee and president Tom Gaylor and together we devised a letter to go to members of the board, asking for their approval to proceed with the diorama, as soon as the money was made available. It was unanimously approved and Gene went back to Don, assuring him that only the three of us would know who the donor was until the building was complete.

With that assurance, Don and his wife Florence gave stock that netted the Society over #140,000.. The transaction was handled by Skip Ames, a long time Society supporter. and the money was deposited in a money market account. Gaylor, treasurer Milton Ray, and myself were approved as trustees of the fund.

The company selected to develop the diorama was Glen Johnson Associates. They studied old maps and aerial photos, did their own aerial photography, and walked the grounds. Gene kept in close contact and made several visits while it was under construction. This was to be the last thing in the building as it was by far the largest, and the heaviest.

Delivery day arrived. Most of the board and volunteer staff were on hand. We had all been impressed with " Gene's Dream" and were like a bunch of kids waiting for the circus. We were not disappointed.

The truck with its exciting cargo arrived . It was carried in by sections, with the heavy domed cover finally in place. We all rushed up

continued on page 5, Gene

REMEMBERING THE "OLDEN DAYS"

(Joan Long, Friday volunteer, who was an employee before she became a resident.)

When my grandson was a little boy, he would ask, "Grandma, did that happen in the olden days?"

In remembering our own olden days of Leisure World, I'm reminded of those days in the 70's when so many changes were taking place in the community. I was supervisor at CH 1 in the spring of 1973, when CH 4 was in the final stages of construction. This meant that all the arts and crafts shops, photography dark room, kilns and wood shop would soon be moving to new quarters, leaving a great deal of unoccupied space available.

For quite some time GRFOfficials had been working with the Recreation Dept. and the USC Gerontology Dept. to create a Physical Fitness Program, and now with all the space available, this program might finally become a reality.

Skip Stone, Recreation Director at that time, mentioned one day that all we needed was someone to run the program. "I think I know someone," I said. "My neighbor has a degree in physical education and would like a part time job, but there would be some restrictions on her work schedule, such as bridge on Tuesdays and bowling on Thursdays."

Skip assured me that it would only be part time, and we weren't even sure the program would work out, but he was willing to give her a try.

For those of you who remember my neighbor, Diane Edwards, you know just how instrumental she was in making sure the program was a success. Also, if you visit the fabulous facilities at CH 1 and our newest facility at the Community Center Building, you won't believe we started out with only two exercycles, a stair climber and lots and lots of floor mats. It really did work out -- and how!



Fitness facility at the Community Center, 2006

GENE

to find *our manors* and to marvel at the detail. Gene was absolutely elated and happy that all of us approved of the finished product. Gene felt that people would see the diorama as a community resource. It emphasized the size, the diversity of manors and the wealth of facilities. It was a dream accomplished.

Gene moved to Villa Valencia after the death of his wife, Helen, in October, 2002. We helped him celebrate his 100th birthday a few months before his death.

BITS AND PIECES OF LEISURE WORLD HISTORY

(Selected from the *Leisure World News*)

... Mari Jan Vested

FORTY YEARS AGO July 1966

Thousands of spectators overwhelmed the bandstand area of CH1 to view the LW Productions Guild spectacular Independence Day program.

Many LW residents traveled to Laguna Beach for the unveiling of the Annual Festival of Arts. This is the 31st year of production. 250,000 people from around the globe attend each year.

Over 600 residents attended a South Seas Luau at CH 1 put on by the Education and Recreation Department. Entertainment included Tahitian dances, Hula and fire dancing.

Newly organized Telephone Club, open to all former Telephone Company employees is the 100th Club in Leisure World.

August 1966

Resident's collections displayed at the "Explosive Hobby Show" enthralled hundreds of viewers.

Presidents of all Mutuels met to review papers for consolidation of all Mutuels to be sent to the Ca. Real Estate Commission, preparatory to the consolidation of the first eight units under the plan of Mutual 10.

Gala Water Festival sponsored by the LW Kiwanis Club is held in the CH 1 pool.

Veteran golfer George Lance sets new golf course record after shooting a 67.

Population of LW has reached an estimated 6,320, an increase of 250 people in two months.

TWENTY FIVE YEARS AGO July 1981

July 4 Celebration includes a formal Grand Festival Ball at CH 5 with musicians who have played with musical stars.

New Leisure World History book is a sellout.

Requests for a reprint increase.

GRF backs off in support of Office Park Rossmoor Professional Center to be located at Moulton Pkwy. and El Toro Rd. Reaction to this decision, made without community involvement was immediate and unexpected.

A ballot is sent to residents of 4th Mutual, asking for the resignation of the entire board. The majority approved. Board decided the count was incorrect. Board members formally announce they will not get involved in personal disputes among members. Pres. C.C.Coats resigns, saying "It has been hate, hate, hate. Now things will get back on track." The Board does not resign. (For full story, see all July 1981 issues.)

Security Guards rebel against collecting coins from laundries. There are now 462 separate laundry rooms with coin meters on the washers. Board agrees to purchase a "Fast Count Coin Collector."

Temple Judea and the Methodist Church will rededicate the "Brotherhood Gate" which leads to the parking lots of both houses of worship. Paul Wynhausen, impressed with friendly relations between the two congregations, left a bequest for its construction, and the original dedication took place in July 1969.

August 1981

Architectural Control Committee approves stringent requirements for patio extensions, height of walls and roofs.

"Chinese Brush Painting" heads list of August events as students display their works.

4th Mutual members plead for harmony and peace. Homeowners group continues demand for resignation of directors. This problem began when the Board passed a resolution to support the Rossmoor Professional Park, since rescinded. Members contend this should not have been done without a consensus of the members.

Residents protest neglect of area around the 4th Mutual, saying "It is an eyesore." Requests to improve the area have "fallen on deaf ears."

A five day survey of 829 residents of Leisure World and surrounding area regarding cityhood reported that 29 % favored, 33 % opposed, and 38% were undecided.

TEN YEARS AGO
July 1996

An early July news story stated that GRF had cleared the last hurdle for the acquisition of 148 acres of land east of Gate 14, and that escrow had been officially closed on the \$3 million land deal. In the July 25th issue, an article read: "The GRF never purchased the 148 acres of Rossmoor land." One of the negotiators for the property said on a Channel 6 interview that GRF purchased only 25 acres for 1.4 million. The other 123 acres were bought by AMH Corp. for 1.6 million for development of a golf course. Formerly, residents were led to believe that GRF bought all the land and then turned around and sold the bulk of it to AMH.

El Toro Airport news is that a Newport Beach millionaire is behind two lawsuits just filed. The developer is reported trying to deny first amendment rights to opponents of the commercial/cargo airport at the Marine Corps Air Station.

Resident Ann Roettgen, a concentration camp internee in WW II, met with Bob Morrow, an author, who had been with the Canadian soldiers who liberated the camp. Morrow had written his memoirs about Aug, 1945 when the Canadians entered Wellerbork, Holland.

LW purchased two used buses and converted them with new floors and wheelchair tie-downs to aid the handicapped.

3rd Mutual resales are on the rise. As of July 16, 166 manors were sold versus 131 in 1995, During that same period, there were 774 leases compared to 579 in the previous year.

At a special "all boards meeting," directors considered a long range plan including a golf cart bridge, a covered swimming pool, new table tennis facilities, and an Aliso Creek horse trail.

Home Depot closes escrow, starts grading near Gate 14. Involved is 25 acres, a 13,000 sq. foot store and garden center, and pads for other businesses.

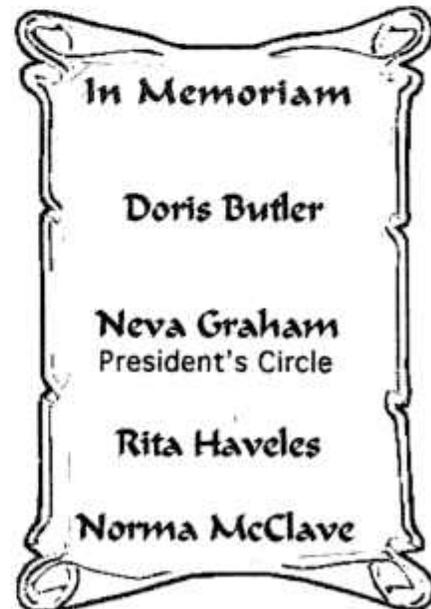
Congratulations, **Jane Whistler**, our August honoree of the Month. Jane moved to Leisure World in 1973, started volunteering at the hospital in 1975. At age 92, she also volunteers with other groups.

Thanks again to **Rennissance at the Regency** for their financial support of this program. If you are considering moving to a facility providing more daily services, do check with the friendly people at the **Regency**.

MEEDED

Volunteers

If you are interested, please come in and talk with our **Executive Director, Holly Williams**. Or call her at 206-0150. Or send an e-mail history@lworld.fea



"President's Circle" is used to recognize persons who have given \$10,000 or more to the Historical Society.

NEWSLETTER
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We need you!
We are here for you!

