



# The Historian

*Preserving Today for Tomorrow*

Volume 2 Number 1

January - February 2008

## Saddleback Community Hospital

Picture the Village without the Saddleback Memorial Medical Center. How did it come into being?

In 1964, the land where the hospital now stands was empty; a part of the Moulton Ranch. A mile away was the little community of El Toro with its store, office, church schoolhouse and scattered farms. With a population of about two hundred it was a sleepy village, aroused at intervals by the thundering Santa Fe trains as they passed on their way to Los Angeles or San Diego.

### **The Concept**

But there was an awakening. Ross W. Cortese purchased the land with a vision of a Leisure World bigger and better than the one at Seal Beach. His plans included a modern \$12 million hospital and medical center.

This community's original medical plan stated that residents would receive 80% of the retail value of; comprehensive medical care at the Leisure World Medical Center, prescription drugs, and in-home nurse calls and ambulance services. The monthly fee for the plan was about \$34.

### **Clubhouse I**

While the Medical Center was under construction, temporary offices and a pharmacy were set up in Clubhouse I. Late in 1963, a skeleton staff was formed to plan and develop the Laguna Hills Leisure World Medical Service Department. Dr. David Zaugg was appointed Medical Director. On May 15, 1964, Miss F. Margaret Nelson, R.N. was transferred from Leisure World Seal Beach and became the Director of Nursing Service.

Initially the conference room above the office in Clubhouse I was used by the

eight-person medical staff which included two doctors, the hospital administrator, Miss Nelson and four secretaries. There was no air conditioning for that room and a daily visit by Bill Dose, chief maintenance officer, bearing a pitcher of iced tea, was more than welcome. This office was used until the Medical Center building opened in January, 1965.

From May 15<sup>th</sup> until *September 10, 1964, date of first move-in*, Miss Nelson's responsibilities included the task of recruiting nurses, assisting with the ordering of equipment for both the Clubhouse I Clinic as well as the future Medical Center. She was also responsible for the development of a nurse staffing plan for the community hospital which was to be completed by November 1965. Rossmoor Corporation completed working drawings and built an actual model of the hospital. The estimates for the hospital, at that time, varied from 125 to 250 beds.

*See Hospital - Page 4*



**Saddleback Community Hospital opened on January 27, 1974**

## MUSINGS

*Historical Society's  
Pictures From  
The Past  
Annual Dinner  
Strevey Award  
Presentation*

**Sunday, March 30, 2008**

**5:00 PM**

**Clubhouse 5**

**Donation \$25.00**

**Music by Rush Robinson**

**RSVP by March 9, 2008**

**Dinner menu includes choice of:**

**Prime Rib**

**Salmon en Croute**

**Chicken Cordon Bleu**

**with salad, dessert and wine**

**Mail your check payable to Historical Society, PO Box 2220, Laguna Hills, CA 92654. Seating is based upon date when paid reservation is received. Reservations for groups, up to 8, who wish to be seated together should be made at the same time, using a separate sheet to list names, and entrée selections.**

### ***A Look Ahead***

Without any doubt, 2008 will be a changing year for the Historical Society. At this very moment, our bevy of dedicated volunteers is hard at work on many new and exciting programs, like the "California of the Past" digital storytelling project. In collaboration with the Orange County Public Library, we are working to preserve California's colorful and important history, as told by some of this city's most senior residents. Our first story is courtesy of Beryl Peterson and can be found on the adjacent page. Later this year, our stories will be available in a variety of formats, including DVDs.



**Chris Macon, Curator**

2008 will also see us embark on an effort to modernize and increase the accessibility of our archives. With the support of resources made available to us as a result of our membership in the American Association for State and Local History, we will begin the arduous but rewarding process of digitizing our entire collection. Eventually, a fully-searchable and easy to use online database will allow us to share the contents of our collection with people around the world.

Of course, we will also be continuing many of our most successful programs, like the Veterans History Project. Our focus for this year will be on capturing the stories of our local Vietnam and Korean War veterans and home front heroes. If you fit the bill, please contact us at 206-0150. There are both on-camera and off-camera ways of sharing and preserving your experiences.

### ***New Professional Affiliation***

The Society is proud to announce that it has joined the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). The Society's participation in professional organizations like the AASLH helps increase our public profile and, thereby, our growth and development.

The AASLH is the only comprehensive national organization dedicated to state and local history. In addition to acting as a clearing-house of information, the AASLH represents the field on a variety of national boards, committees, and task forces.

## California of the Past

“I’m Beryl Peterson. Fifty years ago I moved to California. It was a traumatic experience. It was a happy move because of my husband’s promotion, but I was leaving a much loved bookstore job in Seattle.

After a few months, I got lonesome for the bookstore and I went prowling around and found Dick and Marion Hunter’s Bookstore in Beverly Hills. Dick and Marion had established a very warm, friendly, neighborhood type bookstore. It was a very happy choice.

However, Dick and Marion wanted to retire to their country home down on Palomar Mountain, so they soon sold the store. The new owner moved the store across the street to 400 North Rodeo Drive, which as everyone who knows books, recognizes that it is *the* place to get your books.

We had a very good general bookstore, but my favorite department was the Art Department. It featured art and architecture coffee table-type books, histories and biographies of all kinds.

It was exciting when the book shipments arrived. Every season brought new best-sellers. The book store was a fun place to work because when I wasn’t handling books, I was happily taking books out of the boxes and putting them on our shelves.

At that time our clientele was made up of so many of the early day movie people – stars like Clark Gable, Harold Lloyd, Myrna Loy, Betty White, and Burns and Allen. All were familiar customers in our shop. Katherine Hepburn was a welcome customer. She would come down early in the morning, before we were really open – come in the back door and pick out an arm-load of books for Spencer Tracy.



Beryl Peterson is 101 years old. She moved to the Village in 1989. This is her story:

I can’t imagine living in Beverly Hills without having a chance to work with Hunter’s Books. It was such a fun place to work. I enjoyed the people and I enjoyed the books and the sidelights. I couldn’t help but learn a lot.

It’s too bad that Hunter’s is no longer in Beverly Hills. It was such a valuable part of North Rodeo Drive. It was such fun to share the happiness exhibited by customers buying books.”

## Archive Corner

## *Pink Ladies*

## Fran Lindberg



From 1965 through 1974, Pink Ladies helped man the switchboard in Leisure World’s Medical Clinic.

A surprising total of 1,900 hours of service was donated by the Medical Volunteers, or *Pink Ladies*, who assisted the professional staff in the Medical Clinic during its first two months of operation.

The purpose of the organization was to provide the most efficient medical service to all residents by easing the work load of the professional staff.

Easily recognizable in their cheerful pink pinafores, the Pink Ladies performed a variety of services. They served at the front desk, greeting patients to the clinic, guiding them to their destinations and assisting those who needed help.

They also served in doctors’ and nurses’ offices as receptionists and answering the telephones. Pink Ladies assisted in home nursing and the laboratory, helped the evening nurses and assisted on Saturday mornings.

### **Hospital (from Page 1)**

On September 1, 1964, eight nurses were employed. A ten-day orientation program was conducted prior to the opening of the clinic. During this period the number was reduced to five nurses who provided 24 hour, 7 days a week nursing service. Three ambulance drivers were also employed. Their efforts were supplemented by outside ambulance services.

### **Medical Clinic**

The Clinic was opened September 10, 1964. It was located in Clubhouse I, Dining Room I. Six Medical Doctors and six nurses, including the Director of Nurses, opened the Clinic. The 24 hour on-call Home Care service was started the first day that residents moved in. This service provided a nurse and doctor around the clock, 7 days a week. A resident in need of *immediate* medical and/or nursing care could telephone for Home Care Service.

It was the practice that the on-call nurse would visit the resident first. She would then decide if the on-call doctor should be summoned.

### **First Patients**

The first patient brought into the Clubhouse I Clinic was bleeding profusely about the face and legs. The patient had walked into the glass door of his laundry room. This avoidable accident prompted placement of decals on all glass laundry doors. The first home call made by the nurse was a death. It was necessary for the nurse to call the doctor. Legally, the doctor had to pronounce the patient dead, then call the coroner and sign the death certificate.

After 5:00 p.m. all offices located in Clubhouse I were closed. This included the pharmacy and record room, both of which were located in Dining Room II. The nurse on duty had access to the record room but not to the pharmacy. If a prescribed drug was not available in the emergency kit, the Bouchard Pharmacy located in Laguna Beach, was called. The medication was delivered by the pharmacy to the manor.

The night nurses were left alone in Clubhouse I. There

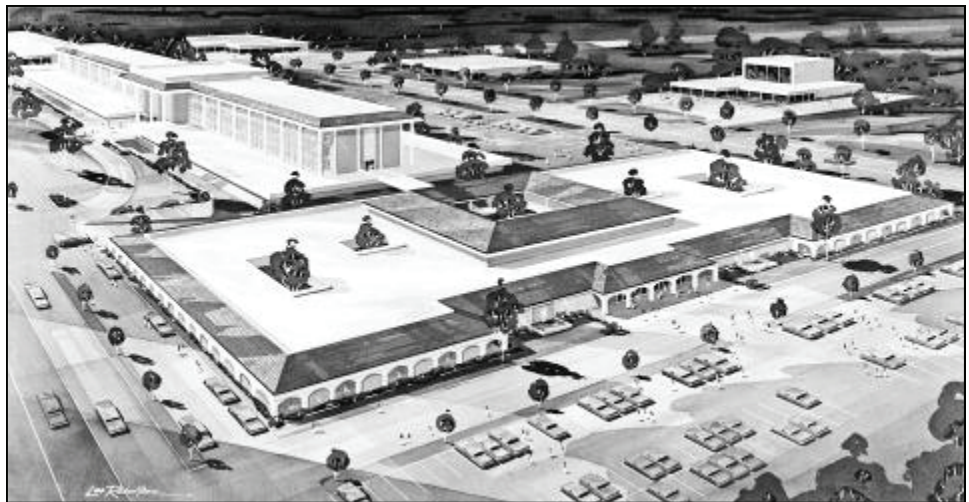
was no watchman, no heat in the building, and no shades on the windows. The night nurse pinned sheets on the windows for some privacy, and if she got chilly, she turned on an electric heater that she brought from home. If a resident requested service, the on-call nurse, with flashlight in hand, would walk from the Clinic to the resident's manor. The Clubhouse I space was used by the clinic staff for nearly five months.

Arrangements were made with the South Coast Community Hospital to accept Leisure World, Laguna Hills patients. The first patient was sent directly from her home to the hospital, on November 26, 1964, Thanksgiving Day. The diagnosis was intestinal obstruction that required immediate surgery which was successful.

The nurses were very loyal. If one nurse was ill another would willingly substitute for the absent co-worker. All nurses traveled from 8 to 16 miles to get to work. There were no provisions for sleeping quarters. The nurse used a stretcher to rest on if it was too foggy at midnight for her to return home. The original five nurses stayed on the Clinic's staff until December, 1971 when GRF sold the facility to Saddleback Community Hospital.

### **Medical Center Opens**

Six doctors and six nurses, including Miss Nelson, Director of Nurses, opened the first section of the Medical Center building on January 12, 1965. In addition to the doctors' offices, two doctors to a suite, the Home Nursing office and Emergency Room and Pharmacy were opened.



**Architect's drawing of the Laguna Woods Outpatient and Hospital Building. The hospital, as pictured, was never built. In 1988 the Medical Center was torn down and became part of the parking area for the hospital.**

**Hospital (from Page 4)**

The Medical Center was built by Rossmoor in 1964 and leased to GRF. In 1968, GRF purchased the facility from Rossmoor. During all this time, the community's management agent, the Leisure World Foundation, managed the center for GRF.

In October, 1988 the Medical Center was demolished, the land paved over in order to meet the needs for additional parking.

**Plans for a Hospital**

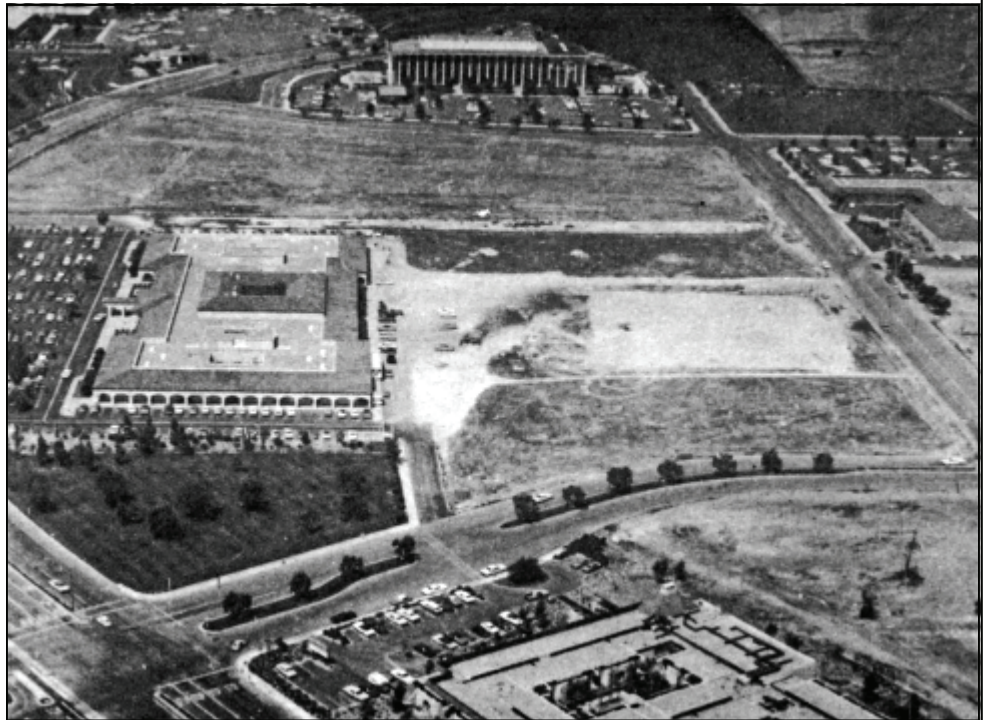
In the original planning, Rossmoor Corporation was to build both the Medical Center and the hospital, but the hospital was not built under that plan because the population growth in Leisure World did not financially justify having a hospital owned and operated by Leisure World. Instead the Leisure World Foundation (not to be confused with today's Laguna Woods Village Foundation) a non-profit corporation including Laguna Hills, Seal Beach and Walnut Creek, was asked to appraise plans for a hospital at Laguna Hills. As a result of this review, construction plans were scrapped.

Abandonment of those plans was accompanied by a more realistic appraisal of how to get the hospital built, and Rossmoor advised the community that it was unable to finance the project.

This meant starting from scratch again, and with two thousand families occupying manors, all of whom had been promised a hospital, the need was growing daily. There was also the problem of financing, accompanied by the danger of building a facility so soon that it would put a financial burden on the establishment until it could reach self-supporting status.

Starting with Mutual 12, the GRF membership fee was increased from \$500 to \$1,200 in order to provide a reserve for hospital construction. Ultimately this resulted in a contribution of \$800,000 to the Saddleback Community Hospital.

In 1968, GRF submitted a letter of intent to construct a hospital to the Orange County Health Planning As-



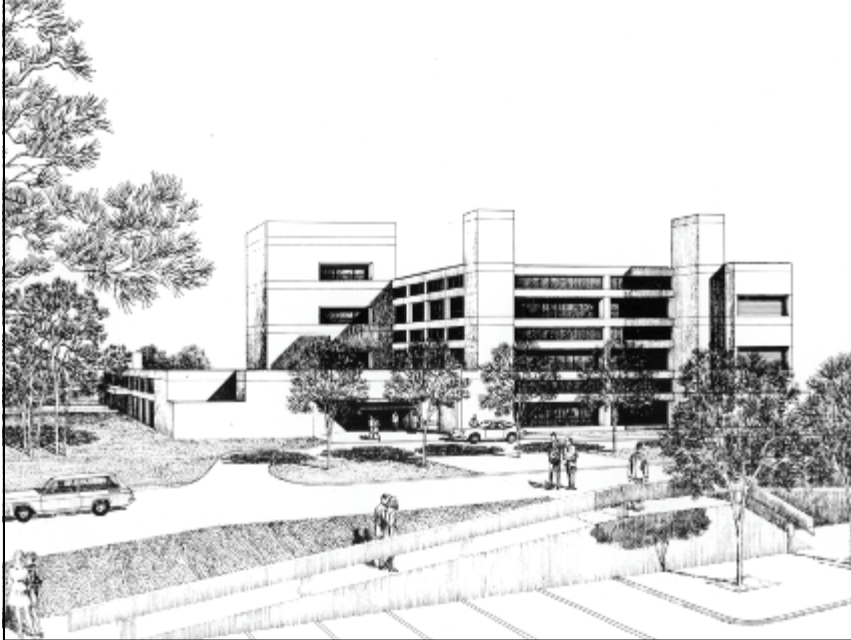
The 9 acre site for Saddleback Community Hospital, adjacent to the former Laguna Hills Medical Center, seen at the middle left, was donated by GRF in September 1970. Beverly Manor is shown in the lower portion of the picture.

sociation. There had been debates as to whether the new hospital should be non-profit or proprietary, but the president of the Lutheran Hospital Society of California recommended that the non-profit approach was most desirable if a fully-accredited Class A hospital was the ultimate goal. By March 1969, Saddleback Community Hospital registered with the State of California as a non-profit hospital and GRF made its first donation of \$10,000 to the new corporation.

A joint survey of future hospital needs was made with the South Coast Community Hospital (now South Coast Medical Center) to determine the best course in providing maximum service at minimum cost for the entire South County area. The report was informative, well accepted and shelved!

Both the State of California and Orange County were trying to evolve a master hospital plan in order to avoid scattered, small hospitals which might be poorly equipped and staffed, and located in areas undesirable from the standpoints of growth, convenience and accessibility.

In July 1969 a formal application to construct a 150-bed hospital was filed with the Orange county Health Planning association. By October, architects were employed to assist in a presentation to the County.



Architect's drawing of Saddleback Community Hospital, as built in 1974.

### **Hospital (from Page 5)**

The County approved the hospital in February, 1970. This made it possible for the facility to obtain Hill-Harris governmental funding. A construction budget was written designating the sources of funds: a gift from GRF as well as a gift from a fund raising drive that fell short of expectations. Construction costs estimates were about \$10,000,000 but they eventually reached nearly \$15,000,000. GRF provided the land for the hospital. In December, 1971, GRF sold the Medical Center to Saddleback Community Hospital.

In June 1970, the Lutheran Hospital Society was engaged to provide leadership in planning, financing, building, and ultimately managing the hospital. By July, an architectural agreement was signed and the groundbreaking was held on June 7, 1971. Construction started shortly thereafter.

Although the hospital had been expected to open in late 1973, strikes and labor disputes prevented this.

Before the hospital opened, on September 28<sup>th</sup>, the Lutheran Hospital Society cancelled its management contract. Management of the hospital was continued by the existing Board of Directors, who hired a hospital administrator.

### **Hospital Opens**

The hospital opened on January 27, 1974. By 1980 there were 210 doctors with 15 applications pending. The staff of 300 nurses included about 200 registered nurses, the balance being licensed vocational nurses

and nurse's aides. Volunteers such as the Pink Ladies, gift and thrift shop personnel and others numbered 1,100 and contributed 100,000 hours of work per year. In addition, many "at home" workers produced items to be sold in the gift shop.

### **Since 1980**

By 1980, Saddleback was authorized to operate with a maximum of 153 beds. During that period it operated at about 98 percent capacity. Frequently it was necessary to transfer overflow patients to Mission Community Hospital or the South Coast Medical Center.

Today, Saddleback has 235 beds, employs approximately 225 registered nurses, 7 licensed practical nurses, 4 occupational therapists, 13 physical therapists, 11 registered pharmacists,

in addition to the equivalent of 529 full-time hourly personnel.

Many of the day-to-day activities you see when you visit Saddleback Memorial Medical Center are performed by volunteers. These dedicated people offer their time and expertise so key patient services are available 365 days a year. Over the past three decades, volunteers have donated over 2.6 million hours of service, valued at \$480 million, which translates to better service for those of us who are treated at Saddleback Memorial Medical Center.

*Editor's Note: This article was taken, in part, from: "Leisure World's Life-Saving Facilities" by Evan W. Baker as printed in Leisure World History, Fall 1980; a speech by Margaret Nelson to the Historical Society on May 21, 1980; and numerous articles taken from the Leisure World News.*

## **Annual Meeting**

**You are invited to attend the Historical Society of Laguna Wood's Annual Business Meeting which will be held on February 28, 2008, at 9:00 am, in the Society's Conference Room.**

## BITS AND PIECES OF LEISURE WORLD HISTORY

(Selected from the *Leisure World News*) . . . . . Evelyn Shopp

### 40 Years Ago — Jan. - Feb. 1968

Veterans of WWII, Barracks 1116, installed nearly 50 flags in Leisure World manors. They urged all resident to fly their flags.

Architectural plans for the new Episcopal Church were approved. The Episcopal Diocese received approval from the State to issue \$350,000 in 6% notes. This financing method was approved because of the "unique nature of the Leisure World community and the remarkable growth potential of the area."

Nine banks advertised Savings Accounts in the LW News but only one had a Laguna Hills office.

The Saddle Club sponsored a rabies vaccination clinic and more than 200 dogs were vaccinated.

Alpha Beta featured Arizona grapefruit at 5¢ each.

Active state clubs included Iowa, California, Colorado, Michigan, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. West Virginia and Massachusetts formed new clubs.

Asian flu was moving westward and all residents were urged to get shots. Those who had shots in 1967 needed a booster.

The postal services, offered at a rented space in the shopping center, were declared inadequate. Bids were authorized on a "new modern facility."

Leisure World residents were invited to participate in a "spelling bee" competition. Technical words, slang, and provincial words would not be used.

Leisure World resident, Leonard Hughes celebrated his 17th birthday. Born February 29, 1896, he was the President of the National "Eight years without a Birthday Club."

The first social worker was added to the Medical Staff.

### 25 Years Ago — Jan. - Feb. 1982

Two male juveniles were arrested and accused of entering at least three *unlocked* doors in the early morning hours. The sheriff's investigator said, "LW residents are under the impression that they are living inside a box protected from the outside world."

The first live broadcast of the GRF Board Meeting was seen on Channel 6 on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

Major donors, Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Slecta, cut the ribbon for Saddleback Community Hospital's \$1.3 million medical-surgical unit expansion.

The original owner of the Laguna News Post asked the US Supreme Court to hear their case against GRF concerning the ability to deliver newspapers to non-subscribers inside the gates.

The Saddleback Senior Center served lunches to seniors, 60 and older, at Lombardi's Restaurant on El Toro Road.

Buddy Ebsen was the featured speaker at a Republican Club luncheon,

Interest on \$10,000 CD's averaged 12%; Hughes Market advertised oranges for 19¢ a lb.; Hungry Tiger's Sunset Dinners were \$4.95; gasoline sold for about a *buck a gallon*; and the average price for a day in an Orange County hospital reached \$766.

A GRF director proposed a 5 year Capital Program after he was inundated with calls from residents saying GRF was spending too much money.

Residents *for* and *against* eradicating rabbits, filled most of the space in *Letters to the Editor* column.

### 10 Years Ago — Jan. - Feb. 1997

The cause of flooding in December 1997 in cul-de-sac 67 was a blocked external outlet drain covered by an oil pan which had floated into the area. Letters to the Editor were extremely critical of the maintenance department.

The January 1<sup>st</sup> issue carried a full page advertisement paid for by GRF and the Housing Mutuals to explain a 126 acre land purchase at Moulton and El Toro.

Lawn Bowlers anted up funds to remodel their clubhouse.

Two teen aged girls kidnapped a Leisure World resident, forced him into the trunk of his car, and went for a wild ride. The car was abandoned in Santa Ana. Shortly afterwards, he was released by police and the girls were arrested a short time later.

Cityhood was discussed at an open Lions Club Meeting. Less than 50 people attended.

The new Leisure World Foundation has agreed to give Social Services emergency funds to help local residents.

A bobcat was photographed on a post behind building 4021 in the Gate 14 area.

Champagne Brunch in Clubhouse 5 was \$6.50 per person.

Yes! I / we want to support the Historical Society of Laguna Woods in 2013. The Historical Society participates in the following worthwhile activities:

- Library of Congress' Veterans History Project
- Oral history projects that capture stories from Veterans and participants in the El Toro Airport battle
- Production of a commemorative book celebrating the Village's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Maintenance of a vast repository of historical material
- Bi-Monthly publication of *The Historian*
- Honoree of the Month Ceremonies

The Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt charitable corporation – #FJ95-3213797. Your support will make it possible to continue these activities, as well as many other special projects, events, and activities.

**Membership Category**

Name 1 \_\_\_\_\_ \$300.00 – Patron  
(each membership is for one person) \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 – Sponsor  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50.00 – Friend  
Name 2 \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 25.00 – Contributor  
(additional member) \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 15.00 – Regular

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Please mail to Historical Society, P.O. Box 2220, Laguna Woods, CA 92654-2220  
or drop off at our office (next to Laguna Woods Village Library).  
If you have questions please call 206-0150. Thank you.***



Volunteers who have given more than 1,000 hours of service to the Society were honored by the Society's Executive Committee at our Winter Tea. Top row , from left: Gloria Levine, Linda Wilson (Secretary), Mattie Ellis, Tobey Greenspan, Mary Arine Beer (VP), Mark Schneider (Treasurer) and Bob Ring (President). Bottom: Joan Long, Shiela Lichtenstein and Martin Hecht (VP).

**Annual Meeting**

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**Annual Dinner  
See Page 2**

**Saddleback  
Community Hospital  
See Page 1**