



The Historian

Preserving Today for Tomorrow

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History of Leisure World - 1970

This article is the eleventh in a series adapted from the transcripts of the Historical Society's first archivist, Marjorie F. Jones. Additional information was taken from five Historical Society Journals published between 1980 and 1982, *Fulfilling Retirement Dreams*, a book published by the Historical Society in 1989 and numerous issues of the 1970 *Leisure World News*.

A Year of Continuing Growth

By 1970 Leisure World had grown to a community of more than 12,500 residents occupying 7,175 manors. These manors were built on 960 acres, half of which were landscaped. In the March 5, 1970 *Leisure World News* Ross Cortese stated that the average net worth of Leisure World residents was \$180,000.

Leisure World Grows

Leisure World was in its sixth year and residents who remembered the view from the hilltop near the present location of the Geneva Presbyterian Church saw a panorama of lights spread over miles of the Saddleback Valley as contrasted with the few scattered lights at the El Toro Marine Base in 1964.

During 1970 Rossmoor Corporation (Rossmoor) built 113 buildings with 916 manors in Phase 2—the area bounded by the golf course, the future Ridge Route, Avenida de la Carlota and El Toro Road. During 1965 Rossmoor started to change the design of the laundry buildings in order to make them less conspicuous. By 1970, the entrances were smaller and the unsightly drying yards were eliminated.

In February, Vista Tor, the highest elevation in Phase 2 opened featuring the La Joya townhouses and Contenta Royale manors. For the first time residents of Leisure World were given preferential selection because the new townhouse and the new Contenta treatment with elevator, embodied features that residents had requested. The first move-in to the three-story Garden Villas was on June 1, 1970.

Leisure World was made up of adjoining parcels of land, each of which was owned by a separate corporation. Each of these corporations contractually

More Than 4,000 Word Giant Puzzle No Puzzler for Ronald Rapp



In 1970, Leisure World resident Ronald Rapp checked the dictionary as he put the finishing touches on the then world's largest crossword puzzle. The giant puzzle contained more than 4,000 words and 41 pages of definitions. Rapp, a self-confessed "crossword bug," worked more than a year in his spare time to finish the puzzle. He admitted that he had a few helpers in the form of an unabridged and crossword dictionary. Even with these aides, he had to do other extensive research to find the words he needed.

Courtesy Leisure World News

agreed to work with the others and thereby a single community was created and continued to grow. In addition to the parcels owned by the individual mutual corporations, the Golden Rain Foundation of Laguna Hills (GRF) owned or was the trustee for the clubhouses, main streets, the medical center and other community facilities.

The services of 669 paid employees, or one employee for each 11 manors, managed, maintained or operated the community. In addition there were hundreds of

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MUSINGS

Veterans History Project.

During the 2010-11 fiscal year the Board of Directors entered into a new partnership with Media Arts Center San Diego to provide interviewing and video recording services for the Veterans History Project.



Bob Ring

Honoree of the Month.

Congratulations to our honorees of the month:

- Helene Iberall – January
- Larry Strauss – February
- Maxine McIntosh – April
- Clara Baker – June
- Lorraine Patton – August
- Katherine DeCourcy – October
- Richard Blatman – November.

Las Palmas and The Regency, both part of **Vintage Senior Living**, fund the Honoree of the Month program. Inga Futtrup is the photographer at **Images by Dwayne** who so expertly captures the images of our honorees.

PCM Donates to Historical Society

Professional Community Management has supported the Veterans History Project through a contribution to the Historical Society. The Society records the stories of wartime veterans interested in preserving their wartime stories for posterity at the Library of Congress.

“We can’t think of a better way to honor those who served our country so bravely than to support the



On July 20, Bob Ring accepted a \$1,500 check from Wendy Bucknum, Governmental Affairs Manager for Professional Community Management in support of the Library Of Congress’ Veterans History Project.

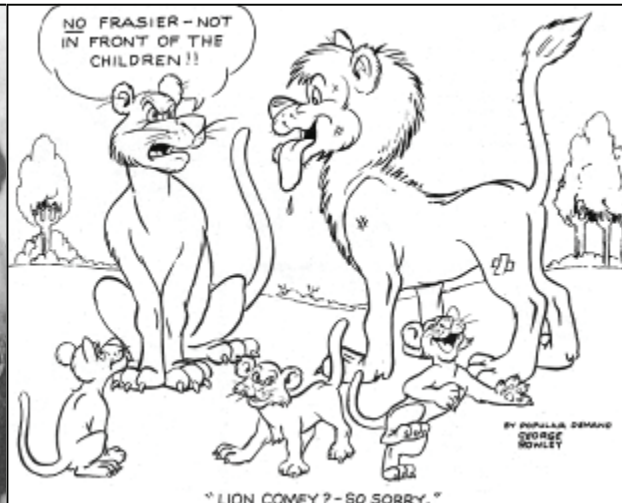
Veterans History Project,” said Bucknum.

The Veterans History Project was launched in 2000 by the United States Congress as part of the Library of Congress’s effort to collect, preserve and make accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war.

Currently more than 800 veterans have provided their histories and of these more than 350 have been video taped.

“We strongly believe these stories of bravery and sacrifice should be preserved and passed on to future generations,” said Bucknum. “We at Professional Community Management are honored to help make this happen.”

PCM’s donation together with the continued efforts of our volunteers help make this project possible.



In 1970, accompanied by the soft purr of Reagan, the first lion cub to be welcomed to Lion Country, Chief Game Warden Bill York told a Leisure World audience what they could expect from their new neighbors, the lions, tigers, and other jungle dwellers in Lion Country Safari. The 500-acre preserve, just north of Leisure World, opened on June 16, 1970. The cartoonist George Rowley noted the event.

Courtesy Leisure World News

1970 from Page 1

unpaid volunteers at the Medical Center, clubhouses and other community facilities.

Activities Report

The 1969 facility utilization report indicated a high level of resident activities. Billiards, swimming and golf continued to be the three top attractions and shuffleboard moved up from sixth place to fourth.

In an average month approximately 7,000 used the swimming pools; 10,000, the billiard rooms; 6,000, the shuffleboard courts; 4,000, the lawn bowling courts; 5,500, the art studio; 17,000, the hobby center; 5,700 attended adult education programs; 650 rode horses; 8,500 played golf; 450 played tennis; 3,000 used the garden center; 35,000 persons rode the buses and 380,000 vehicles passed through the gates.

By 1970, religious services and other church functions within the clubhouses took a severe tumble as a result of moves to church owned facilities.

Security

In 1970, all of the security officers were residents. The 1,300 weekly calls to the security center ran the gamut from emergency illnesses to overflowing toilets. Since repair service was suspended at night, security took up the slack. Patrol officers attended to such emergencies as plumbing problems, stalled elevators and power outages. There was a large freezer in security headquarters where perishables could be kept overnight in case a resident's refrigerator malfunctioned. This personalized service by security started when Leisure World opened in 1964 and continues today.

H. McDonald Barber, the initial security chief, and his staff of three, Ray Barrett, Lewis Moffatt and Nate Willner, were kept busy coping with the emergency needs of the pioneers. Barber's replacement, Don Wickland, had been the successful operator of a Los Angeles protective association for a large mercantile group. In expanding the security force in 1968, Wickland hired as his chief deputy Leland S. Stipes, a comparatively young man who had taken an early retirement from the police force in Toledo, Ohio. When Wickland was stricken with a fatal heart attack in 1969, Stipes was appointed as his successor.

Coping with Leisure World's remarkable growth presented the new chief with an awesome task. He augmented motorized patrol and established a new communications center with 24-hour security surveillance of all property, including constant communication by



Bobby Baker, golf pro, was pictured completing a practice swing. In 1970, residents use of the course averaged 7,500 per month. An additional nine-hole course was ready for use in early 1971.

Courtesy Leisure World News

radio with all patrol units, gates, and the Orange County Sheriff as well as a close liaison with the California Highway Patrol and the Orange County Fire Department.

The problem of surveillance continued to grow as the community expanded. In 1970, Chief Stipes was confronted with the inadequacy of the five-foot ornamental wall surrounding the community. Residents were divided between those who favored the artistry of the walls and those who demanded greater security. A rash of petty crimes forced the issue.

"Until the wire was added we just invited trouble," said Stipes. "The bulk of it was vandalism. On several occasions juveniles on a lark scaled the walls and purloined golf carts that had been left unlocked and took them out for a run on the golf course. There they played 'chicken,' sideswiping and crashing into each other, leaving the carts in a terrible mess."

Installation of the barbed wire on top of the walls and an educational program for owners to padlock carts helped solve the problem.

Community Governance

GRF's Philosophy On Fees

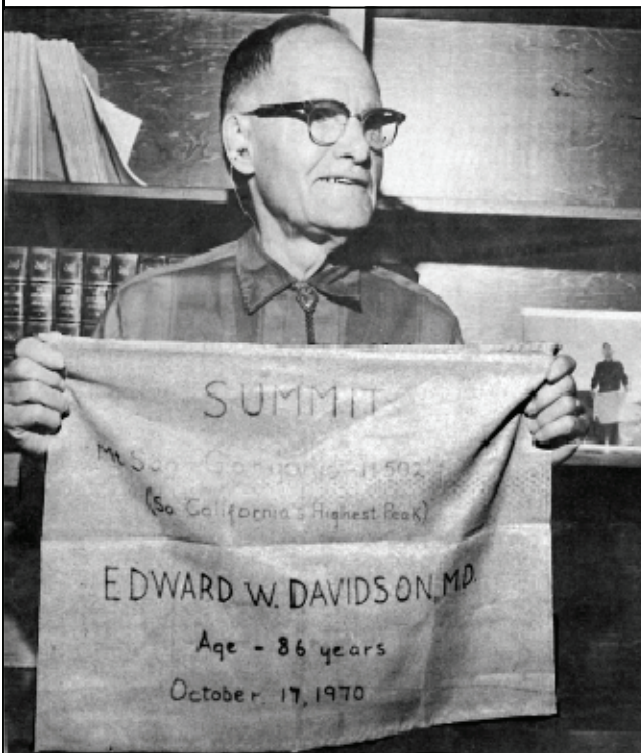
Culminating several months of study by GRF committees, adoption of a "Statement of Philosophy Regarding the Use of Fees" was formalized by in late May 1970. The Statement of Philosophy read: "The primary financial support of the overall program of

community activities and services, as provided by GRF, is to be gained by the levying of equal monthly charges on the community's membership. There will be two general exceptions to this policy.

"1. *Participation Fees* may be approved by the board of directors in support of specific activity areas, providing they are needed and justified pursuant to approved criteria." Fees in Leisure World cover such items as use of the stable, golf course, and swimming pools, storage of recreation vehicles, and cost of alteration permits, and third party assessments made by the controller's department.

"2. *Charges* for services may be made by the management agent, as may be necessary, to provide services requested by individuals or groups concerned, providing they are not in violation of the concept of community overall shared costs, as above stated, and excepting the area of participation fees as reserved by the board of directors for its decision." The GRF philosophy spelled out changes in such areas as the copy center; the replacement of I.D. cards; copies of alteration plans; lessons in swimming, golf and riding; locker rentals; room

Mountain Climber, Dr. Edward Davidson



On October 17, 1970, 86-year-old resident Dr. Edward V. Davidson scaled to the top of Mt. San Geronio, California's highest peak at 11,502 feet. This was the fifth time he had scaled the peak, however this was the first time in 20 years.

Courtesy Leisure World News

set-up and clean-up charges; work with medical claim forms and such services as lockouts, deliveries and carpet and drapery installations.

With the formulation of the philosophy, it was stated that, "There is no pending consideration being given formally by the GRF board for any increase in participation fees."

On December 21, 1970, GRF approved a \$240 annual fee for use of the Leisure World golf course. The new rate provided an alternative to paying for individual rounds of golf. It was emphasized that the annual fee was limited to members only and golfing privileges under the rate would be non-transferable and non-refundable. The yearly rates allowed users up to three plays a week. The new individual rates were \$2.50 for 18 holes and \$1.50 for nine holes. The board also rescinded an earlier resolution to levy a charge on the use of private golf carts on the course.

GRF Facilities Fund

GRF's 1969 Balance Sheet valued the Preamortization Fund at \$346,728. During 1970, GRF received \$700 from the sale of each new manor. This money was added to the Preamortization Fund and used to acquire new community facilities.

Originally, Rossmoor built these community facilities in advance, and subsequently these funds were used to purchase them from Rossmoor. At the time the last sale in Phase 1 was completed GRF Trust owned Clubhouses I and II, the Administration Building, the stables, the garden center, the RV storage area and Gatehouses 1, 2 and 3. Rossmoor agreed to lease GRF the golf course, the maintenance building and Aliso Park which borders Aliso Creek.

Clubhouse III was financed partly by \$400,000 from the Community Facilities Trust Fund and \$383,000 from a ten-year bank loan. Approximately \$77,000 from a special equipment fund was used to purchase furnishings for the building. The ground breaking was on June 17, 1970.

During 1970 titles to Gatehouse 6 and the maintenance building were conveyed to the GRF Trust which was accumulating funds for Clubhouse IV.

GRF also awarded a contract for preliminary plans and specifications for Clubhouse IV. The facility was to be built at the northwest corner of Phase II,

adjacent to the golf course and north of the Garden Villa Manors. Construction was to start in 1971 with completion and occupancy in 1972.

New and Enlarged Facilities

As the population increased, Rossmoor and GRF added facilities.

With speeches, ribbon-cutting, cheers and a great deal of fanfare, Leisure World's bocce courts opened on May 1. Administrator Robert Price, who aided in the ribbon cutting, said the courts were the first new recreational facility to be added to Leisure World in two years and were "symbolic of things to come."

GRF also agreed to spend \$40,000 for an in-door shuffleboard facility in the gazebo area at Clubhouse I. During 1970 gates and fences were installed at Gate 3. The gate house at Gate 6 was completed and Gate 7 opened.

Administrator Robert Price's column in the November 26, 1970 *Leisure World News* noted that the recreation vehicle storage area was "heavily supported by its users." At that time the \$40 annual fee almost paid for the total cost of taxes and maintenance of the facility. The annual cost of services provided by the Security Department and Administration, totaled less than 25¢ per manor. Price noted, "Virtual total support of this facility by its users stemmed from its own unique history as a supplement to the original facilities program."

In 1970 nine additional holes were added to the golf course, making the total 27. The course opened for play during January 1971.

Channel 6

By 1970 Leisure World had one of the largest cable television systems in the world, with every manor being provided 12 channels from a community antenna. The cable system, not including the head end facility and antenna, was owned by the GRF Trust.

During January 1970 GRF signed a five-year contract with Rossmoor Electric Company, owned by Ivan Foley, to maintain Leisure World's 12 channel cable television system. Rossmoor Electric also agreed to operate Channel 6 during 1970 and provide three hours per day of broadcasting plus a 24-hour a day weather watching service in a format similar to today's message board without messages.

On February 5, Channel 6 broadcast programs in color from 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. to test new color equipment designed for closed-circuit television systems.

Towers

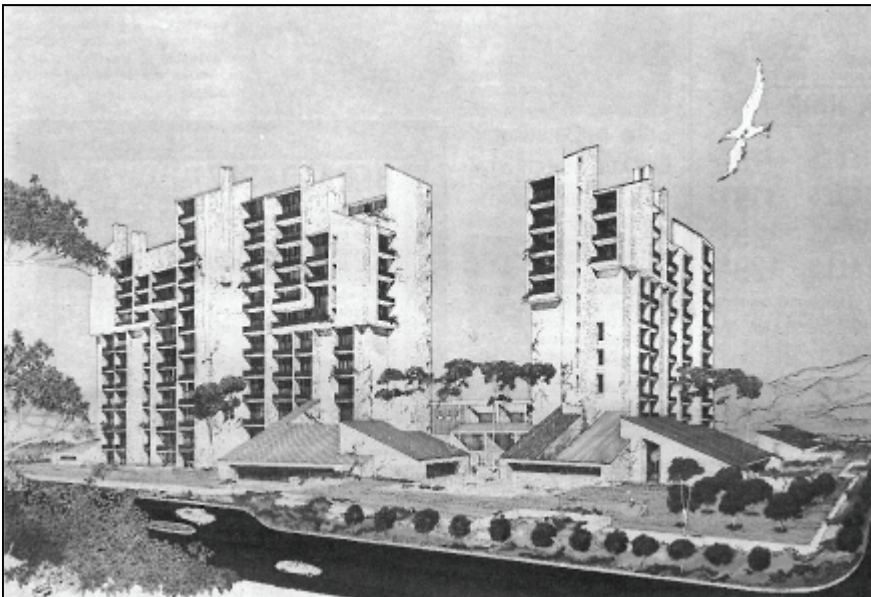
In February, Cortese announced that brochures would be available within 30 days for the 14-floor Rossmoor Towers buildings—the first high rise complex of its kind to be built in unincorporated Orange County. Rossmoor's spokesman stated that the Towers would provide almost total care living.

Leisure World's Neighbors

As Leisure World grew, so did the business centers surrounding the community.

Laguna Hills Mall

In June 1970, the Orange County Planning Commission approved a multi-million dollar 55-acre retail shopping center. Reuben's and Coco's restaurants



The groundbreaking for the 14-story Rossmoor Towers at Moulton Parkway and Calle Aragon, near Gate 3, was scheduled for March 1970. However, it went through numerous design changes before model apartments were finally built in the sales area in January 1971. The design included studio, one bedroom-one bath, and two bedrooms-two baths apartments. The cost was estimated to be \$12 million.

Its 376 condominium units offered deluxe living accommodations, with card rooms, two dining rooms, recreational facilities, a Great Hall or theater, and an aura of luxury. Rossmoor advertising suggested that it would be ready for occupancy by mid-1971. It opened with 311 units in November 1974 near Gate 10.

Courtesy Leisure World News

(now King's Fish House and In-Out-Burger) were actually the first to build in the mall area.

The plans included three major department stores and about 100 smaller shops. Rossmoor negotiated with Sears, Roebuck and Company, The Broadway and J.C. Penney Company. Construction was scheduled to start late in 1971.

Moulton Plaza

By mid-1970, time was ripe for the new shopping center. The earlier idea of an enclosed mall was abandoned. The 18.5-acre Moulton Plaza Shopping Center, located on the corner of Santa Maria Avenue and Moulton Parkway, was anchored with a major supermarket (Hughes Market—Joe Hughes was first supermarket chain operator in southern California to feature fresh fish in his stores), a bowling alley, two financial institutions, two or more restaurants, a pharmacy and 12 shops. Since the location qualified for inclusion in the Leisure World bus route, it became one of the most active of the shopping centers, aided in later years by the addition of a state auto licensing substation.

Challenges to the Community

As Leisure World and Orange County grew, numerous growth and zoning issues needed to be resolved.

Laguna Canyon Fire



A fire of suspected incendiary origin, fanned by a brisk southwest wind, blackened about 100 acres of rugged brush land in Laguna Canyon on Friday afternoon July 3, 1970. It was the worst of three blazes in the tinder-dry area that kept hundreds of firefighters busy most of the day. The intense blaze skipped across hastily bulldozed firebreaks and roared up tributary canyons while men on foot, on machines and in chemical bombers overhead fought to contain it. The fire was reported at 2:45 p.m. and was under control about two hours later.

Courtesy Leisure World News

Saddleback Hospital

On September 7, 1970 the corporate members of GRF voted by more than a two-thirds majority to donate nine acres of land adjacent to the Laguna Hills Medical Center for construction of Saddleback Community Hospital. Donation of the land assured the area of a centrally located hospital that would serve both general and specialized hospital needs of the community.

In order to convey the property, valued at an estimated \$515,000, to the hospital free and clear of any debt the corporation members voted to pay \$430,000 out of GRF's Medical Buildings Fund to pay off the mortgage on the parcel.

Slightly more than a week later the hospital announced a gift of \$500,000 earmarked for a gerontology center from Leisure World resident E.R. Meriwether.

Sale of Rossmoor Corporation

Negotiations for the sale of Rossmoor to the internationally known Crane Co. of New York in April 1969 was cancelled by mutual consent. An agreement in principle for the acquisition of Rossmoor by Zero Manufacturing Company of Burbank was announced on February 6, 1970. The agreement called for Rossmoor to receive 2.7 million shares of Zero's common stock valued at about \$24 million. Rossmoor would become a wholly owned subsidiary of Zero Manufacturing and continue to be directed by Ross W. Cortese.

On April 23, 1970 negotiations for the acquisition of Rossmoor by Zero were terminated by mutual consent because of financial market conditions. At that time, Rossmoor's principal holdings were approximately 5,000 acres of developed and partially developed land, shopping centers and buildings in Laguna Hills and Walnut Creek, California; Monroe Township, New Jersey; and Montgomery County, Maryland. Rossmoor also owned Rossmoor Sanitation, Inc. in Laguna Hills and utility companies in Walnut Creek and New Jersey.

Rossmoor Notes

In September 1970, Oaklawn Homes, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Rossmoor, solicited subscriptions for 8¾% notes to finance construction of businesses under development at the intersection of El Toro Road and Avenida de la Carlota.

Commercial Airport at MCAS-El Toro

In a June 1970 statement to Orange County officials, Brigadier General Henry W. Hise, commanding general, El Toro Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS-El To-

ro) said, "The Marine air bases in Orange County are fully operational and ideally suited to the performance of the mission of constant and effective joint training of air and ground components of the Marine Amphibious Team." He said the bases were essential to the nation's defense and could not be moved.

Hise continued, "Comprehensive planning and the orderly development of such communities can alleviate some of the noise nuisance and crash hazard potential by seeing that areas adjacent to airfields and underlying their approach zones are utilized for activities that are compatible with both military aviation operations and the needs of the local community."

If the Orange County Airport Commission had any doubts about the opposition of Southern Orange County residents to the proposed air transportation sites in the nearby area, these doubts were dispelled at a public hearing on December 7, 1970 in Mission Viejo. Far from wanting expanded, localized air service, many of the impassioned residents pleaded to be allowed to retain their relatively clean air and rural surroundings. Members of an audience of 175, without exception, opposed one or all the proposals, including joint use MCAS-El Toro by civilian and military aviation.

Leisure World's residents were represented by Edward L. Olsen, president of the Leisure World Foundation, who appeared before commissioners to protest, specifically, "any additional flights into El Toro."

He recalled for Commissioners that Leisure World was Orange County's first planned community, and reminded them of the 3,000 foot wide greenbelt which had been built into the original plans. He protested any additional uses of El Toro, pointing out that community residences already are adjacent to the flight pattern. Mr. Olsen, supported in his presentation by members of a resident advisory committee approved by the presidents of the boards, stated, "In our study of the Parsons Report, we find significant interference would result from joint use."

Leisure World residents won a temporary reprieve from further study of joint commercial and military jet use of MCAS-El Toro on December 16, 1970, when the Orange County Board of Supervisors moved to defer further studies until a study of a proposed site in Chino Hills could be made.

New World

In July 1970, Rossmoor broke ground on its New World Laguna Hills project. The new "housing for all ages"

Former Postman Ellsworth Brown



"Where are my mashed potatoes?" screamed an angry woman as she chased weary Ellsworth Brown down the street of a quiet residential Denver neighborhood in 1947 when French's Idaho Potatoes used direct mail to market a dehydrated potato. Brown ran out of samples on his mail route and passed a woman's house who was waiting patiently for hers.

Brown, who moved into Leisure World in 1968 remembered this as one of many experiences he encountered as a mailman in Denver, Colorado. More than 20 years later, people were still chasing Brown down the street but for a different reason. Soon after Brown moved here in 1968, he noticed very few mailboxes had names on them. Using his own initiative and finances, he purchased a label maker and dispenser, and set out to put labels on everyone's mailbox. In a little more than two years, Brown labeled about two-thirds of the community which consumed 10,000 adhesive name labels, involving hundreds of hours of work and a small fortune.

Courtesy Leisure World News

development was planned to be the first 372 of the 2,000 residential units to be built on 600 acres south of Leisure World on the west side of Moulton Parkway.

Cortese stated that the homes were designed "to attract Leisure World employees, clerks, tellers, technicians, sales personnel, and other employees of the stores, shops, restaurants, banks, hospitals, and persons you do business with every day."

New World featured two-bedroom two-bath models with a two-car garage. The project included green belts, barbecue areas, badminton and volleyball courts and play space for children. Priced at \$19,990, the town homes could compete with rentals. The homes qualified for FHA and VA financing. New World opened on September 4, 1970.

Today the 320 New World condos are part of the city of Aliso Viejo.



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Somewhat early, perhaps, but their enthusiasm more than made up for the see-through walls and dirt floor at Clubhouse III, when members of the Leisure World Productions Guild, Chorale, Entertainers and Sunday Sing staff gathered in what would be the auditorium of the new clubhouse for coffee and doughnuts. The ladies' hard hats added a note of fashion to the decor as they toured the site. The ground breaking was June 17, 1970 and the grand opening was held March 12, 1971. The cost for building, landscaping, and interior finishing was \$964,000.

Wilson Kline Photo

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Editor — Bob Ring

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