

LW 'Man of Month' Enters Third Career

By Susan Vanderpol

Leisure World resident Eugene Gilbert is in his third career and is loving every minute of it.

Since moving to Leisure World, Gilbert, 83, has two published works: "Orange County's Past in Pencil" and "A Bicentennial Map of the United States—200 Years of Independence."

A third publication, "America's Past in Pencil, a Sketch Book of Historic Homes," should be out by March 1.

Meanwhile, Gilbert, who says "the wheels are still turning," is working on yet another book which he plans to title "California's Past in Pencil."

Prior to entering this third career, which he calls "sketching in retirement," Gilbert was first an architect on the east coast and then a builder and developer in Westwood, Calif.

Because of all this creativity, Gilbert has been selected the first Leisure World "Man of the Month," according to Elm Weingarden, vice president/marketing of Rossmoor Corp., who recently announced the new program of honoring outstanding Leisure World residents.

"We have been so impressed with the creative activity of Leisure World residents that we decided to call public attention to the ways in which many are regenerating their lives, often in artistic endeavors that they have undertaken only since living here," Weingarden said.

Each month a man or woman of the month will be selected by a committee of Rossmoor executives and an oil painting will be commissioned in their honor.

Gilbert says he has been working on "America's Past in Pencil" for about a year. The book, which will be about 120 pages, includes sketches of the homes of all the U.S. presidents and informa-

tion about each house.

"I searched through libraries and got old photos from which to sketch," Gilbert said. "I tried to get houses from every state in the Union."

Other sketches in the book depict the oldest home in the U.S., located in St. Augustine, Fla.; the Waffle House in Santa Ana; the vice president's home in Washington, D.C.; and the Octagon House in San Francisco.

His "Bicentennial Map" which is available at the Rossmoor sales office, includes sketches of historical events that occurred in the U.S., a listing of all the presidents; a map of the U.S. and a list of when states entered the Union.

Gilbert, who has been sketching all his life, says he's "got it down to a science. Sketching takes no time at all," he said.

His wife, Margaret, whom he calls his "best critic," says he can work fast because he was trained in an architect's office.

Gilbert's experience as an artist began in 1909 when the president of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce asked him to make a pen and ink drawing of several large ships along the Oakland dock.

"The drawing, which promoted civic interest so the people would vote for bonds to improve the Oakland Harbor, was printed on posters and placed all over the city," said Gilbert, who was paid \$10 for his efforts. He added the bond measure was a success.

In World War I, Gilbert sketched battle-front action and his drawings appeared in a book entitled "The 28th Division in France."

He still treasures the letter written by Gen. John J. Pershing thanking him for a "copy of your splendid book showing scenes connected with the service of the 28th division in France."



Eugene Gilbert

First printed in France, more than 15,000 copies of the book were sold. An original copy of the book is in the Library of Congress.

In 1964, the editor of the Santa Monica Evening Outlook commissioned him to narrate a history of Westwood.

"The text, with several sketches showing scenes of various stages of the community's growth, was printed in serial form in the paper," Gilbert said. "It was later published in a 16-page tabloid edition and several thousand copies were sold."

Before he became a resident of Leisure World in 1972, Gilbert was a nationally known architect whose work included the over-all design of Duke University at Durham, N.C.

"Designing Duke was like a dream come true,"

Gilbert said. "I was very lucky to have charge of its design."

Other projects he designed included the Pennsylvania Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Public Library, the University of Pennsylvania auditorium and the Evening Post Building in New York.

Gilbert was also a designer, builder and owner of many income properties in Westwood.

"A friend of my mother, who worked for a mortgage loan company, was about to build an income unit containing three apartments," Gilbert said.

"When he said he wanted someone to look after the job for him, I accepted the job on a fee basis.

"When the building was completed, he sold it and I estimated he made a good profit. With that knowledge, I made

up my mind right then just what I was going to do."

Gilbert said he wasted no time in drawing up a similar set of plans for himself.

From that point, until Pearl Harbor was attacked, he designed and built income properties in Westwood. After war was declared against Japan, all private building was stopped.

"This meant I was out of the business of building," Gilbert said, "so instead we became the custodians of our rental properties. You might say I became semi-retired."

Yes, semiretired until he entered his third career.