
Leisure Worlder of the Month

Erma Batman

Erma Batman is a doer. Her long and tireless years of service began with her first assignment as a girl scout leader in 1937. When her first troop grew to be designated as intermediates and seniors, she went along to serve as their counselor. Her next step was on a grander scale, as she assumed the position of Camp Chairman for the 52 Southeast St. Louis District troops. Her girl scout career culminated with the job of Day Camp Director for the Southeast District, where, in addition to her regular duties, she lead the art program and directed pageants with talent gleaned from her 52-troops.

Her girl scouting experience closely parallels most any endeavor that Erma Batman choose to take on. This month, she will take on another, as she serves as Leisure Worlder of the Month for February in the ceremony sponsored by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society. Her special ceremony commemorating the event will be held on Friday, February 1, at 10:00 a.m., in clubhouse Six. The public is invited to attend.

During the aforementioned stint with the girl scouts, Erma also was attending college, and in 1947, she began her first day of teaching kindergarten. But like her time with the scouts, she was destined for much more than one classroom full of five-year-olds. While working on her Master's degree, she helped design a radical new program for the teaching of kindergarten in the state of Illinois, a state that until the 1970s, had no mandatory kindergarten program. According to Erma, for some time, students who had attended kindergarten showed marked differences in ability over those who had not. It became obvious that all students could benefit and should have the opportunity to attend. As part of the experiment, Erma was put in charge of an all-kindergarten school, with more than 500 students.

In 1968, Erma was appointed Primary Coordinator for school district 68 in Illinois. That was the first year a kindergarten program had been offered in that district.

Today, Illinois has mandatory kindergarten, and each child has an equal opportunity to excel. These children probably aren't aware, but if they were, they might thank Erma Batman.

Erma's work throughout this time did not go unnoticed by her peers. She was awarded a life membership by the National Council of the PTA in 1956. She was invited to join Delta Kappa Gamma, an international society for women educators and became a charter member of the Beta Kappa chapter in 1959. She was also appointed to the Dupage County, Illinois Kindergarten—Primary Institute Committee in 1963, where she served three years, and as chairman for 1965.

As one of her most ambitious projects, she photographed, wrote and edited the manual "An American Kindergarten in Action," which has been used as an educational tool for parent groups, colleges and educational meetings.

Since that time, Erma has earned her Master's in education and literature. She became a member in the International Platform Association, and in 1971, she was listed in "Personalities of the West and Midwest."

In Leisure World, she continues to prove her value to the community. She is past president of the Women's Club, past president of the Retired Teacher's Club and past secretary of the United Methodist Women's Organization and program speaker for the group's 18 circles. She has been a member of the Folk Dancer Club, and is past president of the Illinois Club and of the Cat Club. She is a Volunteer Pink Lady at the Saddleback Community Hospital and the secretary of the Leisure World Chorale. She remains active with the Theta Theta chapter of the Delta Kappa Gamma society and she seves on various committees of the United Methodist Church.