

Taking charge has its ups for Downs

By Cheryl Walker
The News

It didn't take long for Leisure World clubs and organizations to realize that when something needed to be done quickly and well they could call on Jean Downs.

This take-charge lady was used to dealing with people and problems dating back to her work at the Beverly Hills Hotel when she came in contact with celebrities such as John Wayne, Elizabeth Taylor, Johnny Carson, Pat Nixon, Nancy Reagan and The Beatles.

But the spotlight will be on Downs in August when she is honored by the Leisure World Historical Society.

At last count, the 23-year Leisure Worlder resident was an active participant in 14 political, social and charitable clubs, organizations and programs.

"Jean doesn't just join, she works," says Historical Society President Evelyn Shopp pointing out that Downs has given over 2,500 hours of volunteer service at Saddleback Hospital and held a variety of offices in Leisure World organizations such as the Women's Club, Ebell, Opera 100, the California Club, World of Travel Club, three dance clubs, the Republican Club, Canine Club, Keyboard Club and the Historical Society.

Ceremony schedule

Who: Jean Downs

What: Leisure Worlder of the Month for August.

Where: Clubhouse 6

When: Wednesday, Aug. 4, 10 a.m.

Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society.

Downs, Canadian born and a U.S. citizen since 1957, says the desire to contribute and make a difference is part of her nature and upbringing. "I was raised to be honest and truthful and do for others.

"I also like working with people because, no matter what you hear, there are more good people than bad."

The former motel owner/manager; Anaheim Visitor and Convention Bureau convention coordinator/financial director and executive housekeeper at the Beverly Hills Hotel, says that in spite of her professional experience and varied expertise, she is sometimes overwhelmed by the amount of work she takes on for the clubs. Her phone never stops ringing.

Yet, she finds it impossible to say no to any of the requests and, tapping the skills which allowed her to efficiently handle motel management, 100 conventions and a staff of 75 catering to an international roster of celebrity whims, she quickly and

competently accomplishes whatever task she's assigned.

"I work for everybody like I'd work for myself — and still give a little more," she says with a characteristic broad smile. "I just like to do things."

And do she does, seven days a week, from early morning to late at night. "It's a good thing I don't need much sleep," says Downs.

Just a few of the tasks she regularly juggles are coordinating events from casual receptions to major benefits, handling membership drives, directing phone campaigns, bookkeeping, and setting up scholarship programs.

What makes Downs a special member of any team? Former Republican Women's Club President Frances Dixon explains. "She has fantastic follow-up, always goes the extra mile.

"There's not a job she's taken that she hasn't done well: she deserves every honor she can get."

"I don't know how to say no," Downs explains. "I like being part of something: involvement has filled my life."

"My motto is keep busy, advance by being honest, do right at all times, be helpful and treat others as I like to be treated."

She also makes it a point not to dwell on anything that drags her spirits down and politely sidesteps queries about all but her professional and club, etc. records. "I don't want to cry, I have to be on the positive side."