

# Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

## JOHN MARSHALL FERNALD, M.D.

The wizened physiognomy of a venerable Chinese patriarch stares out at you from a superb oil painting hanging in the vestibule of the home of John Marshall Fernald, M.D., as he opens the door to welcome his guest.

It is so striking that you stop to study it. Beneath it is a beautiful black lacquered rosewood commode, obviously as Oriental as the man portrayed and is more than a fine art object, yet Rossmoor's Leisure Worlder of the Month for July, if permitted, would dismiss it as such.

The story behind this ancient Asian with the sparse chin whiskers, reluctantly told, reveals the human warmth of this internationally renowned surgeon.

The story goes that in the depression years, Dr. Fernald performed emergency surgery on a young woman, aware that his prospects for payment were negligible. A few months later, she brought the unframed canvas of the man she had painted in Chinatown and presented it, with apology, saying that it was all she could afford.

"As it turned out, I was overpaid," laughs Dr. John, who laughs easily, "remember the depression years?"

Born in Fresno, the son of gifted parents, Dr. Fernald was named after his maternal ancestor, Chief Justice John Marshall. After attending Los Angeles Poly High and U.C.L.A., he earned his doctorate at the University of California Medical School at San Francisco.

At Poly High, he met Margaret Mills, but it was some ten years later that they were married. She recalls, smilingly, "John would take me to pre-med meetings and then to Chapman's for an ice cream cone. That was our courtship."

Typical for a young doctor in those days, Dr. John rode the police ambulance and handled emergency cases at the old Georgia Street Receiving Hospital while establishing an office in the Wilshire District.

World War II interrupted his practice. As a medical officer in our Air Force (1942-46), his first assignment was setting up surgery departments in station hospitals. During that time he also served as Chief of Surgery and surgical inspector.

In addition to his private practice, Dr. Fernald spent 30 years as a surgery instructor at the University of Southern California and at the California Hospital Medical Center.

Of his innumerable professional honors, perhaps these head the list:

Vice-Regent and Fellow, International College of Surgeons; Fellow and Life Member, American College of Surgeons; and Diplomate, American Board of Surgery.

Of his community responsibilities, his tireless work with the YMCA won him Los Angeles' highest honor, the Golden Book Award for Distinguished Service. Dr. Fernald became President of Sertoma International in 1954 and was awarded its Distinguished Service Award in 1961. The same year the Wilshire Chamber of Commerce named him their "Man of the Year."

Last year the Los Angeles City Council honored him with a large plaque bearing the City seal. He had served on Mayor Sam Yorty's City Planning Commission and the Committee for the Revision of the City Charter.

Even while practicing and teaching surgery, he lectured at home and abroad. Last year, he made 74 presentations of both medical subjects and motivational talks to business conferences, schools, churches and clubs. He is a member of the National Speakers Association. Locally, he is sponsored by the Eldorado Bank which has just recently opened its Leisure World branch. He adds that Margaret is his most severe critic for his talks.

He is the president-elect of the 135-member Saddleback Kiwanis Club, immediate past president of the 1752-member Leisure World Republican Club and a director in the Medical Society of Leisure World. In addition, he is a member of the Stamp Club, Saddleback Toastmasters and a trustee of the Dwight David Eisenhower Scholarship Fund. Both he and Margaret are active in their United Methodist Church groups.

Says Dr. John Marshall Fernald, "The most important item in life is to be active and try and help the other fellow a bit. Inactivity will surely kill you."