

# Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

## IRMA FRANKLIN

Irma Franklin is always surprised when special recognition comes her way. That's because she characterizes her volunteer contributions as "just doing what I like to do."

The retired business teacher was born in the small community of Atwood, Kansas, where she grew up on a farm. "I was part of a typically large family. That's the one crop in Kansas that never fails," she laughs. In order to keep track of the burgeoning clan, she has researched both sides of the family tree back to its European origins and provided a record for members.

She attended Long Beach State College while working full time as a secretary for the city's Board of Education and later resigned to complete her bachelor's degree at UCLA. Continuing on at the Bruin campus, she simultaneously earned a master's in business education and taught accounting at nearby Marymount College.

"I'd attend a class, and then go teach a class," she recalls. The merry mixture of tasks has become a key element in the life of this woman who enjoys keeping busy. The habit even surfaces in those rare leisure moments when she can be found doing intricate needlepoint work in unison with her TV viewing.

The major part of Miss Franklin's long career as a teacher was spent at Venice High School where she conducted classes in accounting, bookkeeping, business English and typing. She found pleasure in working with business-oriented students whom she describes as "highly motivated with definite goals in life."

She interrupted her teaching in 1960 to travel on sabbatical leave and to write a business correspondence instructional guide which was utilized throughout the Los Angeles School System.

Taking early retirement in 1969, she terminated 30 years of residency in Westwood and moved to Leisure World. A second retirement came five years later after she had been pressed into service while visiting a local investment brokerage firm. "They urged me to join them, so I earned a stockbroker license and became the only woman in the office," she recalls.

Helping others cope with financial matters took precedence over personal monetary gains in that job, as it does in other areas of Miss Franklin's life. She currently is on the referral list at Saddleback Medical Center to aid local residents with insurance claims and also provides record keeping assistance for individuals in need.

But the bulk of her time is spent as one of the 120 volunteers who keep the Leisure World Library quietly humming along. As secretary for the library board and chairman of the vital book selection committee, she handles correspondence and book orders.

Diplomacy also comes into play, as illustrated by two vignettes from life at the library. On one occasion, a 90-year-old woman came in to return a book. "This is the filthiest thing I've ever read," she said, as she slammed the offensive tome onto the counter. "But I just loved it," she slyly added.

Another time Miss Franklin opted not to include a certain X-rated bestseller on her purchase list, only to learn later that it had been donated to the library by a generous resident. "Foiled again," was her smiling comment.

"We don't make judgments," she explains. "We're all adults here, and we can choose whether or not to read a particular book." Selections are made on the basis of what has proven popular in the past with the more than 5,000 residents who enter the library each month. Historical novels and mysteries rank high on the list.

Miss Franklin has worked for the library ever since her arrival in Leisure World. She is also past president of the local Naturalist and Kansas clubs and has been active in numerous groups including the American Association of University Women, which provides a scholarship named in her honor.

Favorite activities are travel, photography, gardening and entertaining. A confirmed naturalist, she has belonged to the Audubon Society for 40 years and does volunteer duty each month at Caspers Wilderness Park adjoining the Audubon Starr Ranch.

Her love of the outdoors leads her every summer to the Sierra Mountains where she enjoys birding, nature study and mountain climbing.

Mountain climbing? Why not.

"People look askance—but I'm going to climb mountains as long as I can. It's not so difficult. As you grow older, you learn to pace yourself."

An added comment illuminates both her hobby and lifestyle:

"The goal isn't just to reach the mountain top," she says. "It is also to discover what is on the other side."