

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

WILLIAM E. GRUNDKE

As the oldest son of a German painting contractor, William E. Grundke was expected to follow in his father's footsteps. He bowed to Old World traditions and assumed that role through most of his life until retirement, when a lifelong interest in art was finally given full rein.

Now recognized as a national expert in the technique of intarsia, Bill Grundke has had his pictures of inlaid stone exhibited at major rock and gem shows, hung in museums and pictured on magazine covers.

Even though each picture takes hundreds of hours to complete, he still finds time to donate his services both in helping teach others and in keeping Leisure World's large assortment of lapidary shop equipment in smooth running order.

Mention of his countless volunteer hours at Clubhouse Four brings a simple disclaimer from Grundke. "Leisure World wouldn't be what it is if it wasn't for the volunteer work done here," he emphasizes.

While a small boy in Germany, Bill earned pocket money by drawing stitchery patterns on fabric for his neighbors. He also recalls long hours spent with oil painting supplies he received at age 12 and frequent Sunday visits to art museums in Dresden and Meissen when he was a young journeyman house painter.

His decision to come to America in 1927 was inspired by the stories of an Illinois relative and by "pure wanderlust," he admits. He worked as a painter and built himself a home during the slow winter season. After constructing a second house, he sold both and purchased an apartment building in Chicago.

His working day was never shorter than 14 hours during the time he combined apartment management with paint and construction contracting jobs. Lending loyal support through those years was a beautiful blonde he met in a bakery and married in 1930. She is the former Elfriede Wiess of Germany, still noted by friends for her baking and cooking skills.

After their only son left home to serve in the Korean War, the couple bought and managed a motel in Redding, Calif. They later retired to Carmel, where Bill took up wood carving, and in 1971 moved to Leisure World, where he enrolled in numerous art classes including ceramics and lapidary.

He soon began to excel in intarsia, the exacting art of cutting and fitting pieces of stone together to form pictures. Grundke's work is credited for a local resurgence of the rare technique formerly practiced by artisan families in Italy and China, where the secrets were passed on from father to son.

His innovations in intarsia have been carefully noted in articles he has written for *Gems and Minerals* trade journal, assuring the continuation of this seldom publicized art form. The magazine has twice pictured his intarsia work on its cover.

But ask anyone at Clubhouse Four what makes Grundke special and the answer will echo that of lapidary instructor Russ Hind. "He's always helping people and never turns anyone down when it comes to sharing his knowledge of intarsia and lapidary. And that might be up to 30 or 40 times a day, even if it means answering the same questions over and over again. He's a very patient man," says Hind.

As maintenance supervisor for the lapidary shop, the quiet-spoken Grundke donates many hours to cleaning and repairing machinery. His generosity is also noted in the ceramic shop, where he installed benches and wedging boards and formerly ran the kilns.

What others see as dedication to making Leisure World a better place for artists and hobbyists is just plain fun for Grundke. "I'm afraid that when I get up to St. Peter, I will have to be careful. He might decide I've been too happy and turn me away," he grins.

Grundke is a member of the Gem Carvers of America. His community affiliations include the Rock and Gem Club, Jewelry and Pottery Clubs and the Leisure World Continuing Education Committee, which he has served on since 1976.