

# LEISURE WORLDER OF THE MONTH

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Virginia M. Halley

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NOVEMBER, 1992

The Leisure World Historical Society is pleased to announce the selection of Virginia Halley, Leisure Worlder of the Month for November. The event is sponsored by the Leisure World Historical Society, supported by the Ross Cortese Commemorative Fund.

Although she was born elsewhere, Virginia Halley says, "I feel as though I am a native Californian." This, because her parents moved from Ohio to Santa Barbara when she was only nine years old. All of her schooling, through her Bachelor of Arts degree at what is now the University of California at Santa Barbara, was done there.

Graduating in the middle of the Depression Years, with bleak job prospects prevailing, Virginia took her brand new Home Economics degree and accomplished what few others in her field at that time could do. She was the first of her class to secure a teaching position. Not only did she get the job, she also got her guy - for early in her second year at the school, a new teacher, Bob Halley arrived. A whirlwind courtship followed their meeting in March with a marriage ceremony in July.

Teaching tenure in those days was tenuous, so that Virginia and Bob were forced to find new assignments. They did - but separated by some two hundred miles. Virginia's assignment was in Corona, and Bob's near Bakersfield. Their first year together was a weekend marriage and commute. With all of that, they still managed to save \$1,300 (that was Virginia's 1938-1939 salary) and so took a six-week (delayed) honeymoon) summer trip around the United States. As a sign of the times, Virginia and Bob returned to California with enough money left over to pay cash for a new Ford auto and a fur jacket for Virginia.

From 1940 to 1942, Virginia and Bob toured the country with the Del Courtney Big Band, Bob beating the bass and Virginia being the "Saturday night musician's widow." They played all the hot spots of Chicago, New York, New Orleans and the like on the tour. World War II, and its attendant gas shortage ended that adventure for them.

When the Navy rejected Bob because of a cardiac condition, the Halleys settled in the oil town of Avenal in the San Joachin Valley, Bob to teach mathematics and Virginia as assistant to the head of the natural gas division of Standard Oil of California.

By the early 50's with son, Frank, now entering fourth grade, Virginia returned to teaching. As the only female teacher in the school, she had her choice of teaching "anything that the men didn't want", she says, including the trouble-making girls, Student Council and after school sports.

Travel still was the Halley "thing", and by 1972, they had achieved their goal of having visited the 48 contiguous states.

Now retired and living first in Cambria and then in San Luis Obispo, Virginia still continued her involvement in social service activities. The eight years she devoted to the Cambria Adult Recreation Center revitalized that organization, increasing its membership and making it profitable.

The next challenge Virginia found was the Women's Club in San Luis Obispo and again she was successful in overcoming the vexing problems she met as Building Chairman.