
Leisure Worlder of the Month

Hazel LaBelle

She has the music in her. It was there as a child, as she grew into adulthood and today it remains. She is Hazel LaBelle, concertmistress of the Leisure World String Ensemble, and conductor of the Leisure World Orchestra.

April holds another kind of honor for her, when she will be installed as Leisure Worlder of the Month, in the program sponsored by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society. Her ceremony will commence at 10:00 a.m., on Monday, April 1, in Clubhouse Six. The public is invited to attend.

Hazel's career began in Oak Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. She began playing the violin at age six. While still in high school, she played in the Chicago Women's Symphony. Later, she studied under Leon Sametini at the Chicago Musical College, where she grew and developed into a professional caliber violinist.

After playing, singing and dancing on the RKO vaudeville circuit, Hazel settled down, raised four children and became a secretary for a public school in Chicago. But her avocation for music remained and her musical abilities continued to mature.

After some years, she became a member of the Northside Symphony in Chicago. Again her musicianship swelled, and she grew to become the concertmistress for the group.

She also played the viola for the Oak Park Symphony. In that organization, she climbed to the position of principal violist, a position comparable to her place with the Northside, except that the concertmistress title is reserved for the first chair violinist, and cannot be held by any other player.

Now, Hazel LaBelle lives in Leisure World. And when she came here 10 years ago, she brought her music with her. She is an enthusiastic chamber music player, and she is still active with the Laguna Hills String Ensemble. She also serves as conductor for the Leisure World Orchestra, "an outstanding group," she says, "that is 55 musicians strong."

Her music is not limited to the symphony, however. She is an active player in the Carillon Bell Choir. She also directs the Methodist Church Bell Choir.

Although Hazel says she doesn't have much time for joining the many Leisure World clubs, she did find time to volunteer at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Home and at the Leisure World Library. She is also often at the Drop-in Lounge in Clubhouse One, where she is also a volunteer.

Hazel LaBelle has brought joy to many ears and hearts throughout her musical career, and the residents of Leisure World can be pleased that she continues to do so today.