

HISTORICAL SOCIETY
LEISURE WORLDER OF THE MONTH
DECEMBER 1997

BETTY PHILLIPPI

Betty Phillippi accepted the Great Depression years as a challenge. While her latent talents were not yet apparent, in her teenage years she and a girlfriend would occasionally slip out of York, Pennsylvania, her birth home, with parental consent, and go to New York to see Broadway plays and operas.

The experience of going to theaters in New York triggered a strong desire to become involved in the performing arts. The years that followed had a varied influence on her life. In 1936 Pennsylvania State College awarded two scholastic scholarships, one each to a boy and girl. Betty was chosen but returned hers because of family objection to co-educational schools of higher learning.

Her adventurous spirit brought her to California in 1944, after working her way through a local Business College earning her degree in Accounting and Secretarial skills. She graduated Valedictorian.

Betty had recognized those talents that had dwelled within her, including leadership. Before coming to California she was Co-director of a Church Training Camp in Gettysburg for nearly 10 years, and was counselor in choir groups.

Entertaining in the Los Angeles and Hollywood USOs was a delightful experience, she relates.

During this time she met her future husband, Charles. She and Chuck were married at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Wee Kirk O' the Heather, an unusual circumstance her eastern family could, in her words, "never understand or get over".

She and Chuck had one child, a daughter, Linda Elizabeth.

Betty earned her degree in Drama and English Literature during this period.

While the variety in her life did not include professional acting, music was dominant, aside from her wifely and motherly responsibilities. She sang in a church choir for 10 years, the Sweet Adelines in Pasadena for 12, and another 12 with the William Hall Chorale. Somehow, she found the time to join the ranks of the Laubach Literacy Tutors for 12 years in addition to developing a career as legal secretary.

Betty's accomplishments in Leisure World are ongoing. She is currently president of California Club; past president of American and Ballroom Dance Clubs and Minnesota Club (from Pennsylvania?); Philharmonic Committee Gala Chairman; active in World on Film, Opera 100, Hymn-a-Long, Stroke Club and Lawn Bowling (when there's time). She now studies Spanish so, in her words "she can argue with the gardeners!"

Betty did not pursue a career in the theater -- or did she?

The Historical Society is pleased to present Betty Phillippi as its Leisure Worlder of the Month for December, 1997.