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Recently a man walked up to the uniformed driver at the Rossmoor New Sales office and said, "I want to shake your hand. It was your story of Leisure World when you drove us through on our first visit that induced us to buy."

This slender, blue eyed man wouldn't begin to guess how many thousands of prospects he has taken through this adult community in the 13 years he has been director of transportation, first for Leisure World Foundation and the last 12 for Rossmoor Corporation.

I mention this today because Jim is celebrating his eightieth birthday this week. He looks at least 20 years younger. On each of his thousands of trips through Leisure World Jim describes the community with pride because he and his wife Gwen have resided here since 1966.

Hidden behind Pursell's ever ready smile is an interesting life story as an athlete and coach. Jim was a 158-pound guard (small even in those days) on the first University of Southern California football team to play in the Rose Bowl.

While his Trojans won 14 to 3 over Penn State that New Year's day of 1923, the more lasting story of that episode was the near fight between the two coaches prior to the game. It has been retold countless times.

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"Penn State was 45 minutes late for the opening kickoff and that's what started the whole thing," Jim recalls."Elmer Henderson, our coach was fit to be tied.

"He thought it was a strategy ploy to keep us waiting, and told Coach Hugo Bezdek so.In the shouting match that ensued with each calling the other a liar,Bezdek invited Henderson to take off his glasses and put up his dukes.

"Although he had been suffering from the flu I think he would have,too,but cooler heads prevailed."

Pursell moved to Leisure World after 47 years of coaching the Los Angeles Schools System.As the track and field coach at University High for 30 years he developed not a few world class athlete

In fact,the Los Angeles Times pointed out in a story in 1949 after the National Collegiate championships in which three of Jim's former high school stars collected 44 points that University High could have won the team title.

The three were USC sprinter, Mel Patton, 1948 Olympic gold medal winner;UCLA hurdler Craig Dixon and Lewis Taylor, a discus thrower for UCLA.Patton and Dixon scored double wins in that meet to account for 40 points.

While Pursell has no idea how many thousands have taken his bus through Leisure World he will never forget the biggest day.

"It was when the Towers were opened.My crew started at 8 a.m.There were so many people we had to lease two extra buses so

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we had a total of eight going back and forth from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. We must have transported 5000 people. Cheese and wine were being served at the Towers. I never knew whether they had enough for everyone or not."

What do Jim and Gewen do for vacation? You guessed it. They go for long cross country trips.