

# The Historian

## Preserving Today for Tomorrow

Volume 6 Number 2

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## The Woods Have Trees

This authoritative article of "Trees of Leisure World" was written by Angela Kitzinger and published in the Fall 1983 and Summer 1984 issues of *Historical Hi-Lites* published by the Historical Society. Kitzinger was assisted by M J. Bergfeld, a former English and speech teacher from Illinois who plowed into the vast and complex field of dendrology (scientific tree study) and emerged a master, eventually labeling over 135 species or a total of over 1,200 individual trees. Lorraine Winterer, a member the Naturalist Club, did reference work on the botanical names of trees and their country of origin and thus helped to establish the authenticity of the labels. Charlotte Truesdale combined her interest in trees with skill as a photographer and the result was a unique collection of slides on the trees of Leisure World. Frank Bruins made a generous financial contribution for the purpose of developing a collection of spectacular, interesting and colorful trees at some site where they might be enjoyed by all residents.

### ***The Leisure World Naturalist Club***

Many residents, singly or in groups, take a special interest in the trees and make significant contributions to the community through their efforts in behalf of the trees.

### ***Tree Labeling Program***

This organization, which started as the Laguna Hills Bird Club in 1965, became the Naturalist Club at the end of 1970 and expanded its interest to trees near the end of 1971. At that time, Mr. Frank Bruins appeared before the board as a guest and proposed that the club undertake some form of tree labeling "for the purpose of promoting knowledge of the many wonderful trees, shrubs, and plants on our grounds." It was decided to label trees in the areas most frequented by the public—Aliso Park, Friendship Walk and the greenbelt. The Naturalist Club donated more than \$2,000 for these labels and has continued to give unlimited support to the project.

### ***In the Beginning***

In the beginning there were bare rolling hills, golden during most of the year and emerald after the rains or in the spring. Farmers grew beans and barley on these hills and ranchers turned their cattle and sheep loose to graze upon their slopes.

Since this scene in 1960, what changes have been wrought! Today these hills are home to more than

20,000 people and more than 31,000 trees. Just as people migrated to these Laguna hills from many corners of the earth, so too have the trees found their way here from every continent and almost every country to form a veritable paradise equaled by few areas on earth.

How many of us traveling to far places have marveled at the exotic flora and fauna along the way? For instance, in Australia we look forward to seeing the kangaroo and the koala bear; in New Zealand, the kiwi bird. But how many of us realize that here in Leisure World Australia is at our doorstep and New Zealand not far away—not in the form of kangaroos, koalas, and kiwis, but in the form of many of our spectacular trees. Australia is represented here by more than thirty species, including a dozen kinds of eucalyptus and various flowering trees such as the bottlebrush, with its brilliant red springtime blossoms, and the Queensland lacebark with its sturdy trunk and spectacular off-season blooms. New Zealand's most noteworthy contribution is the New Zealand Christmas tree which in this latitude blossoms in June or July.

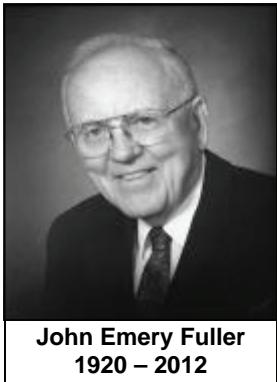
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Queensland lacebark blooms.

**John Fuller**

John Emery Fuller, president of the Historical Society from 2001-2005, died gently on January 14, 2012 of pulmonary fibrosis. John was a gentle man and a gentleman whose life was guided by unwavering faith in God and love for his family and friends.



**John Emery Fuller  
1920 – 2012**

John retired in January, 1991, married Kevin Mary Hannigan and they moved to Leisure World Laguna Hills in 1992. He was selected as the Historical Society's Honoree for January, 2001. At that event Bert Posthill, the Society's honoree for March, 2003, saluted John as follows:

"I think it was Leonardo da Vinci who was asked to decide which of several machines was the most efficient. His response was very illuminating—he chose the one that made the least noise! There you have it—John Fuller fits that bill to a tee. He is very effective and efficient and he does it without any fuss and bother. It's very deceptive—people don't realize how much he's doing since he accomplishes things without making any noise. John is so unassuming and quiet about his activities that most of us are unaware of all the things he has done."

Bert then recognized John's election to the United Laguna Hills Mutual Board in 1997 and his service on the Maintenance and Construction Committee, his year as corporate treasurer and his year as president of the corporation—all accomplished with distinction. John was elected to the Golden Rain Foundation Board in 2001 and served as one of its vice presidents for two years.

Over the years, John Fuller was a valuable contributor to our service clubs. John was a vice president and board chair of the PC Computer Club, treasurer and a member of the board of the Community Association, and vice president and program chair of the Aerospace Club.

John also volunteered as an escort/messenger at Saddleback Memorial Hospital for 10 years. In 2001, he became a member of the Board of Directors of the Laguna Woods United Methodist Foundation and served as its secretary for more than five years.

Those of us who knew John describe him as quiet, terrific, solid, diplomatic and outstanding leader.

John Fuller spent more than 20 years of his life as an enthusiastic volunteer. We have been blessed by his presence.

**Trees from Page 1**

Ginko biloba trees have fan-shaped leaves which are divided into lobes and turn golden yellow in the fall.

Courtesy James Field, Wikipedia Ginkgo Biloba Leaves

**Many Chinese Trees**

How many Leisure Worlders have extolled the graceful landscape of China as seen firsthand on tours or depicted in Chinese landscape paintings? Look homeward Leisure Worlders! A dozen species of Chinese trees are represented in your own community. Most common is the crape myrtle that colors our landscape in August with delicate pinks and reds and purples. Also common are various trees that droop with the delicacy of a Chinese print, notably the Chinese elm and the weeping willow.

Uncommon in Leisure World, but one of our most valuable and interesting trees is the maidenhair or gingko biloba tree, recognized by its fan-shaped leaves. When you look at this tree, you are looking not only far away in distance, but far back in time, for the gingko tree is a living fossil whose form has not changed in millions of years. It is the only remaining species of a large order of trees that existed when dinosaurs roamed the earth. In the Orient it is planted near temples and revered as a sacred tree. Other interesting Chinese trees in Leisure World are



**Brazilian pepper tree in bloom at building 2209.**

the twisted Hankow willow, the windmill palm, and the weeping Chinese banyan tree.

The rest of Asia and Africa contribute a dozen trees, notably the golden rain tree, a native of Korea; the coral tree, a native of South Africa; and the orchid tree, a native of India. All told, approximately two-thirds of the species that inhabit Leisure World are immigrants from the eastern hemisphere that have adapted themselves to the Southern California climate. Surely these exotic trees lend interest to the community for those whose eyes are open to their presence.

But we are not entirely surrounded by trees from the Far East. Approximately one-third of the species in Leisure World have their origin in the western hemisphere. Notable from Brazil are the Brazilian pepper that grows prolifically in this climate; the jacaranda or fern tree that is known for its delicate lavender flowers in the spring; and the amazing floss silk tree that has spikes on its sturdy light green trunk and phenomenal off-season pink flowers at its crown. Of special interest to Leisure Worlders, of course, are our fine specimens of two California trees—the 400-year-old California sycamore in Aliso Park and the rapidly growing California redwood in front of Clubhouse 1.

### **135 Species of Trees**

In all, Leisure World, with its 1,600 acres of landscaping, gives home to more than 135 species of trees, approximately the same number for which the 800 square miles of the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee are celebrated and spectacularly more than 85 species said to exist in all of western Europe! The tree lover of Leisure World has an arboretum at his doorstep. But, unlike the Great Smokies and Western Europe, the native habitat of Leisure World is devoid of rain during most of the year. Our tree population is thus heavily dependent upon our irrigation system



Mimosa silk tree in bloom at building 732.

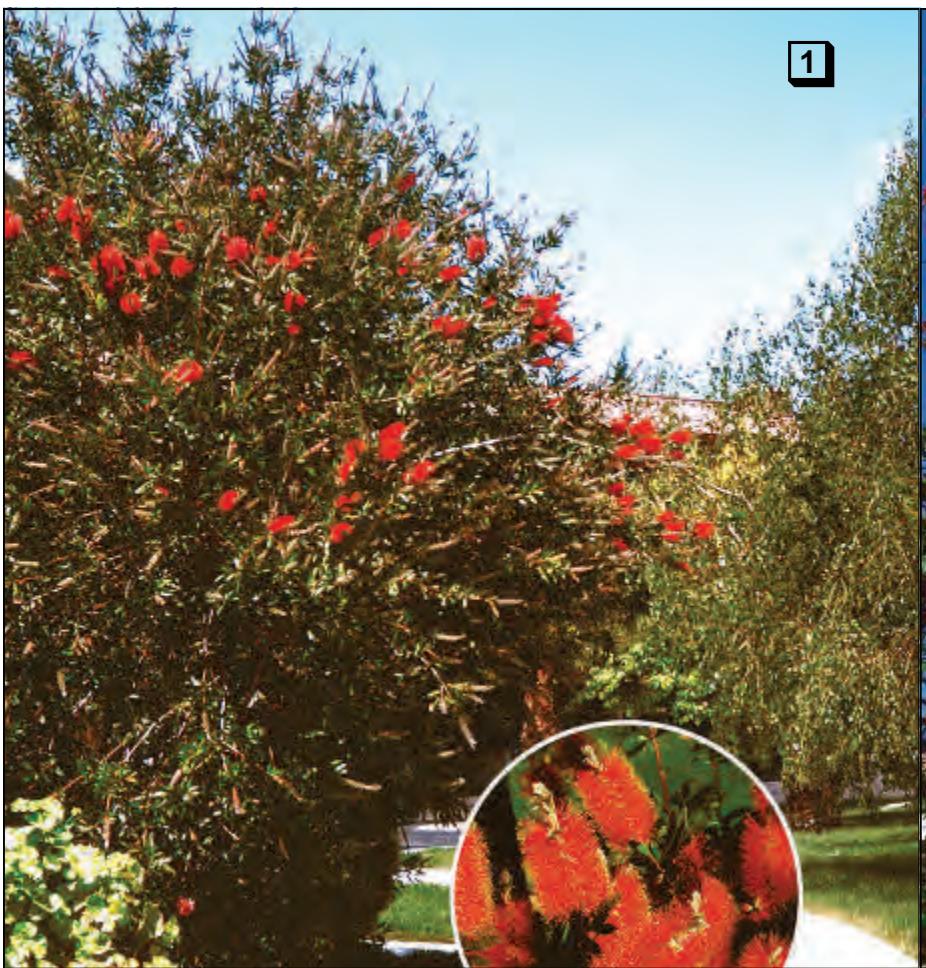
which is the largest electronically-controlled sprinkler system in the world. Irrigation spells the difference between our Leisure World arboretum and those bare rolling hills where only beans and barley grew.

To these hills in the early 60s came the man whose task it was to visualize and develop the landscape of Leisure World. This was landscape architect Reynold W. Forsum. Before him lay the barren land—his to populate with trees and shrubs that were to be companions of people and the homes of birds down through the decades. Obviously, this was no flatland to be laid out in squares and rectangles and planted in row after row of conventional trees. These were rolling hills that lent themselves to artistic development

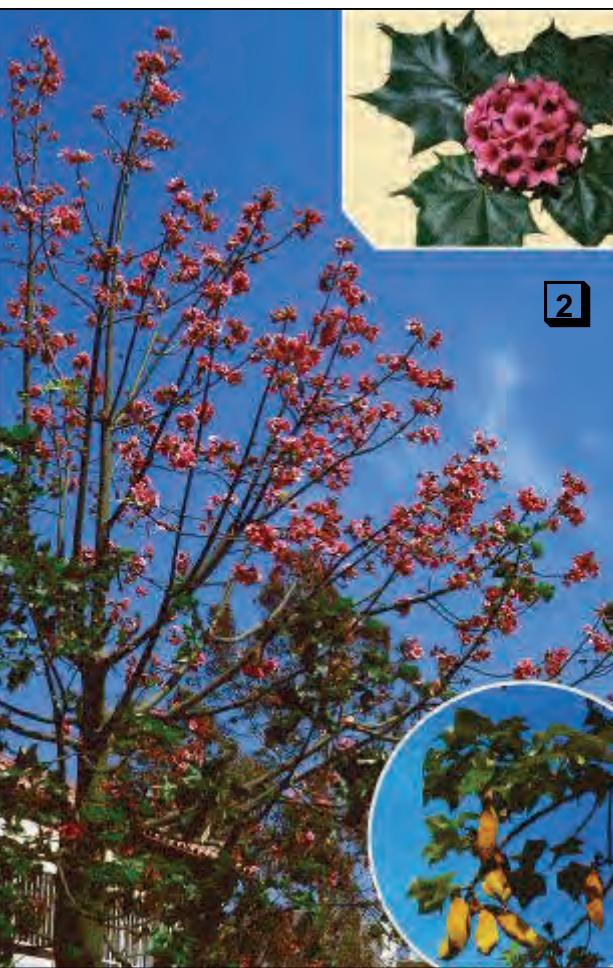
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### **Pictures on Pages 5 and 6**

- 1** Bottle brush tree (*callistemon rigidus*) located at unit 2163 in May 1975. Referred to as bottlebrushes because their flowers resemble a traditional bottle brush. Origin Australia. Blooms: July.
- 2** Queensland lacebark (*brachychiton discolor*), located at unit 2188. Native of Queensland, Australia. Have pink flowers with five-pointed lobes, without petals. Blooms: November - February.
- 3** Floss silk tree (*ceiba chodatti* & *ceiba speciosa*). Native to subtropical forests of South America. Seeds of both the creamy-yellow (*chodatti*) and pink-yellow (*speciosa*) flowering trees are surrounded by a white, fluffy silk-like material. Blooms: October - November
- 4** Liquid amber (*liquidambar styraciflua*), also called sweet gum, located at unit 2045 in November 1975. Fall color of the five-lobed colored leaves is impressive. Leaves are finely toothed, paler underneath, and have a little white fur where the stalk attaches. Separate male and female flowers without petals form clusters but are not very noticeable. The inch-size brown fruit balls dangling on their stems are composed of large numbers of individual capsules containing winged seeds and are protected by sharp spikes.
- 5** Floss silk tree (*ceiba speciosa*) located in Garden Center 1. Native to subtropical forests of So. America. Seeds of the pink-yellow flowering trees are surrounded by a white, fluffy silk-like material. Blooms in Oct. - Nov.
- 6** African tulip tree (*spatodea campanulata*) located at Clubhouse I, is native to the dry forests of Africa where the stem bark is used as a paste to heal wounds. Blooms in Sep.
- 7** Blue jacaranda (*jacaranda mimosifolia*). Flowers, up to 5 cm long, appear in spring and early summer, and last for up to two months. They are followed by woody seed pods which contain numerous flat, winged seeds.. Blooms in spring.



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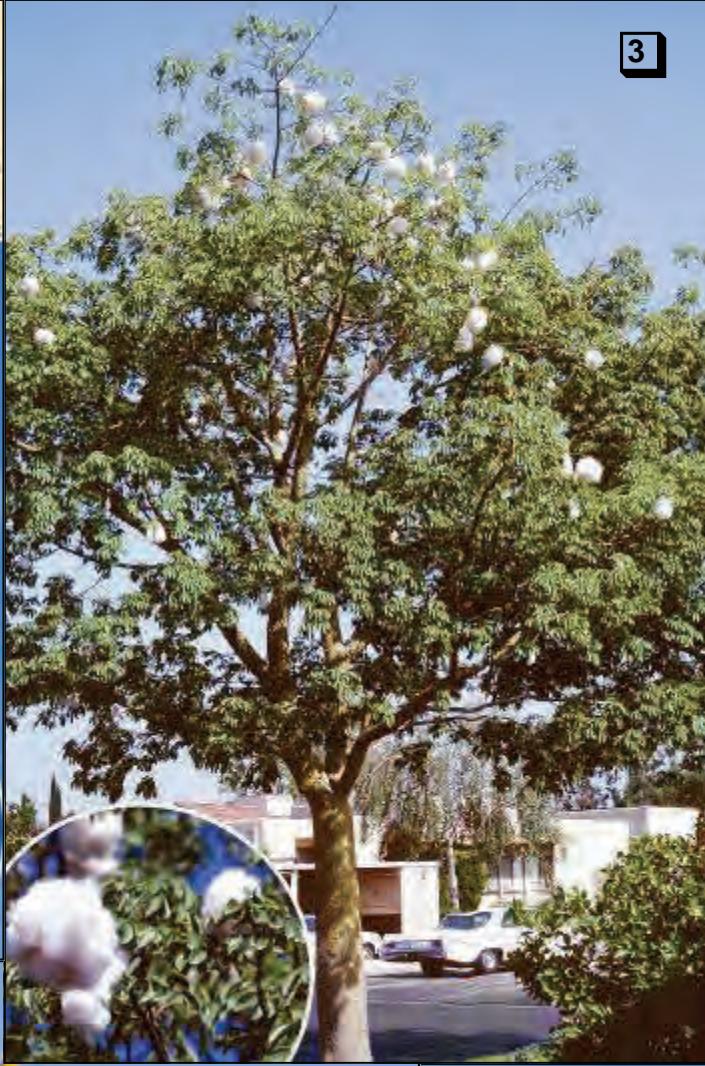


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### **Trees from Page 3**

and it was with artistry in mind that Forsum formulated his concepts.

Different areas would be treated in different ways and planted with different trees so that each area would have a distinctive identity. There would be variety in color, texture, contour, and character so that perceptive people would find interest, excitement, and beauty in their environment. Contrast would be provided, for instance, between deciduous trees and evergreens. There would be accents in the form of flowering trees and emphasis on trees of special interest. Today these concepts are still evident in the landscape and the community is indebted to Reynold Forsum for his vision.

These tasks are performed by the 235-member corps of the Landscape Maintenance Division of Professional Community Management under the able leadership of Fred Ridge. Working directly under Ridge are eight supervisors, each of whom brings to Leisure World a unique background in some aspect of landscape gardening. Most closely concerned with the tree program is Area Supervisor Ismael Saenz who, during the 16 [currently 44.5] years of his employment at Leisure World, has risen from the rank of gardener to his present position of responsibility for tree maintenance.

But the Leisure World tree program does not function in isolation. There is continual and close cooperation between our landscape maintenance personnel and outside agencies concerned with tree management. Horticultural students and farm advisors visit Leisure World to study the operation of the tree program. The division conducts various experiments in cooperation with university horticultural departments. Tree problems are referred to the University of California at Riverside or Davis. There is close contact between our community and the state and county agricultural services. Our tree program is thus a giant laboratory to which others turn to test their theories and practices in relation to trees and through which our own personnel are enabled to profit from the experience of others.

### **The Role of the Resident**

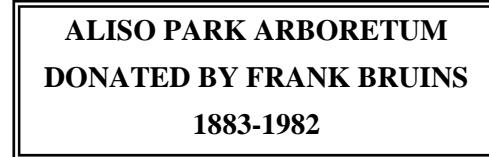
The story of the Leisure World trees does not end here. In some ways the work of the professionals is merely the beginning, the setting of the stage upon which residents act or interact in relation to their environment. The trees create the ambiance within which each resident lives. They surround our man-

ors, they line our streets, and they populate our community. Some residents may indeed be oblivious to the pervasive presence of trees, but every resident is dependent on the trees for the values—some recognized, some denied, some ignored—that immeasurably enhance life in Leisure World.

For instance, take the value of property in the community. Remove the trees or, in some cases even one tree, and a building once attractive stands forth like a barrack, bare and barn-like when stripped of the subtle grace of limbs and branches, stark and naked when devoid of the soft screen of leaves. For this reason developers hasten to surround new buildings with trees. Trees enhance the value of property as much as ten percent, as well as facilitating its rapid sale. From the standpoint of the purchaser trees provide shelter, privacy and the identity sought by Reynold Forsum which distinguishes one residence from all others. Trees increase the oxygen content of the air and provide a screen against smog and noise. Witness the effect of tree plantings along heavily traveled highways. And finally, for those who are sensitive to their environment, trees uplift the spirit as they soar toward the sky carrying the thoughts upward beyond the mundane level of life. Thus the trees, silently, unostentatiously, and with grace, contribute to the quality of life in the community. But this is not a one-way street. Many residents, singly or in groups, take a special interest in the trees and make significant contributions to the community through their efforts in behalf of the trees.

### **Frank Bruins**

Frank Bruins made a generous financial contribution for the purpose of developing a collection of spectacular, interesting and colorful trees at some site where they might be enjoyed by all residents. The result is a site in the northeastern area of Aliso Park identifiable by the following plaque:



### **Grounds Maintenance Committees**

In addition to the unofficial efforts of residents in relation to the landscape, the governing boards of the mutuals take official action through their various grounds committees. These committees meet regularly and deal with a wide range of issues, especially

requests from residents for tree removals. Following are examples of such requests:

1. Resident complains that a mocking bird stations itself in a nearby tree and awakens him every morning with its singing.
2. Resident requests removal of a large specimen tree because it is damaging his rose bushes. This would denude a particularly beautiful grassy area on a main thoroughfare of Leisure World.
3. Residents request removal of several large eucalyptus trees because they object to the annual shedding of bark on their lawn.
4. Resident complains that her carpeting is being spoiled by tree droppings tracked into her manor.

Examples of this nature go on and on and the committees attempt to deal fairly with residents' problems, while keeping in mind the overall importance of trees to the community. In the final analysis, the residents of Leisure World, through their governing bodies, are responsible for the values that make Leisure World what it is. If they truly value the park-



**The golden rain tree blooms in summer. The leaves turn buttery yellow each fall. It has panicles of little yellow flowers raining down from the tips of the growing shoots so that a tree in full flower is breathtaking to behold. Flower arrangers like to clip sprays of these seed pods for winter arrangements as they last for years and can also be sprayed gold for wreath accents.**

like environment of the community, they will think twice before requesting tree removals for frivolous reasons. They will remember that our trees are the common property of all residents and a primary asset of the community. Should residents ever cease to value their trees, our beautiful Leisure World could all too readily revert to those bare rolling hills of some 25 years ago.

#### **ARCHIVE CORNER**

**by Fran Lindberg in Historian July 2007**

We all recognize the initials GRF which stands for "Golden Rain Foundation." Perhaps you wonder where the term "golden rain" originated. It can be credited to the poetic side of Ross Cortese.

The golden rain tree is a fast-growing, deciduous tree reaching about 30 feet in height. At maturity, it has a rounded crown, with a spread equal to or greater than the height. Its leaves give it an overall lacy appearance. The leaves turn yellow before falling. The golden rain tree is perhaps most striking in the fall with its large clusters of bright yellow flowers that hang from the drooping branches and appear to be "golden rain." These are followed by two-inch red-purple seed pods, which are equally dramatic!

Cortese first saw the golden rain tree in New Orleans. After he learned that these trees could thrive in California, he ordered 2,700 trees sent to a nursery in Chino where they were nurtured until they were ready to be planted in Leisure World Seal Beach. Thus, it became the symbol of the communities he was planning for senior citizens.



The name Golden Rain Foundation was given to the corporation at the center of government and management at Leisure World Seal Beach and then carried over to Laguna Hills.

Today [2007] there are approximately 86 golden rain trees in the community. The oldest is at Carport 111 across from 117 Via Estrada. The tree pictured here is on the turf slope next to Building 201.



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Olive tree (*olea europaea*) located at Clubhouse I in late 1990s. Because of the safety hazard created when the olives drop, most of these trees were removed.

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**Editor — Bob Ring**

Opinions expressed by authors in *The Historian* do not necessarily reflect those of the Historical Society of Laguna Woods.