



LAGUNA WOODS
HISTORY CENTER

The Historian

Your Place in Local History

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1983 - The Library, Rossmoor and Aliso Creek

The material in this edition was taken from articles written by News Editor Myra Neben and reporters Nancy Harding, Robert Hyndman, and Chris Meyer in numerous issues of the 1983 *Leisure World News*. Additional information was taken from the 50th Anniversary Book, published by the History Center Society in 2014.

Library Matures



Irma Franklin, 1982
History Center

According to Irma Franklin, chairman of the library's executive board in 1983, the facility celebrated its birthday on November 19th because that's the day in 1976 when the community's collection of books and periodicals moved into its handsome new home next to the (original) Administration Building.

But the library actually was a teen-ager, and in May 1983 it came of age, a full 17 years after Catherine Wright and her fellow Panhellenic members decided that Leisure World wasn't complete without a library.

Founder Wright, known to almost everyone in the community as "Katy," left Leisure World for Regents Point in 1983 (where, incidentally, she founded that community's library). Franklin who was in her 14th year at the library carried on the tradition of a volunteer staff that serves for love of *See Library Page 10*



In 1966, the Panhellenic Society opened a library in Clubhouse 2.
History Center

Rossmoor Corporation Liquidation

In 1982, Rossmoor had the reputation for being the largest builder of retirement home communities in the country. The company was started by Ross Cortese in 1951 and within a few years, at the urging of friends who saw the need for retirement living, he began building Leisure World in Seal Beach.



Ross Cortese, 1965
Ralph McIntyre

The first Rossmoor project was in Los Alamitos where 3,672 homes were built in a walled city which eventually was designated "Rossmoor." In 1961, the Seal Beach Leisure World projects were started and have grown to over 6,500 homes. It was followed by gate-guarded retirement communities in California (Walnut Creek), Florida, New Jersey and Maryland.

Leisure World Laguna Hills was the largest and most successful development with over 12,700 homes. The last part of the community involved about 100 homes at Gate 9 priced over \$300,000. Thirty-five units had not been sold by the end of 1983.

On June 15, 1982, the Rossmoor Corporation technically ceased to exist. The company's stockholders, headed by developer Ross Cortese, voted in June 1981 to liquidate the assets of the firm. Business conditions had left Rossmoor holding various properties. The management during liquidation was Cortese, Rossmoor President Al Ceresa and Vice President for Finance William March. On June 16, 1982, Rossmoor's properties were transferred into a liquidation trust with the stipulation *See Rossmoor Page 2*

Rossmoor from Page 1

that all holdings had to be sold within three years.

Among the properties held by the company was the approximately 180 acres on the southwest corner of Moulton Parkway and El Toro Road. That land was under option to the Koll Company of Newport Beach who planned to build a project named the Rossmoor Business Park. However, development was stalled because of the restrictions placed on the land, which was under the flight path to El Toro Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS-El Toro). Rossmoor had filed a legal challenge to those restrictions in Los Angeles Federal Court. In October 1983, more than 10 years after Rossmoor had been awarded a \$2.75 million settlement from the United States Government in a case involving Marine Corps opposition to development in the greenbelt, the same two parties once again were back in court. In this action, the Rossmoor Liquidating Trust attempted to force the Marine Corps to lift the restrictions that prohibit development on the parcels.

The controversy over the property dated back to the original purchase of the Moulton Ranch by Cortese. Claiming he was "coerced" by the Marine Corps, Cortese signed a "Declaration of Restrictions" covering 709 acres under the flight path. The restrictions prohibited substantial development on the land. Most of the land was designated open space and facilities where only a limited number of people congregated were permitted.

As a result of the October court hearing, Federal Judge Laughlin Waters handed down a judgement, upholding restrictions on Rossmoor owned property. The court "found that the restrictions negotiated in 1974 were intended to be permanent and should be enforced." The restrictions effectively prohibited Rossmoor from developing acreage at Moulton Parkway and El Toro Road. Waters' ruling meant the restrictions must be complied with "unless the Marine Corps agreed to change the restrictions or the base is closed."

Rossmoor's other pending transactions were the sale of the Moulton Parkway Shopping Center, on Santa Maria Avenue, and the Willow Tree Shopping Center on El Toro Road. Rossmoor also owned 10 acres of open space near the intersection of Laguna Canyon Road and El Toro Road.

The Laguna Hills Utilities Company, of which Cortese was a major stockholder, continued to occupy its offices in the Rossmoor Building on the corner of Calle Sonora and El Toro Road (now Age Well Sen-

ior Services). Another parcel of land just outside Gate 3 on Moulton Parkway was under "verbal agreement" to a developer who planned to build a two building care-type facility (Palm Terrace and Las Palmas).

Professional Community Managent Sold

In June, PCM was sold to Johnstown American Companies for a reported \$1 million. Johnstown American, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia had offices in 26 other states, including an office in Newport Beach. The firm was involved in real estate services activities in apartments, condominiums, office and commercial with management, brokerage and finance. PCM became a business subsidiary of Johnstown American with considerable autonomy over its own operation. Johnstown American acquired the firm because of its expertise in the field of condominium management.

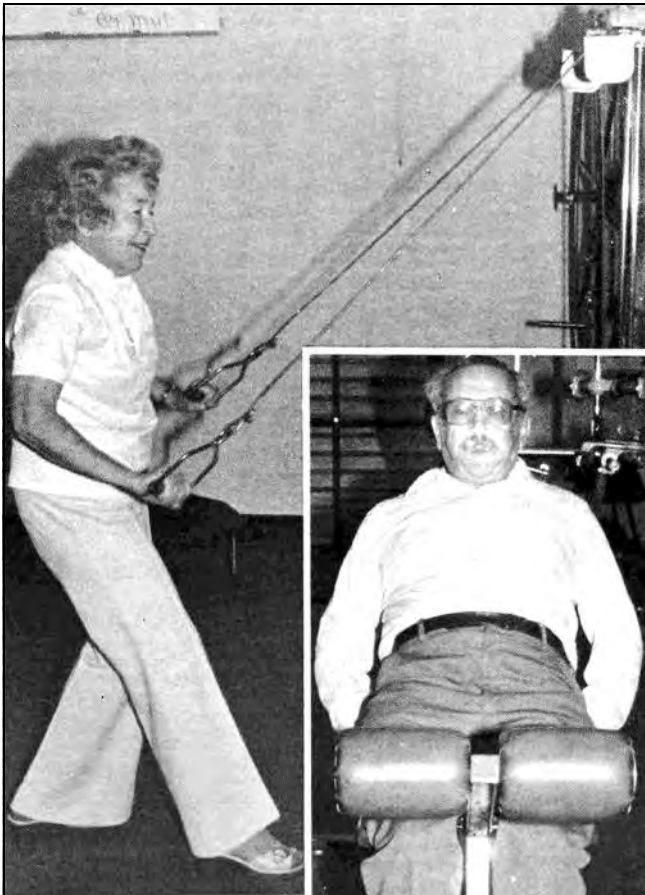
At that time, PCM was one of the nation's largest managers of condominium and planned community homeowner associations. They managed about 35 communities, of which Leisure World was the largest, and employed an aggregate of about 1,100 people.

Leisure World General Manager Russ Disbro and PCM's President Jeff Olson said the acquisition would afford PCM the opportunity to expand its services outside the Southern California area and perhaps become "nationally oriented." He said that nothing should change as far as the firm's management of Leisure World. "Leisure World is our number one client. We aim to continue to serve this community. Johnstown American realizes that Leisure World is a very important client and we will serve it as we always have."

In September 1983, GRF recommended that all the mutual corporation boards contract with PCM be renewed without changes. GRF Ad Hoc Management Review Committee, appointed in July with participants from all mutual boards, agreed after reviewing the contract, "not to attempt to change the contract as written." At that time the community's cost for management was linked to the consumer price index for Orange County which had not changed. Therefore, the 1983 per-manor cost paid to PCM, \$1.27, would not change during 1984.

'Mini-Gym' Becomes 'Fitness Center'

It took about three weeks in July to expand the mini-gym to include a 590 square-foot classroom next door in Clubhouse 1. In addition to the repainting, recarpeting, improving the air conditioning system,



PUFF, PUFF, PUFF! Leisure World people use fitness center equipment to tone up aging muscles.



and other construction work, the center's new dimension allowed for the installation of a rowing machine, a new wall pulley and nine new exercise bikes. Diane Edwards and Terry Robinson agreed that the mini-gym really wasn't so "mini" anymore, so it was adios, mini-gym and hello, Fitness Center. With the improvement in the air conditioning, a gym by any other name may smell sweeter after all.

3rd Mutual Changes Ballot

"Voters tend to vote for those candidates whose names are up front," began John Luhning, Third Laguna president, as he introduced a resolution that would change the balloting system.

What was suggested was for the mutual to use three variations of the ballot used for the election for new directors. The three variations would all have the same names, but the placement of the names on each ballot would be different. The order of the candidates' names would be the result of three drawings. Each set of approximately 2,000 ballots would have the names in a different order, thereby avoiding the so-called advantage of being first on the ballot. The same would be done with biographical material that accompanied the ballots.

There was a 48% turnout for the 1982 Third Board Election compared to 80% of Leisure Worlders who voted in that year's national elections. The suggestion was met by some skepticism by some residents who did not believe that three different ballots would help increase the vote and/or change the results.

The resolution instituting the three ballot system passed with all the directors except one voting in the affirmative.

Transfer Fee Reduced

At their December meeting, the GRF Board voted to reduce the controversial "resale transfer fee" paid by people purchasing manors in Leisure World by \$500 starting January 1, 1984. The total fee for new residents to the community moving into a resale manor, or current residents moving from one manor to another, would be \$1,600.

The transfer fee in 1983 was \$2,100 which was a reduction from the original fee of \$2,600. Out of the \$1,600, \$1,100 was allocated to the Capital Projects Fund and \$500 to the Working Capital Fund.

Golden Rain Can Speak for Leisure World

In August, two resolutions which were highly criticized at the Third and United board meetings were passed by GRF with virtually no adverse discussion. One resolution called for the establishment of a Corporate Officers Advisory Committee, composed of all the officers of all the mutual corporations, which would replace the President's Committee. The second resolution gave GRF the authority to speak for the community on "matters of community-wide concern, internal or external."

At the two earlier mutual meetings, residents voiced concern that giving GRF authority to be “the voice of the community” would be taking power away from the individual mutual corporations. However, the resolution passed by all the boards, specified that the mutuals would be consulted prior to action by GRF and would be included in the decision-making process with regard to community matters.

With all the officers of the mutual boards being involved, the committee would number between 18 and 20. The new advisory committee would be chaired by the current GRF president.

Towers get First Golden Rain Director

Leisure World’s corporation directors elected five new members to the 15-member Golden Rain Foundation Board. The election included Towers resident Don Davis, the first member of GRF to represent Mutual 50, since the high-rise was opened in late 1974.

Golden Rain Receives \$1 million

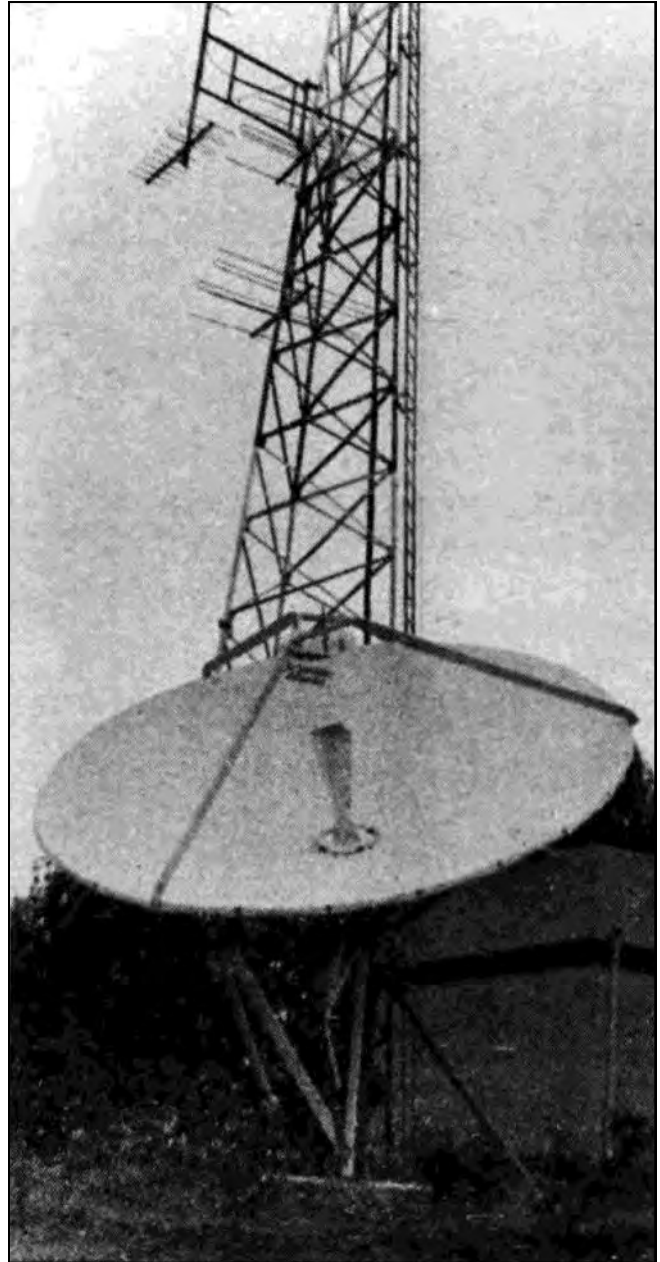
In November, a check for \$1 million was received from Bradford National together with settlement papers. The firm sued by GRF for fraud and misrepresentation. After four years of working on a customized accounting system for Leisure World, Bradford could not deliver a workable product.

GRF sued Bradford, a subsidiary of McDonnell Douglas, for fraud, misrepresentation, and negligence, among other charges. After a federal judge upheld nine of 10 causes in a motion to dismiss, Bradford agreed to the \$1 million out of court settle-



For the first time in Leisure World history, a regular meeting of GRF was broadcast on Channel 6. Rob Cromwell was behind the camera as GRF President Leon Bosch conducted the meeting in the Administration Building on January 4, 1983.

Leisure World News



Satellite Broadcasting – In February, a satellite “dish” was installed by Rossmoor Electric Co. just below the tower inside Gate 14. The dish provided additional television channel capability to residents which allowed residents with newer cable-ready sets to receive five additional channels 18, 19, 20, 21 and 23.

Leisure World News

ment. After accepting the settlement, GRF and PCM would reevaluate whether the accounting system could use any of the accounting software which had been developed by Bradford.

El Toro Water Acquires L.H. Utility Co.

The public El Toro Water District (ETWD) will acquire the Laguna Hills Utility Company’s water and sanitation subsidiaries, which serve Leisure World and

parts of Laguna Hills, Lake Forest, El Toro and Aegean Hills, at a "rock bottom" price, according to the terms of a tentative agreement announced on May 10th by the district.

About \$10.5 million will be paid over a period of 30 years at 12% interest, according to Hugh Hunter, chair of ETWD Board. This money will come from property and real estate taxes and not paying the substantial salaries currently received by the top three executives on the private company's payroll.

Hunter, who made his announcement Tuesday morning at a meeting well attended by Leisure World's directors, said the agency cannot promise that there will be no water and sanitation rate increases to consumers. However, he added, ETWD has no current plans for rate hikes beyond passing on water price increases from suppliers.

El Toro Water District, in existence since 1960, has boundaries roughly equivalent to those of that are served by Laguna Hills Water and Laguna Hills Sanitation. It has functioned as a supplier of water to the private company, one of the last operating remnants of the Ross Cortese business empire that developed Leisure World. According to Al Ceresa, president of Laguna Hills Utility Company, that firm will wind up its business and dissolve upon completion of the sale transaction with the water district.

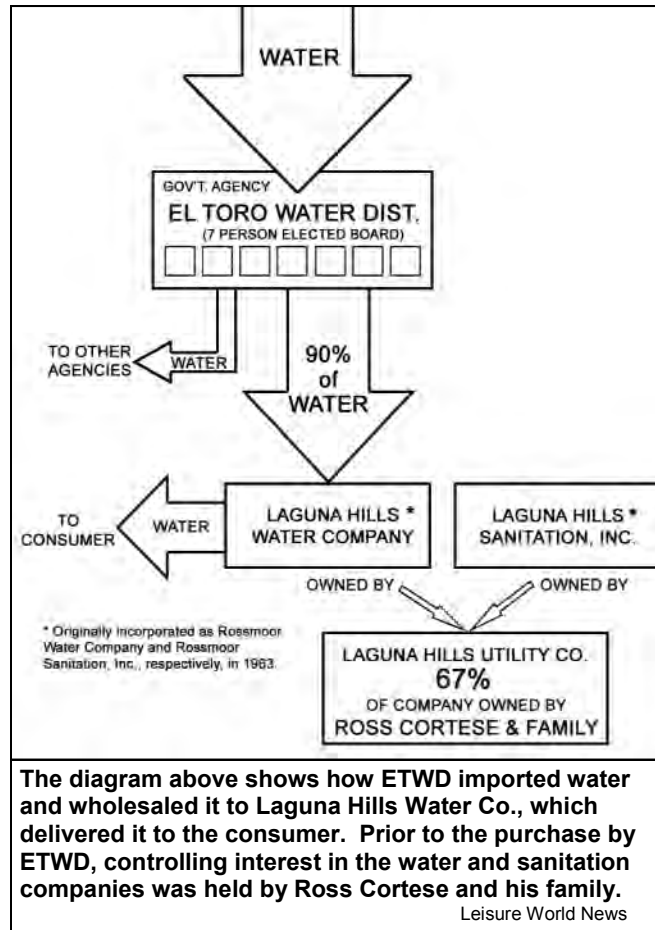
After what Hunter termed "arduous negotiations" between the district and the private firm, the presently contemplated price of purchase is \$10.5 million; the agency also would assume \$5.5 million in long-term debts of the company.

One primary concern of Leisure World residents is the fate of the water tank in the Gate 14 area, long the object of litigation between Laguna Hills Utility Co. and the contractor who built it because of its leakage, lack of function and aesthetic limitations.

According to the sale agreement, Hunter said, the private firm must make stipulated repairs to the tank in the event the lawsuit against the contractor results either in a favorable judgment or an out-of-court settlement. If the company loses the lawsuit (in which, Hunter said, about \$750,000 already has been expended by the firm), the water district will take over the tank "as is," and spend the \$150,000 needed to renovate it.

"If worse comes to worse, and we get the tank as is, we'll fix it," pledged Hunter, who is himself a Leisure World resident.

Residents seemed skeptical that the long standing problem with the tank (described by some "a rusting prehistoric monster") will be resolved.



"If and when you fix the tank, we invite you all to a big wingding," said C.C. Coates, who resides in the Gate 14 area. "But don't forget I have not too many more years to live."

Among advantages in dealing 'with the new owners, according to Hunter, will be the fact that "we, being local people, would have more interest in giving customers good service."

Besides, he added, water district officials are elected by voters: "If we don't do a good job, you can throw us out."

Questioned by such Leisure World representatives as United Mutual President Sarah Lederer, Community Association President Ruth Grossfeld and Golden Rain Foundation Directors Frank Duels, and Herb Troy about whether the public district will be able to make its payments on the acquisition, Hunter said, "We wouldn't have gone into this if we didn't know we could handle it."

Pending approval by parties, regulatory agencies and shareholders, the final accord is expected to be reached this month. Hunter gave a September 1983 target date for changeover of operations.

Thursday, January 13, 1983

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LOOKING BACK

Trivia to Impress Your Friends

There are 2,584 buildings, not counting community facilities, overseen by GRF and the mutuels. Leisure Worlders have 17 million square-feet of living space in 12,736 manors. Although Leisure Worlders were far from being “all washed up”, in 1983 there were 1,161 washers and 967 dryers in the 509 laundry facilities.

There were 215 cul-de-sacs, 1,225 carports, 11,400 feet of wooden fence and 250,000 sprinkler heads. If members of the Hikers Club were to cover every foot of sidewalk within the walls, they would face a 165-mile trek which might be lighted by 3,144 path lights. The Naturalists Club could spend years counting the number of shrubs (800,000) or trees (50,000).

Leisure World had 933 cultivation plots in its two garden centers. That area is miniscule compared to the 153.5 acres for 36 holes on the golf courses. The Landscape Division cultivated 765-acres which includes 450-acres of lawns.

Residents of Leisure World's 3.27 square-miles (2,095 acres) can be found at the six clubhouses, five swimming pools, 18 shuffleboard courts, three lawn bowling greens, six tennis courts, 10 crafts workshops, library, stables (in the 40 stalls or on the 3.5 miles of equestrian trail) or two recreational vehicle storage areas (413 spaces).

Of course, record-keeping in Leisure World had its ups and downs—there were 82 elevators.

USC Medical Study Finds Answers

In 1980, with the consent of the community, Dr. Ross, an epidemiologist from the Norris Cancer Hospital and Research Institute of the University of Southern California, prepared the rather extensive, multi-page questionnaire that was sent to 18,000 residents, about 12,000 of whom responded.

In December 1983, these residents were asked to respond to a follow-up questionnaire to see how past and current health practices related to the risk of developing certain diseases, primarily breast, lung, rectal-colon and prostate cancers.

Many of the questions asked in the original survey referred to dietary habits, with specific questions about a multitude of different foods as well as vitamin and mineral intake. The purposes of this survey was to: a) to find out who had been sick in the intervening time; and b) whether people who had been taking certain vitamin supplements had an increased or decreased risk to certain types of cancers. Some

of the statistics from the 1983 survey were:

- 66% of the respondents took vitamin or mineral supplements. That was higher than any other population group studied. Vitamin C was the most common and was followed by Vitamin A.
- Most people were taking the supplements within safe limit, but more than 20% of the women in the survey had a calcium intake less than 66% of the recommended dietary allowance.
- 92% of men and women reported they had their blood pressure checked annually. 40% of women and 37% of men had high blood pressure.
- 10% of women and 12% of men had or formerly had angina.
- 7% of women and 17% percent of men had had a heart attack. 4% of women and 7% of men had had a stroke.
- 24% of the women had one ovary, 15% had no ovaries, and some women didn't know.
- 48% of the women took oral estrogen for a variety of reasons.
- 9% of the men and 12% of women were smokers, while 59% of the men and 30% of the women were former smokers.
- 30% of the women and 18% of the men reported they completely abstained from use of alcohol. (Keep in mind, this was a self-reporting survey.)
- 52% of respondents had never had a test for blood in the stool, which is a fairly good test for colorectal cancer.
- 64% of the women had never had a mammogram which was recommended yearly for women over 50 and is an effective screening tool for breast cancer. 77% of women said they did monthly breast self-examination.
- 25% of the men and women in Leisure World reported that they did virtually no physical exercise; while 30% of the men and 38% of the women reported doing less than one hour of exercise a day; the remainder exercise one hour or more.

Dr. Ross was excited about the study, his findings and potential findings. “We found that Leisure World people are bright, well-educated. An overwhelming majority filled out the questionnaires carefully, completely and quickly. Leisure World is also a closed community and that's desirable for an epidemiologist. But mostly people wanted to help. That's the truth, and that's great.”



Aliso Creek Sycamore Honored

The venerable sycamore in Aliso Park in Leisure World Laguna Hills is estimated to be more than 400 years old, will be designated an historical landmark in ceremonies planned on May 1st by the Aliso Canyon chapter, “Daughters of the American Revolution.” The local DAR chapter will place a bronze marker on the tree in public ceremonies.

It was from Aliso Park that the local chapter got its name for Spanish language experts comment, “aliso” is the common Spanish word used for “sycamore,” although its literal translation is “alder.” But, “Aliso Park” denotes the park where the giant sycamore stands, and the Laguna Hills chapter selected this historic tree from which to take its name.



Aliso Creek Sycamore was estimated to be more than 400 years old in 1968.

Rains frequently made the foot bridge over Aliso Creek difficult to cross. Sometimes the bridge was completely submerged.

Leisure World News

Below, the Aliso Creek walkway circa 1980.

History Center





In May 1969, the former sandwich shop was transformed into the Leisure World Library. By 1974, this location proved to be unsatisfactory. GRF appropriated \$265,000 for a new building in 1975. History Center

Library from Page 1

books. "No person has ever been paid one penny to work here," Franklin said emphatically in an interview. "No one gets paid, but everyone is devoted."

The "devoted" staff had grown to 125, but only five volunteers started back in 1966, when the library opened in Clubhouse 2 with one box of donated books. "Within the first year," said Franklin, who kept a book of News clippings about the library, "they needed 40 people and five supervisors."

In 1968, when a single box of books had expanded to thousands of volumes, the library left its cramped quarters in Clubhouse 2 and moved into the vacant snack shop building, which quickly became known as



By October 1976, the walls of the library were up and landscaping was under way. On November 19, 1976 the library opened. History Center

"the little tin shack."

"The snack shop's roof leaked in winter, and the sun scorched in the summer," recalled Franklin. "We had to close when it rained because the rugs got wet, which wasn't very good for the books."

As more and more books were donated and purchased, the "tin shack" became as cramped as the single room in Clubhouse 2 had been. The library staff petitioned GRF for new quarters, and on November 19, 1976, after being housed temporarily in a trailer, the books made what Franklin hoped would be their final journey to the new building.

It was the rapid multiplication of the books (of which only hardbound copies are considered part of the formal inventory) that made the moves imperative. By 1968, according to Franklin's statistics, there were 5,000 volumes; by 1972 there were 11,000, and 1982's inventory was about 20,000.

"We shall try to maintain that number," Franklin said. "It's about all our shelving will hold. We are constantly trying to inventory and cull."

That 20,000 count does not include a formidable paperback collection, which has been overseen since the library's infancy by volunteer Florence Wolfinger. Franklin estimated that more than 100,000 have come in, and that about 40,000 are currently shelved. Circulation of paperbacks is always more than 5,000 per month, and sometimes reaches 7,000.

Not all those that go out into the community make their way back to the library. "We know there are lots of paperbacks out there in the community," Franklin said wryly. "We would be delighted to see them again."

More than 88,000 hardbound copies have been purchased or donated to the library since it opened. Not all are shelved; duplicates and some volumes inappropriate to the Leisure World collection, such as textbooks, have been sent to a boy's correctional school and to UC Irvine.

"No book is ever wasted," Franklin declared. "We are now accepting only the newer publications, with a few exceptions, but we donate the others to other non-profit libraries."

Two-thirds of the volumes currently on the library shelves were donated, Franklin said; the remainder has been purchased. Since its inception, the library has been ordering current fiction and mystery, two of its most popular categories.

In 1983

The reference section included a new Encyclopedia Britannica and an unusual, bound collection of National Geographic magazines complete from 1903 on.

There are about 40 periodicals subscribed to by the library; all subscriptions are donated, Franklin said, with the Kiwanis Club a major benefactor, contributing some 20 subscriptions annually.

"We are continually ordering for the large print section, in which we have over 500 titles," she said.

"This is possible because we get very generous donations. It's important for people to keep reading, even when vision is no longer what it was."

The best loved books in the library seem to be mysteries, with romantic fiction a close second.

"We were raised in an era of romance," Franklin explained with a smile.

Modern fiction may be less romantic—and more explicit—but it is not censored. "It is not our function to censor books," Franklin said. "If you don't like what's in a book, you don't have to read it. Just close the cover." Modern and even somewhat steamy titles by authors such as Judith Krantz, of *Princess Daisy* fame, have found their way into the library catalogue, which is arranged using the traditional Dewey decimal system.

Books are not the only popular fare at the library. There also is a sizeable collection of jigsaw puzzles, all donated; about 100 a month are checked out. Those puzzles with pieces missing are recycled to selected schools.

Although volunteer staff members number about 125, more are always welcome, Franklin said. Connie Rice, chairman of the personnel committee, takes charge of the volunteers, who get what the chairman termed "a kind of on-the-job training."

A trained librarian is always on duty at the desk—although Franklin, like her predecessor Katy Wright, was not a professional librarian. Both were teachers, and Franklin also has a minor in literature. "I've always been a 'book person'," she confessed.

Most Leisure Worlders, it would seem, are also "book people," judging from the use the library gets. Visits are estimated at about 65,000 a year, with circulation at about 52,000 annually for hard-bound books.

And the facility seems to be appreciated by the community, said Franklin. "There are very few over-dues, but we get about \$80 a month in fines. Residents are, very generous; they always say, 'Keep the change'."

Contributions to the library have, of course, amounted to considerably more than spare change.

"When we moved to the new building," Franklin recalled, "there wasn't enough money for new shelves. We just couldn't put the old shelves in—they looked sick. So we wrote to all the clubs, and in six weeks we had collected \$18,000 for new shelves."

With at least a small collection of books on almost every subject, the library will continue being a major attraction through many more birthdays—whenever they may be.



The original stucco arches from the snack shop curved above the stacks in the new building (A). Since the 1980's the arches were the entry to the stacks (B). Since 2012 the arches surround the reading lounge (C).

History Center (A & C) Laguna Wood Globe (B)



LAGUNA WOODS HISTORY CENTER

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More wood for the fireplace

Enough wood to keep the fireplace going all winter came out of a 75-foot eucalyptus tree that toppled in early February 1983 behind the manors on Ronda Sevilla. The tree, about 16 years old, was alongside the creek which had been rain swollen for several weeks.

Leisure World News

Editor — Bob Ring

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