

January 30, 1986

# February Leisure Worlder is 'up a tree'

Point to a tree anywhere in Leisure World and chances are that M.J. Bergfald has it catalogued. In fact, Bergfald probably knows more about the local trees than anyone in the area, and he knows them by name.

When Bergfald retired to Leisure World in 1971, he noticed that the trees were different from those in his native Illinois. In 1974 he embarked on a major challenge: identifying and cataloguing all the trees.

To salute the "tree man's" accomplishments, he has been named Leisure Worlder of the Month for February. A ceremony in his honor will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 5 at 10 a.m. in Clubhouse 6. The public is invited to attend the program which is sponsored by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society.

A teacher for 31 years in a Liber-

tyville, Ill. high school, Bergfald was also principal for six years—although, he admits, he missed the years of teaching.

He had come to Illinois after graduating from the University of Iowa and teaching in Iowa and North Dakota. It was during his time in Illinois that he developed his interest in gardening and trees.

Coming to Leisure World, with its exotic species, captured his fancy and he began to identify those varieties he could.

"Once I find a tree," he said, "I'd do a little research. And once you spend time researching a tree, you don't forget it." Keeping that knowledge to himself wasn't natural for the former teacher, and soon he was leading Leisure Worlders on "tree walks."

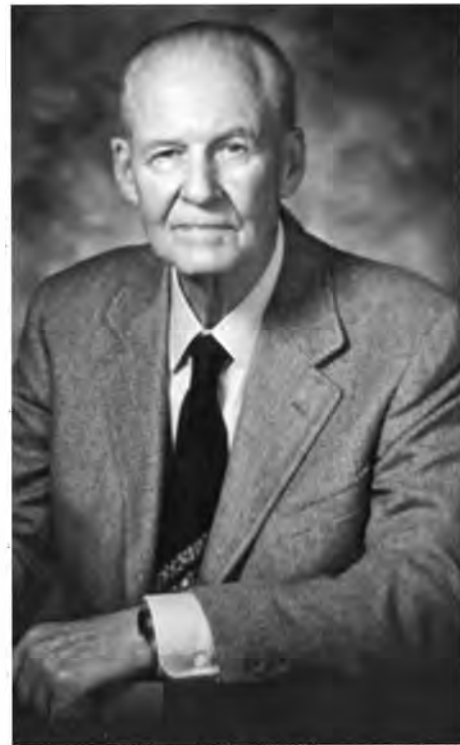
On some days, 35 people would walk a mile or so, and "in less than a mile we would see more than 50

species of trees."

According to Bergfald, there are more than 135 species within Leisure World, representing more than 35 countries. "The trees have a great variety of uses," he says, "Medicinal, lumber, furniture, erosion control, shade, and I'm sure some uses I haven't discovered yet."

"Actually," he said, "I believe we're living in an arboretum here. There are more than 75,000 trees here, all within three and a quarter square miles."

Bergfald and his wife, Barbara, have brought a great deal to Leisure World. However, a reminder of what he stood for still remains in front of the Libertyville Public Library, where a demonstration rose garden grows, allowing future generations to see what is really important: taking time to smell the roses.



**M.J. Bergfald**