

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

MARJORIE BREGAR

Fellow members of the Laguna Hills Transcribers call Marjorie Bregar their "sparkplug." Under the unassuming title of assignments chairman, she serves as the vital link between the local Braille transcribing group and the Braille Institute in Los Angeles.

The Institute provides the volunteers with most of their assignments for textbook and literature transcribing. The work is then divided among members by Mrs. Bregar. "I tear up the books, put them back together, answer questions, hold hands, make sure we are all following the same format, and then check the completed work," she explains.

She also contributed some 2,500 pages last year from her own transcribing machine, a six-key instrument which produces raised characters in a deft combination of typing and shorthand. Last year Mrs. Bregar won the outstanding volunteer award of the L.A. Braille Institute. Today she joins the distinguished list of Leisure Worlders of the Month named by Home Federal Savings and Loan and the Leisure World Historical Society.

Mrs. Bregar has never received a paycheck during her long volunteer career, which began with PTA and Girl Scout activities during the years her children were young. Inspired by a blind neighbor, she later taught herself Braille and joined a transcribing group in the San Fernando Valley. When her husband died suddenly in 1969 she moved to Leisure World and found her niche with the local transcribers. "Our group started here," she says, "but as the surrounding community grew, we grew also."

One third of the membership comes from other areas in Orange County, while the requests filled by the group have no boundaries. "Right now we are working on a biology text for a Santa Monica College student," Mrs. Bregar comments. "We previously did a physiology textbook for him, and he got an A in the class. So you can see that it is well worth the hard work involved."

Other requests have included Brailleing a list of names and extension numbers for a sightless switchboard operator, doing an office interview form for a blind personnel worker and compiling an annual calendar for a Leisure World resident whose busy schedule belies her visual handicap. The group also provided such highly specialized items as a television script for blind musician Jose Feliciano, a navigation manual for a sightless young boating enthusiast and an 80-volume version of the Koran.

One of the most difficult assignments arose when a blind law student was facing her bar examination. Mrs. Bregar and three other members volunteered to transcribe at the site of the exam. "We were in a hotel room, and a runner would bring us the questions. As soon as we transcribed them, he would take them back to her. We were there for six or eight hours," she recalls.

Mrs. Bregar conducts a monthly workshop on advanced transcribing. "This gives everyone a chance to iron out the problems that occur," she says. The group is provided with special paper for its Braille Institute assignments, but relies on contributions for the purchase of additional paper and the transcribing machines themselves. Mrs. Bregar's machine was obtained with carefully hoarded Blue Chip stamps.

A Michigan native, Marge moved west with her family in 1922. She was graduated first in her class from Huntington Park High School and was a junior at UCLA when she left to marry chemist George Bregar. Her education has continued unabated. "I keep learning from everything I do," she says. In addition to the textbook knowledge acquired from her transcribing, Mrs. Bregar is currently studying genealogy and French. She is involved in a project she calls "finding my roots" and writes queries in French to her relatives in Quebec. Mrs. Bregar also is active in the local Astronomy Club and catalogues books at the Leisure World Library where she has been a volunteer since 1969.

An active woman who walks and swims each day, Mrs. Bregar considers Braille transcribing the perfect pursuit for those with busy schedules. "I can work at home on my own time, and pick it up whenever I want." The sightless also find advantages in the system, she reports, "Our blind proof reader says she can read in the dark, even under the bed covers, and never disturb a soul."