



Don Leach/The News

Dolly Briggs takes a break from practicing the piano to talk about why she was selected as Leisure Worlder for December.

Striking the right chord for charity

By Cheryl Walker
The News

Although Dolly Briggs says she was surprised the Leisure World Historical Society selected her Leisure Worlder for December, Saddleback Hospital Foundation co-workers say "It's about time."

Former Third Mutual director, fellow hospital volunteer and 18-year friend, John Dudley says Briggs is a joy to work with, generous to a fault, incredibly talented and "the greatest saleswoman I've ever met."

According to Foundation Associate Secretary Connie Fox, Briggs and her husband Art have been members of the hospital's support group, The Associates, since 1986 and

CEREMONY FACTS

Who: Dolly Briggs
What: Leisure World of the month
Where: Clubhouse 6
When: Wednesday, Dec. 1, 10 a.m.
Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society.

mainstays of the Saddleback Memorial Medical Center since 1983.

During that time, she adds, Briggs has handled many responsibilities from chairing three Associates benefit fashion shows and a Monte Carlo Night, to heading the Friends of the Saddleback Heart Institute High Teas and Fashion Shows and coordinating sales of specialty items (safety-pin bracelets, crystal earrings and calculators) which raised

more than \$75,000 for Saddleback cancer research.

As if all that weren't enough, she and her husband entertain (Dolly plays piano while Art sings) for Saddleback's Stroke Club at its annual party and Saddleback's Associates and Heart Institute Friends at their annual meetings.

Briggs says her interest in medicine goes back to her childhood.

Originally, the Detroit, native hoped to be a nurse, but her dad, a musician, would have none of that putting his daughter on a piano stool at age 6.

By 7, Briggs was accompanying her father's voice students and at 12, her piano skills had improved so she was able to accompany her father's performances for three radio stations.

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In high school she organized her own orchestra, played for glee clubs and accompanied violinist Brodus Earle, who later became concert master of the New York Symphony.

She received a scholarship to the Detroit Institute of Musical Arts meanwhile accompanying a number of major vocal and instrumental artists at concerts in the Southern Michigan area.

She met her English-born husband Art when he came to take voice lessons from her father to fine tune his robust natural baritone.

In 1936 they married and moved to California. Although music remained a high priority with the pair, two children and the reality of the Great Depression made business careers more practical with Art eventually specializing in the custom home construction, Dolly in interior design.

At the same time Briggs was involved in school and youth activities and taught piano (once having an enrollment of 64 students a week); and continued to accompany Art and movie star Dennis Morgan whenever they had singing engagements in Southern California.

In 1964, the couple moved to Laguna Niguel where Briggs volunteered at the South Coast Community Hospital Auxiliary to help raise funds for the medical facility now known as the South Coast Medical Center.

Her contributions there won her the title Laguna Beach Woman of the Year in 1975-76.

In 1975, she and Art moved to Leisure World. Briggs took on a new career in the 1980s and early 1990s when she became a fragrance consultant and in-store perfume model at Neiman Marcus in Newport Beach where

she honed her selling skills.

Briggs was "discovered" by a Neiman Marcus manager who overheard her animated conversation with a cosmetics department employee.

According to a Neiman Marcus house magazine article, the manager, "impressed by her sunny manner and attractive personality, asked her to do fragrance promotions," and Briggs, recently retired, accepted.

Not long after that the retailer's public relation's department asked her to model clothes and jewelry during her promotional rounds.

Soon the wandering model/ tester was selling products as well: her first customer was '30s film star/dancer Ruby Keeler who liked her patter so much that she purchased three bottle of expensive perfume.

Briggs became an expert on scents and soon was giving lectures on the "History, Mystery and Romance of Fragrance" and traveling to the European capitals of perfume manufacturing to study the product she promoted so well.

Although a series of heart attacks have curtailed Briggs' sales career, she doesn't let grass grow under her toes.

"I love to cook, they call me the soup maker of the neighborhood," she says, noting that her recipes have appeared in no less than three cookbooks and are anticipated by those who've had a chance to sample her creations-particularly her creamy New England Clam Chowder.

Briggs's doctor is also permitting her to gradually spend more time at her beloved piano keyboard.

Briggs admits now she's glad she listened to her dad. "I've had a happy life ... they say God's given everyone a talent and you should use it."