

LWer of the Month

Mary Cornelius given honor for month of February

It's important to try new things, even if you blunder. This is the philosophy of Mary Reese Cornelius, who has been chosen Leisure Worlder of the Month for February. "We all need to find something that is demanding to make life interesting and meaningful," she says.

A portrait of Mrs. Cornelius will hang in the rotunda of the Rossmoor Leisure World sales office during the month after which it will be presented to her and Mr. Cornelius in an informal ceremony on March 1, to which her friends and neighbors are invited.

From a little farm girl in a Welsh town in Central Ohio, where she was involved in farm and home activities from canning and breadmaking to milking and hay-baling, Mary Cornelius has emerged as an important figure in club work and as a public speaker, legislative leader, political advocate and a staunch supporter of the educational process.

A delightful lady with an articulate grasp of the English language, Mary's sense of humor and her love of people have enabled her to achieve a

well-tuned sense of balance as a participant in, rather than an observer of, the world around her.

She majored in English, drama and speech with a B.S. in education from Ohio State and spent seven years teaching high school in Utica, Ohio. She had one semester at U.C. Berkeley and a graduate year at USC.

Following this she and George Washington Cornelius were married in Ohio on June 30, 1933 after a brief first encounter on shipboard in San Pedro Harbor as she was enroute from New York City to San Francisco by boat on her first trip to California. This was followed by a volume of letters.

George was a woodshop instructor in the San Gabriel Schools at that time and was later elementary school principal and administrative assistant for 16 of the 27 years he spent in that system.

Mary immediately became involved in San Gabriel little theatre and community work. She was president of the San Gabriel Women's Club, a charter member and president of the Alhambra-San Gabriel Branch of AAUW, on the



Mary Cornelius

Mission Play Revival Committee, war work committees and a Girl Scout leader. She served on the Alhambra Board of Education 12 years, part of that time as its president.

She served the Los Angeles District Federation of Women's Clubs with 25,000 members in five counties, as secretary, vice president and then president. She then

served the California State Federation as education chairman, public speaking chairman, auditor and vice president at large, traveling up and down the state speaking to clubs.

She was public speaking consultant to the International Federation of Women's Clubs in 1953-55 conducting workshops in Washington, D.C. and Denver. She

retired from the "upward climb" in the Federation one year after her husband retired in 1957 in order to spend more time with him. She had also served the State Division of AAUW as parliamentarian, fellowship chairman and nominating committee chairman.

GEORGE AND MARY then built three desert cabins on five-acre homesteads in Lucerne Valley and for the next five years they bought, remodeled and sold several houses as a retirement hobby for George.

While remodeling two houses in South Laguna in 1963, they learned of Rossmoor Leisure World, took their first look in December of that year and bought a model at 51-B Calle Aragon in February, 1964.

Since coming here, Mary has been president of the Woman's Club, the Democratic Club, United Methodist Women and the Foreign Policy Association. She served as Chairman of Leadership Development, Status of Women and Legislation of the Orange County Federation of Women's Clubs and was named its "Woman of the Year" in 1973. She was named Laywoman of the Year at the United Methodist Church in 1974.

SHE IS A charter member and currently active in the Laguna Beach Branch of the University Women, is an honorary member of Delta Kappa Gamma, a member of the Indiana-Ohio Club, United Methodist Church, Church Women United, World War I and American Legion Auxiliaries, Foreign Policy Association, Woman's Club of Laguna Hills and of Mission Viejo.

Saddleback College Citizens' Liaison Committee and takes part in the Pennsylvania Club, Retired Teachers and Hikers Clubs' activities now and then to "please George".

MRS. CORNELIUS served on the Saddleback Area Coordinating Council Board for two years and on its Review Board for four years and is currently elected from Leisure World to again serve on the Council Board. She is an elected director of United Mutual (currently the only woman with ten men) and represents that body as publicity chairman, SACC liaison and on the governance and community relations committees.

She occasionally has time to do story-telling and book review and does frequent folk song-and-story programs and installations with original verses while George plays the melodica and some of his 25 harmonicas.

He plays the piano at home and Mary says her favorite piece is "Meditation" because she can at least hear what meditation is like even though she doesn't have much time for it.