

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

PARK B. DOWD

Isn't retirement the perfect time to sit back and disengage from life? Not according to Park B. Dowd, who opposes what he terms the spectator role. "Many retired people feel they've done their part—and they really haven't," he says. "It's not a time to say 'stop the world, I want to get off.' We owe it to those who follow us to try to make their path easier."

The former department store executive is active in Kiwanis civic and youth projects, serves as a volunteer management consultant and participates in community self-government on the Third Mutual board of directors. Not the least of his many involvements is a continuing effort to share his experiences as one of the first Navy officers to view the atomic wasteland of Ground Zero at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Dowd's lively interest in the world around him is a natural outgrowth of a globe-trotting career that has included being a fashion buyer, Navy lieutenant commander and an International Executive Service Corps consultant in Brazil.

His life began prosaically enough as the first-born son of a small-town druggist in Guthrie Center, Iowa. The family moved to a farm in Canada for five years and then to California, where Dowd played varsity ice hockey during his years at UCLA. Wed in 1935 to a fellow student Bettie Thorne, he went to work for Bullock's and soon was tapped for executive training and promoted to women's shoe buyer at age 25.

His decision to study Japanese at night school is recalled as "a crazy quirk that changed my life." Drafted by the Army after Pearl Harbor, he was sent to the University of Michigan for further language study before transferring to the Navy and attending Officers Training School at Harvard.

He served under Paul Nitze and Gen. Douglas MacArthur as planning officer for the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey sent to evaluate the damage at Hiroshima and Nagasaki just 73 days after the atomic bombings. The team measured the angles of radiation shadows to determine the explosion's exact center, which it named Ground Zero. "That was over 36 years ago—yet the memory of that terrible devastation remains," says Dowd, who gives talks to local groups outlining the dangers of nuclear war.

He returned to the fashion merchandising field at Bullock's in 1946 and remained with the store a total of 19 years before joining Meier & Frank and later becoming vice president and general merchandise manager of Rhodes Department Stores.

The Dowds moved frequently during these periods and took pleasure in designing, building and decorating nine of the homes they occupied. One of these was an Oriental-style residence which provided a show-place setting for the Portland wedding of their only child, Denise. The latter now has a daughter, Terry Welch, who attends Colorado State University.

Retiring at age 60, Dowd launched a second career in the real estate and investment field with Coldwell Banker and Systech Corporation before accepting a 1972 offer to go to Brazil as a volunteer consultant with the International Executive Service Corps. His work in furthering the IESC goal of helping the developing nations achieve self-sustaining growth proved successful, and he was hired for several return visits to Brazil by the retail firms involved.

Business trips and family travels have taken the Dowds to 59 foreign countries. Museum visits are a must in each new city for Dowd, who revels in researching lifestyle and historical trends.

A past president of the Foreign Policy Association in Leisure World and current president of the Saddleback Kiwanis, he belongs to the Liason Committee for Saddleback College and participates in the college's Emeritus Institute. He also is a member of the SCORE team of retired executives who act as volunteer advisors for Small Business Administration customers.

The athletic vitality that was evident during Dowd's former ice hockey and skiing days is maintained with frequent rounds on the Leisure World Golf Course. "I love to play golf," he says. "I have played in many countries on picturesque and unusual courses, such as the one along the beach at Rio de Janeiro. But my most unusual golf game was in Eastern Africa at the late actor Bill Holden's Mt. Kenya Safari Club, where a ball hit out of bounds ends up in 'Wild Animal Country.'"