

# Local 'late bloomer' flourishes

## Mary Drane is LWer for November



Mary Drane

Mary Drane is a self-described "late bloomer" who worked her way through the secretarial ranks of Exxon Corporation's headquarters, becoming personnel administrator for worldwide marketing.

She started night classes while employed full time and received a B.A. (cum laude) in economics from Hunter College, at the same time she was celebrating her 25th wedding anniversary, plus an MBA, also with honors, in management from New York University on the occasion of her 30th anniversary.

Job advancement was only a secondary consideration in those scholastic achievements, according to Mrs. Drane, who cites "gaining knowledge and welcoming new challenges" as her lifelong goals.

She discovered challenges aplenty upon moving to Leisure World, where her activities have included serving on the Third Laguna Hills Mutual Board and as an active member of the Saddleback Area Coordinating Council, which honored her with an Exceptional Service Award in 1977.

Selected as Home Federal Savings' Leisure Worker of the Month for November, Mrs. Drane will be in the spotlight when her color portrait is hung at the Rossmore New Sales Pavilion on Monday, Nov. 2. The 10 a.m. ceremony will be conducted by the Leisure World Historical Society, selection consultant to Home Federal. Refreshments will be served.

The portrait will remain for a month before being presented to Mr. and Mrs. Drane at another brief ceremony on Tuesday, Dec. 1. The couple's friends and neighbors are invited to both events.

Mary was born in Nashville, Ill., and moved at age 16 to St. Louis, where she promptly met up with a fellow high school violin player named Harold Drane.

After graduation, she enrolled at the local Harris Teachers College while Harold went off on a scholarship to New York's Columbia University.

The year was 1932 and travel funds were almost non-existent, so the couple solved their separation woes by eloping after finishing their freshman studies. Their honeymoon trip was a Greyhound bus ride back to New York, where they lived in off-campus furnished rooms while Harold continued his industrial engineering studies. The marriage remained a secret for fear he might lose his scholarship.

"I was like a bird in an ungilded cage," as Mary recalls the early days of her depression-time marriage. She at first pursued the music studies that have always remained an important part of her life, and then landed an office job as "Miss Mary Drane" in an economic era when few married women here hired by corporations.

A hard worker, she earned a certificate from the N.Y. Stock Exchange Institute and soon was given expanded duties during her Monday through Saturday job at Francis I. duPont and Co., a Wall Street investment firm.

The lure of a five-day work week drew her to Exxon, where her versatility earned her increasingly diversified positions during 33 years with the company.

Starting as a stenographer and statistical typist, she became secretary of the Annuity Trust Com-

## Drane is November's honoree

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mittee and was responsible for accounting for funds in excess of \$100 million. Later she was personnel administrator and office manager for the worldwide marketing department.

She was especially helpful to Exxon executives all over the world and performed extra services, such as arranging for the shipment of a pet dog to Hamburg and keeping the financial accounts of a man assigned to Thailand. When Mary retired, Exxon executives sent letters and cablegrams saying they would miss her pleasant efficiency.

A trained soprano with violin and piano skills, she sang with the Rockefeller Center Choristers for 18 years and was founding member and officer of the Community Singers of Queens.

Also concurrent with her business career were her terms as president of Personnel Administra-

tors of New York City, vice president of the NYU Graduate School of Business Alumni Association and president-elect of the city's Beta Gamma Sigma Alumni of over 1,000 top business executives belonging to this chapter of the national honor society of collegiate schools of business.

Mrs. Drane was also director and officer of a cooperative apartment corporation, which prepared her for later service on the Third Laguna Hills Mutual Board in Leisure World.

Additional activities in Leisure World have included being an officer of the American Association of University Women, Laguna Hills Philharmonic Committee and the Leisure World Chorale. She also belongs to the League of Women Voters, Community Association, Ebell, Aliso Club and the Historical Society. One of her latest challenges is participating in the handbell choir of the United

Methodist Church, where she also sings in the choir.

Noted for her empathy for residents and their problems while serving on the Third Laguna Hills Mutual Board, Mrs. Drane believes she obtains a feel for the pulse of the community by her frequent rides on the Leisure World minibuses... "talking with the riders, but mostly listening," she notes.