Modesty is hallmark of Dr. DuBridge

Dr. Lee A. DuBridge

December Leisure Worlder named

Perhaps the best way to introduce the Leisure Worlder for December is to quote from a story in "Time" magazine's May 16, 1955 issue.

"At 7:30 one morning two men who had just met for the first time sat eating breakfast in Pasadena's Huntington - Sheraton Hotel. One of them was a U.S. Senator who had come to town to see the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology. The senator seemed to have only the foggiest notion of who the other man was. 'What Department are you in at Caltech?' asked the senator. Replied his companion; 'Physics.'"

Modesty always has been one of the hallmarks of the career of Dr. Lee Alvin DuBridge. At the breakfast that morning he didn't feel the necessity to volunteer that he was actually the president of Caltech, headed one of the nation's most powerful advisory boards and that he had been the wartime director of the radiation laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology that developed microwave radar and other scientific breakthroughs in World War 2.

DuBridge has been selected by Rossmoor Corporation as Leisure Worlder of the Month for December. His portrait will be hung in the rotunda of the new sales office at 10 a.m. Friday, Dec. 1 where it will remain until Jan. 2 when it will be presented to DuBridge and his wife Arrola.

Their friends are invited to attend both ceremonies.

DuBridge's more than half a century in the field of science terminated in 1970 after the conclusion of a special tour of duty as scientific advisor to President Richard Nixon. That was the year the DuBridge's moved to Leisure World

The son of a YMCA physical education instructor, Dubridge was born in Terre Haute, Ind. and earned his bachelor's degree at Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa where he met his wife Arrola.

"My father played football in college and I suppose he was disappointed when I didn't go into athletics," he says. "But I weighed only 120 pounds at the time and even in those day the college competitors were out of my weight class."

It was in his sophomore year at Cornell that DuBridge found himself enthralled with physics. "I even learned what I had never known before; that it was possible to take graduate work in physics and actually earn money by being a scientist. From that time on college became an exciting adventure."

DuBridge was dean of the faculty of arts and science at the University of Rochester when, in 1940, he received a summons to take over a special job at MIT.

As director of the radiation laboratory, his team of 4,000 scientists accomplished many things; the breakthrough on radar for airplanes; ground control Approach for landing aircraft; microwave early warning radar.

"We were very excited about our work," says DuBridge, "because of what radar meant in war at that time. Now its value in peace is seen on every side; in the planes you ride, at the airports and ships at sea. Even in communications satellites.

"We developed more than 100 different kinds of radar sets; $2 billion worth of equipment was ordered by the military service."

DuBridge chuckles about the reluctance of the Navy to embrace radar at first.

Too bulky

"They said it was too bulky, that ships masts already were loaded to capacity."

One trial run on an old destroyer convinced the admirals what it could do to ferret out submarines and see surface vessels and coast lines in the fog.

The 77 year old physicist recalls with equal fervor his quarter of a century as president of Caltech.

The 200-inch mirror for Palomar was at Caltech waiting to for the war to end so it could be polished and installed.

"It is responsible for most of our knowledge of the Cosmos. The Russians built a larger one, but I've read little to indicate it has accomplished as much as our scientists at Palomar."

The establishment of the jet propulsion lab in 1938 that made possible the launch of Explorer 1 in 1958 and led to the Moon landings and now the Jupiter probes are exciting to him

"Imagine making adjustments of malfunctions of flying laboratories million of miles away, by earth command."

DuBridge's first job, in 1946 when he took over as Caltech's second president, was to move the university out of its war-oriented program of secret military projects and return the school to normal purpose.

Many honors.

The walls of DuBridge's study are covered with plaques citations and pictures depicting the course of his years and his numberless accomplishments. It was his wife who insisted they be thus displayed. "Most of my important documents are now in the Caltech archives," he said.

"Some of my things have been willed to Caltech.

Intentionally, Dubridge has kept a low profile in Leisure World. He and his wife are into lawn bowling and golf. "She's the golfer in the family and I tag along."

Arrola also keeps up her interest in PEO and is an officer of the ARCS Foundation of Los Angeles. DuBridge has joined one local organization, The Academian Club.

Somehow, during his busy Caltech years, DuBridge found time to serve on 32 boards and 31 committees in addition to making literally hundreds of speeches. Among his awards are: the King's Medal for Service in the Cause of Freedom (British), The United States Medal for Merit in 1948 and the Golden Plate Award, American Academy of Achievement in 1973. Another 28 honorary degrees have been bestowed on him.

Remarkably, of his many extra curricular activities, he prizes high on the list his chairmanship of the board of directors of Sourthern California KCET.

"I was proud to have been a part in its origin. Except for occasional news telecasts and some football games, we get much of our viewing enjoyment from KCET."