

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

WALLACE T. FILSON

When Wally Filson moved to Leisure World 13 years ago, he envisioned lazy days devoted to stamp collecting and photography. "But somewhere along the line, it didn't happen that way," says the former Illinois attorney who became a leader in local community government.

"I once said I didn't want to go live with all those old folks. Now I tell everyone that there are more 'young' energetic old people here than anywhere." Filson is a prime example. A closet octogenarian whose doctor exclaimed "you're kidding" when Filson disclosed his age, he maintains active membership in countless Leisure World organizations. Now he has joined the list of distinguished citizens selected as Leisure Worliders of the Month by Home Federal Savings and Loan and the Leisure World Historical Society.

He is one of six siblings born in Hamilton, Mo., where his father practiced law. His mother was a school teacher whose former students included a bright lad named J.C. Penney. During his undergraduate days at Missouri's Park College, young Filson earned tuition money as a tent man for the traveling Chautauqua shows produced in the early 1920s. Featuring lectures, music and drama, the tent shows provided educational entertainment in the pre-radio days of America.

"We worked like the devil, traveling all over the country," he recalls. During a performance in the east, he met a Welsh girl named Myfanwy (Miffi), who later became his wife. The couple had three children and celebrated 52 years of marriage before Mrs. Filson's death in 1978.

Filson was graduated from the University of Illinois Law School and practiced general law before launching a 29-year career with the Prudential Insurance Company. As resident attorney ("that means house lawyer"), he handled the firm's legal work on mortgage loans and real estate investments in Springfield and later in Indianapolis and Chicago offices.

He also returned to his law school as a guest lecturer and made other speaking appearances for the Illinois Bar Association, which awarded him an honorary counsellor of law degree following 50 years of service. A life member of the Illinois Land Title Association, Delta Theta Phi law fraternity and the Masonic Lodge of Springfield, Filson also belonged to the Indiana and Chicago Bar Associations and the American Title Association.

Forced retirement at age 65 led him back into private law practice for an additional three years in Hinsdale, Ill. "Then we got tired of the cold winters and moved to Leisure World," he explains. His expertise was quickly put to work in the community, where he became a director and the only president of Mutual 28 before its merger with Third Laguna Mutual, which he helped organize and also served as first president.

Filson did double duty during his first seven years in Leisure World, combining Saddleback Area Coordinating Council activities with his mutual work and later with Golden Rain Foundation nominating committee and board jobs. In addition to serving as a representative to SACC for a total of six years, he was named to its board of directors and was the sole community delegate to the council's Second Governance Committee where he chaired the law section.

A ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church since the 1930s, he continues his affiliation with the local Geneva Church and also is active on Saddleback College support committees.

Filson's long list of local memberships include High Twelve, Shriners, Masonic Club, Foreign Policy Association, Historical Society, Theatre Guild, The Forum, Opera 100 and the Illinois and California Clubs. Plus the Leisure World Stamp Club—just in case he ever gets around to actually retiring.