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# Leisure Worlder of the Month

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John C. Harding

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LAGUNA HILLS—The 'Joy of Living Through Sharing,' group, has helped suffering people back to a reasonably normal life since early 1985. Its founder, John Harding, says that being involved with it has been, "one of the best and most satisfying parts of my life," and adds, "my rewards cannot be described."

To recognize his work, John Harding will be named "Leisure Worlder of the Month," on Wednesday, Dec. 2, at 10:00 a.m. in Clubhouse Six. The public is invited to attend his special ceremony, which is sponsored by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society.

John was born in San Antonio, Texas. His father, Robert John and his wife Louise, moved to San Antonio in 1912. An older brother, two sisters, another brother comprised the immediate family.

"My father was a civil engineer and moved to San Antonio from New York state to become general manager of the then privately owned city water company," John remembers. "In 1920 the city purchased the water company and father refused an attractive offer to stay on. He bought into several suburban water systems and expanded the family interests into ranching and various other investments."

John says his boyhood was strangely different from that of boys his age.

"We had horses in town, and I started riding when I was far too little to get on the horse without help. By the time I was twelve I was training young horses for Polo and selling them to the Polo playing stars."

San Antonio was the wintering place for the best known players who played against Army Cavalry teams. John played in pick-up games with these men and sold them \$40 ranch horses for as much as \$300. He also started hunting when he was seven, when his father gave him a 20 gage shotgun.

"By the time I was twelve I knew most birds and could track deer and other animals," he said.

"Although we lived in the city I spent all the time I could on the ranches and in my early teens rode rodeo in small County Fair shows, and broke horses for various ranchers. I got \$10 to break to saddle and could break about four a week. The problem was that it often took two weeks to recover from one week's work."

Later, John went to the University of Texas at Austin and joined the Sigma Nu Fraternity. He graduated with a degree in Business Administration in 1935.

From 1935 until 1957, with the exception of the time he served during WWII, John was involved in several family-owned businesses.

"My father had been in an accident and was killed in 1929, but my older brother and I managed our water systems and other investments," he said.

Although the ranch interests had been sold, John continued to be interested in the cattle business. He would buy 1,000 herd of yearlings and put them in feed lots for "topping-off," to bring a much better market price within 90 to 120 days.

"This is a risky business, but I was lucky enough to do well in it," he said.

In 1950 John bought an interest in a small manufacturing business producing a patented piece of equipment used by printers and engravers. He established dealers in large cities, Mexico Canada, Cuba, and even India.

Meanwhile, he married in 1937 and had twins; a boy and a girl. "The children were wonderful," he said, "and we lived a good life. However my business interests and constant travel intruded into our married life to the extent that in early 1957 I voluntarily signed over all our assets to my wife and came to California with only a few hundred dollars."

He began a period of working for someone else, and according to John, it was hard to get used to.

"I got a job as general manager of a metal specialty manufacturing company in Santa Barbara. I found this to be a 'big title-small salary' position. This company's immediate problem was too large a backlog of behind schedule orders, due to too many rejections of out-of-specification parts. Until we could get someone for the job, therefore, I became quality control manager. The problems were ironed out."

John left this job after 18 months to accept a position with Curtiss Wright as an engineering administrator. He then went into contract administration.

In 1961, he accepted an offer from Lear, Inc., which soon became Lear Siegler, Inc. He climbed the corporate ladder there reasonably fast and was Director of Contracts Administration and also responsible for all sub-contract buying.

John and Mary and were married in 1967. She had a heart attack in 1972 and the Hardings made a decision to prepare for the time when they were both retired.

John remembers buying their present condominium before it was built and moved in at the end of November 1972. He continued to commute to Santa Monica and traveled a great deal on business. In 1973 he too had a heart problem and had bypass surgery in September of 1973. Afterwards, his physician felt that the stress of work could not be tolerated and put him on disability.

John retired in January 1974 to begin his life in Leisure World.

He joined the Golf Club, the Rod and Gun Club and served as director and president of the Men's Social Club.

He was elected to the Board of Directors of Third Laguna Mutual in 1979, was Secretary for a three year term, served on many committees and was chairman of the Capital Improvements Committee.

He also served on the Golden Rain Foundation, Capitol Improvement Committee, since 1982 with the exception of one year as a resident advisor.

"Through these years my wife and I have found many friends, found time to travel, and enjoy life in Leisure World. She has helped me through some bad times and in turn I help her," he said.

In 1981 she had bypass surgery, carotid surgery and three other major operations by the end of 1982.

"This has forced her to live much more quietly, but as long as she can put up with my cooking we'll do all right together," said John.

"One of the best and most satisfying things that has happened to me was initiated in 1985. I had seen so many people apparently unable to cope with the stress of grief, loneliness, depression, family problems and similar stress producing circumstances, that they had simply withdrawn and surrendered.

"I presented an idea to our Recreation Department and Human Relations Department who helped me start a fellowship of people who need help. The group is called 'Joy of Living Through Sharing.' We've been meeting every week since early in 1985; my rewards cannot be described. Just knowing that we have helped suffering people back to a reasonably normal life and that we can help them manage their lives and handle life's problems; that they can now find love, and caring and are no longer alone; these things are wonders to receive with joy!"