

December honoree finds there is 'joy in living'

Since 1985 The "Joy of Living Through Sharing" group has helped many Leisure World people with problems back to a reasonably normal life. Its founder, John Harding, says that being involved with the group has been "one of the best and most satisfying parts of my life."

To recognize his work Harding will be named "Leisure Worldler of the Month on Wednesday, Dec. 2 at 10 a.m. in Clubhouse 6. The public is invited to attend the ceremony sponsored by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society.

Harding was born in San Antonio, Texas in 1912. "My father was a civil engineer and moved to San Antonio from New York to become general manager of the then privately owned city water company," Harding 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."

Harding remembers his boyhood as different from that of other youth. "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 12 I was training young horses for polo and selling them to polo stars."

He also played in pick-up games and sold the polo players \$40 ranch horses for as much as \$300. He started hunting when he was 7, when his

father gave him a 20 gauge shotgun. "By the time I was 12, I knew most birds and could track deer and other animals."

Even though he lived in the city, Harding spent all the time he could on the ranches and broke horses for the 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."

Harding attended the University of Texas at Austin coming away with a degree in business administration in 1935. From then until 1957, except for an interruption during World War II, Harding was involved in several family-owned businesses.

In 1950 he bought an interest in a small manufacturing business that produced a piece of equipment used by printers and engravers. He established dealerships in several large cities and overseas in places as far away as India.

He had married in 1937 and had twins; a boy and girl. "The children were wonderful," he said and we had a good life." But the business travel intruded into married life and in 1957 Harding turned everything over to his wife and "came to California with only a few hundred dollars."

He became general manager of a company in Santa Barbara, helping it over some major hurdles. "I found this to be a big title-small salary position."

Eighteen months later he went to work with Curtiss Wright as an engin-

eering administrator and then accepted an offer from Lear, Inc. which became Lear Siegler, Inc. He climbed the corporate ladder reasonably fast becoming director of contracts ad-



John Harding

ministration.

He married his present wife Mary in 1967. She had a heart attack in 1972 and the couple made a decision to prepare for retirement.

They purchased their Leisure

World condo before it was built moving in almost exactly 15 years ago. Harding continued to commute to Santa Monica until he too had a heart attack then bypass surgery in 1973.

He retired in January 1974 and began to enjoy life in Leisure World joining the golf club, Rod and Gun Club Men's Social Club. He was elected to the board of Third Laguna Hills Mutual in 1979, serving on many of its committees as well as heading up the Capital Improvements Committee. He has also served on the Golden Rain Foundation CIC since 1982 with the exception of one year as a resident advisor.

"One of the best and most satisfying things had 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."

Harding presented an idea to the Recreation Division and Human Relations, which helped him start the "Joy of Living Through Sharing."

"We've been meeting every week since early 1985; my rewards cannot be described. Just knowing we have helped suffering people back to a reasonably normal life and 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."