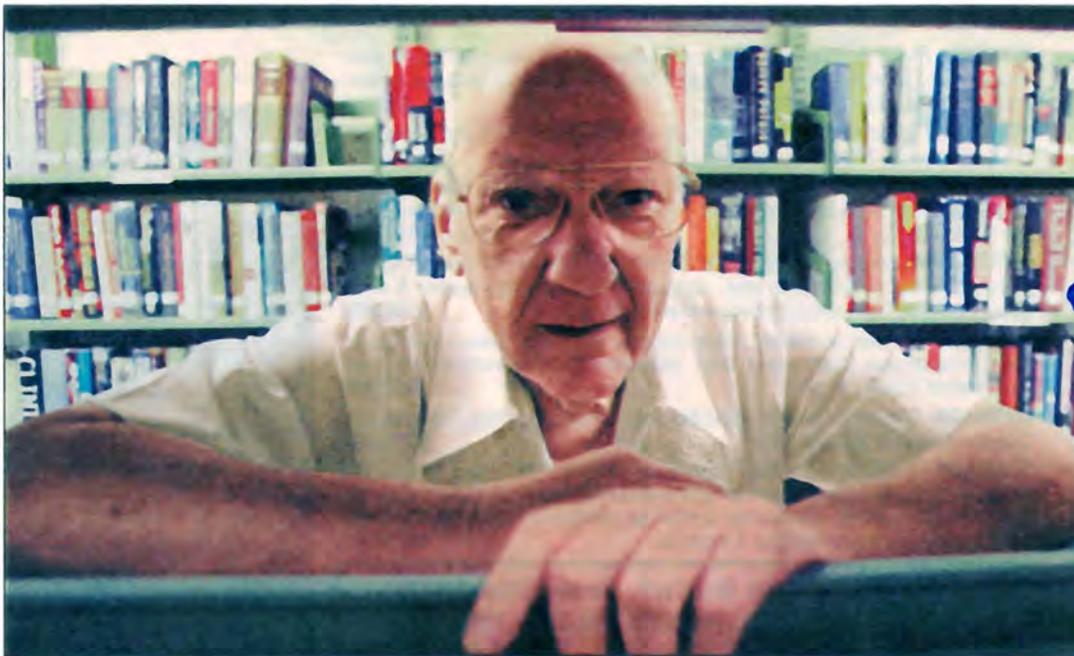




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LEISURE WORLD NEWS

Thursday
July 31, 2003



Library director Martin Harris spends as much time as he can at the Leisure World Library, "his home away from home."

News photo by Rod Veal

Bundled up in books

Library director is Society's August pick

By Cheryl Walker
The News

In 1965, Leisure World's Panhellenic Club decided to do a project and give something back to the community. The project the club picked was: a library for Leisure World.

The Golden Rain Foundation provided a game room in Clubhouse 2 and an appeal went out to residents for volunteers and book donations.

As the collection grew, the need for larger quarters became evident. Operations moved first to the old Snack Shop building near the old Administration Building, then into trailers and, eventually, into a new 4,000 square foot library

building at 24262 Calle Aragon, which opened its doors in 1976.

For the last nine years that building has been the home away from home for the Historical Society's August Leisure Worlder of the Month: Library Director Martin Harris who fortunately, lives within walking distance of the facility.

Dorise Seid, library supervisor and secretary, says Harris is a good steward and CEO of the library. "He's very easy to get along with," she says, "if you follow the procedures."

Former Library Director and Third Mutual Director Virginia Halley agrees noting his prowess soliciting donations of materials and funds. "I don't know how he does it."

United Director Linda Wilson calls him one of the "unsung, dedicated heroes of Leisure World."

"I am so pleased that he is being recognized as Leisure Worlder of the Month."

Background: Harris, a native

Please see **BOOK Page 10**

Ceremony facts

Who: Martin Harris

What: Leisure Worlder of the Month

When: 10 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 6

Where: Clubhouse 6

Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society, underwritten by Renaissance at the Regency and Renaissance at the Wellington

BOOK

FROM 1

of Minnesota, did not have a background in library sciences. His major at New York University was foreign trade and sales his main occupation.

"I like working with people," he explained and he's found ample opportunity to do that in his volunteering at the library, since he came to the community in 1994, after losing his home in Northridge to the earthquake.

Even though his business was sales, books were always his companions on the road. "I always had a book in my pocket," Harris explains.

Over the years, he developed a vast eclectic reading taste. "Everything but the 'R' (Romance) books," he explains.

Harris is very selective in what he accepts for the Leisure World library collection, and is always trying to shake money from the trees to supplement the 3 cents per manor per month the facility is allocated in the Golden Rain budget.

Besides that stipend and donations from clubs and organizations, the library also collects overdue fines.

Of course the library also benefits from generous donations of a variety of items. That's why the staff is continually reviewing what it's got and getting rid of the items that gather dust and take up shelf space.

Even so, the library, boasts more than 19,000 hardcovers, 2,000 videos, 2,000 audiotapes, 8,000 paperbacks, shelves of

jigsaw puzzles, magazines and a special section on Leisure World authors.

There's also a variety of specialty items relating to Leisure World: governance and finance documents, voting materials, forms, pass applications and much more. There's even a rotating series of private collections on display, like this month's Mildred Langley clowns.

Harris notes that the library's holdings will soon be computerized to make the system and circulation more efficient for all concerned.

Right now, though, everything at the library is very hands on. Volunteers even repair books and audio tapes, collect discarded materials for the El Toro Library Friends and make housecalls to residents who can't take advantage of the six open days per week schedule.

Harris says there's not much he doesn't like about his job at the library, even though he doesn't have great fondness for readers who leave crumbs, write comments or cut out articles and photos from books.

Harris, who is also an advisor on the Golden Rain clubhouse advisory committee and on United's planning group (United Looks Ahead) and enjoys Friday afternoons at TGIF gatherings, still finds working at the library every day but Sunday is his passion and his challenge too since it isn't always easy overseeing operations and the 103 volunteers and making sure everything runs as efficiently as possible.

"Besides, I love to talk to people," says Harris.