

Stubborn but effective

Big Bud Kerney pushed for many United programs

By Cheryl Walker
The News

Every time a maintenance crew comes into a United Mutual manor to replace original appliances, counter tops, flooring and bathroom fixtures, owners can thank September's Leisure Worlder of the Month.

And while they're at it, they can also give kudos to 10-year resident and former United President William "Bud" Kerney for making the refurbishment program financially possible without a heart-stopping jump in carrying charges.

The 6-foot-6-inch Indiana native's record of maintenance and construction innovations have won him the praise of residents and staff alike, even when his suggestions have proven controversial, like converting Leisure World from an electric- to a gas-powered community.

Former United President Lester Orvis, like Kerney a long-time member of United's capital improvements committee, contends no other director was as responsible for the improved appearance of buildings and grounds as the honoree.

"I appreciate the six years he and I worked together, he's been an inspiration . . . and a wonderful friend."

Capital Improvements Advisor Bill Luedeking says he too was impressed by Kerney's ability not just in coming up with good ideas to improve the community but to demonstrate how they could be financially viable, such as the program that has crews perform preventative maintenance chores, thus averting major expenditures later on.

Recalls Luedeking, "He really pushed getting the preventative



David E. Caballero/The News

Bud Kerney, Leisure Worlders of the Month for September, takes time out from his interest in governance matters to pursue his art.

maintenance and 916 programs to redo one's home, and got them into the resale picture long before people started crying about improving resales."

United Treasurer Bob Miller also commended Kerney's determination to support programs he believed were right for the mutual.

"He ramrodded development and installation of the laundry room power demand limiters and their savings amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars," says Miller. "Bud has contributed more time, effort, leadership and ingenuity than we can comprehend."

Building Maintenance - Manager Michael Griffith agrees,

noting that he admires Kerney as a colleague and leader "and, most importantly, a friend."

"He is unwilling to accept conformity within the walls of the Leisure World community," says Griffith, adding Kerney inspired others "to consider thoughts and ideas beyond the norm."

Background: Kerney says even as a child he knew he wanted to build things and an athletic scholarship to the University of Wisconsin (where his team won a Big Ten and national basketball championship) allowed him to fulfill his dream of becoming a civil engineer.

Most of his working years were spent in construction, first industrial plants, later houses, many the ones he lived in as the result of moving 32 times. "I have itchy feet," explains Kerney with a smile.

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Ceremony facts

Honoree: William 'Bud' Kerney

What: Leisure World of the month for September

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

Where: Clubhouse 6
Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society

KERNEY

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The World War II Army veteran and retired Lt. Commander in the National Guard (with over 19 years of service) says his first residential effort was a Frank Lloyd Wright-style home completed before his marriage (now in its 54 year) to fellow Hoosier, Nell.

Kerney enjoyed a long association with Shell Oil then scrapped it to venture out on his own as a motel manager, a move that was rewarding, successful and fun for both Kerneys.

Even so, he decided to give it up rather than face another midwestern winter and followed the sun 29 years ago to California, settling in San Diego where he combined a lucrative career constructing homes on speculation while indulging his love of sailing (even becoming commodore of his yacht club).

Nell took a hands-on interest in his construction projects and served as first mate on his many seaboard ventures.

When retirement beckoned, the couple, following a friend's tip, visited and eventually bought a manor in Leisure World where amiable chatter about his past accomplishments during a

slipcasting class with fellow student Fritzie Schwartz, the wife of the then president of United, led to his involvement in mutual governance activities.

Schwartz says her classmate impressed her because of his credits and because, though a newcomer to the craft of slipcasting, his handling of the materials was utterly professional.

She decided to mention his name to her spouse and, she says, "Harry thought he'd fit right in and grabbed him."

Kerney says though at first he was "meek and mild" in the committee meetings, it wasn't long before he felt compelled to assert himself to get the facts on the table.

Then, he says, working with knowledgeable people like Luedeking, Rae Singer, Orvis, Leon Siegal and Griffith, he began to make things happen.

The proof of the effectiveness of their efforts he says is the change in attendance at the mutual's Resident Information meetings which offer owners the opportunity to complain, make suggestions or get help from directors on a one-on-one basis.

"I was an early supporter of the program and in the beginning we used to have so many people lined up to complain - now, you only get a few."

Besides serving on numerous mutual committees, Kerney's was also president of the Laguna Hills Art Association, delivery person for Meals on Wheels, data entry typist for Leisure World's Historical Society, teacher of sketching and member of the Bocce, Mac Computer and Hoosier clubs.

A recent transplant to Third Mutual, Kerney says he misses the committee meetings that were so much of his life -and seeing things happen. "I loved it, I like to get my hands dirty."

Being off the boards, though, doesn't mean he's able to turn off the flow of ideas of ways to improve Leisure World.

"I always want to try something different," says Kerney who adds that he's got the perfect temperament to see projects through.

"I'm a Gemini, of German extraction, an engineer . . . in other words, I'm stubborn."