

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

HENRY LEFEBVRE

Because of his speed on the gridiron in the early twenties as a fullback at the University of Southern California, Henry R. Lefebvre became known as the "French Flash".

This fact, in itself, hardly would qualify him for selection as Rossmoor Corporation's Leisure Worlder of the Month for March any more than his demonstrated swiftness of brush when he turns out excellent paintings of covered wagons, cowboys and Indians.

It is the fact that Hank is exceptionally swift and generous with a buck when a worthy youth charity crosses his horizon that impressed the Rossmoor selection committee in making its choice.

A few weeks ago at a luncheon held for him in his hometown of Long Beach, Lefebvre was presented with a silver plaque by the YMCA. It reads, simply enough: "*For Service to Youth.*" That was Lefebvre's fourth in as many years and Norman Fuller, YMCA endowment consultant, says the Long Beach Y has received \$140,000 from this munificent man. "In today's economy you would not consider Henry as extremely wealthy. It's just that he's extremely generous," says Fuller.

In Heritage Hall, the athletic office on the campus of Hank's alma mater, may be found a list of the names of those who subscribed to the fund for the Dean Cromwell Track and Field Stadium. There, after the name "Henry R. Lefebvre, Class of 25" on this honor roll is a figure of "\$100,000".

These contributions are known. How extensive Hank's extraordinary generosity has touched other youth-oriented organizations (such as Rainbow Acres, a home for mentally retarded boys at Camp Verde, Arizona, the nearby Joplin Boys School, etc.) is difficult to ascertain.

Agnes and Henry Lefebvre never had any children in 40 years of wedlock which explains only in a degree their urgent desire to give. "We have a guilty feeling," explains Hank, "making so much more money than we'll ever need."

Although several patents and a successful swimming pool appliance business (Sun Aired Mfg Co.) has been the major source of a handsome income since 1946, Hank learned the true value of a buck early in life. He was an outstanding track, baseball and football player at Long Beach Poly High where he was a member of the state championship grid team. He chose USC over a host of other schools. Trojan teammates describe Hank as "swift, smart and sturdy."

The Depression was at its peak when Hank was graduated. Jobs were virtually non-existent.

Unlike today, pro football was still of the sandlot variety. Lefebvre played a few games at \$125 each but there was no future in it. Then he got a part-time job as a grip . . . that is to say a helper, a handyman . . . at Warner Bros. Studio. Because he could catch and the studio baseball team needed a catcher, he became a full-time employee and stayed with Warner Bros., until World War II came along. Hank joined the Navy, earned a chief petty officer's stripes and spent the bulk of the conflict as a rehabilitation officer at the Long Beach Naval Hospital.

Lefebvre met and married a nurse in 1941 and it was Agnes who took charge at war's end. "She objected to me going back to the studios and that's why I got into the swimming pool business.

Through all the years, Lefebvre has had the urge to do things with his hands; lapidary, wood carving, sculpturing, painting. In the Lefebvre's den is a large framed mosaic called "Pirate Treasure" composed of coral, painted sand and costume jewelry which Hank made at least 35 years ago. On a high shelf in a corner is a Spanish galleon made entirely of plastic which lights up. Both of these creations won blue ribbons in their day. Among the scattered pieces of ceramics and metal sculptures in his den is a bronze casting of a baseball runner sliding into a second baseman. The baseman is, of course, Jimmy Lefebvre, Hank's nephew who once was a regular with the Dodgers.

Where Lefebvre's clever hands really excel is in his paintings. "That didn't just happen," he says, "Agnes and I took a lot of lessons. It was something we could do together."

Membership in the Lions Club, American Legion, Art Association, Golf Club, etc., at Leisure World are only a throwback to his business days when he really participated in such things. With the Lions Hank has a standing offer to match the funds raised by the rest of the Laguna Hills club to charter a boat once a year to take members of the Joplin Boys School deep-sea fishing.

"I've made an interesting discovery about life," says Hank Lefebvre, "the more you give the more you get back."

Recently several of his paintings of covered wagons, cowboys at roundup time and Indians on the war-path were on display at Great Western Savings and Loan. Why covered wagons?

"My parents were pioneers in Bisbee, Arizona where I was born 80 years ago," says Henry Lefebvre. "When I was a boy covered wagons were a way of transportation in the Southwest, I like the memory of them."