

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

DR. STANLEY J. LELAND

Dr. Stanley J. Leland's career as a public health physician took him to the U.S. Military Occupied Zones, postwar China and native villages in West Africa. That's before he settled down to calmer pursuits, such as becoming director of health for the state of New Mexico and later for California's Imperial and Napa counties.

Arriving in Leisure World eight years ago, he found more work to be done in the area of health awareness. Leland helped to instigate in 1977 what he calls a community "watchdog" group, the Golden Rain Foundation's Health Committee, on which he continues to serve. The group monitors health services and negotiates the local contract with Saddleback Community Hospital in addition to reviewing the many requests from researchers to include Leisure World residents in their surveys.

In 1980 he received the Outstanding Service Award of the community's Medical Society. Today he joins the distinguished list of Leisure Worlders of the Month named by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society.

The Indiana-born physician practiced general medicine and pediatrics for 12 years before joining the U.S. Army Medical Corps in 1942, becoming in 1945 an assistant to the Army Surgeon General and director of Civil Public Health and Nutrition for the Occupied Zones. "My duties in the army made a public health man of me," Leland reflects. "Public health means community health . . . and preventive medicine is the hymn that we sing. There is more and more emphasis on the prevention of disease as time goes along, but much remains to be done in this area."

Following his army discharge, Leland was named medical director of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in China, where he supervised allocation of supplies and equipment to hospitals throughout the nation and arranged for mass smallpox inoculations. Much later he learned that the overwhelming public acceptance of the vaccinations was influenced by the gun-bearing Chinese soldiers who accompanied medical teams throughout the country.

Leland's wife Isabella, who began her own editorial career with Time Inc. as secretary to publisher Henry R. Luce, was assigned to run a new Time/Life office in Shanghai during the one and a half years her husband served in China. Mrs. Leland retired to join her spouse in New York for his next position as director of the Liberian Foundation, the health and education subsidiary of a company formed by private U.S. capital to promote economic development in Liberia.

The physician conducted a 1949 survey of what was then the only independent black republic in Africa, often traveling by foot to examine villagers who had never seen a non-missionary white doctor. He spent a month in charge of a clinic and leper colony at Ganta and another six weeks on a tour of the hinterland with then-President Tubman. Leland's "unclerical" manner won quick approval from the Liberians, who provided a few surprises of their own for the visiting American. "I came to see how much their witch doctors knew about penicillin. It turned out to be quite a bit," he remarks.

During this 1954-63 tenure as director of health for New Mexico, Leland also served on the Mental Health Council of the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education and as president of the United States—Mexico Border Public Health Association which named him an honorary life member.

He was awarded two resolution citations from the California State Legislature commending his subsequent work as director of health in Imperial County for three years and in Napa County an additional five years. Among other honors received was the national Crumbine Award for restaurant sanitation improvements in Imperial County.

A member of the American College of Preventive Medicine, Leland holds a degree from Vanderbilt Medical School and a master's in preventive medicine and public health from Johns Hopkins. In Leisure World he served on the board of the former Adult Health and Day Care Center and chaired the committee that compiled the Health-Medical Care Guide distributed to new residents by the Saddleback Kiwanis Club.

Leland is past president of the Leisure World Medical Society and belongs to Saddleback Kiwanis. He also is active in the local Camera Club for which he has presented several color slide shows on Mexican archaeology, a long-time interest of both the Lelands. The pair are also members of the Leisure World Historical Society, Opera 100 and the Philharmonic Society.