

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

OLIVE LEONARD

Olive Leonard remembers. She remembers when Leisure World was a serene and tranquil spot on the map, where gentle winds stirred the grassy hills dotted with grazing sheep and cattle. That was thirteen years ago and she has not only seen but been an important part of the burgeoning growth of our community.

A native of Kansas and one of eight children, Olive was born into a family where the love of music was nurtured and encouraged. Her natural talent was evident at the early age of 4 years when she accompanied her violinist father at an old pump organ where her feet barely touched the pedals. It was a happy home, she recalls, where good music and good values were a way of life. It was a family of achievers and the examples set by her parents were sturdy guideposts in raising her own family of which she is intensely and justly proud.

A graduate of Minnesota School of Commerce she then decided to enroll in Minnesota College of Music. After graduation she spent two summers at MacPhail College and following a teaching career in Wisconsin, Olive married a law student and helped him open a bank in the northern part of that state where their five children were born.

With all the responsibility of such a large family she still found time to be a church organist where she served for 45 years, headed the Sunday School, was active in Girl Scouts, Red Cross, Tri-County Handicaps and helped organize the Community Concert Association of the Federated Music Club. She gave piano and organ lessons at home and after the Bank opened, she became a Director of the Board continuing in that capacity for the next 20 years. Following a serious car accident to her husband she had to manage the bank for many months and she remembers with some amusement her tour of duty as the local postmaster. (Not postmistress, she stresses.)

In the meantime she helped put her children through college with doctorate and masters degrees. Her daughter Kathleen is a teacher in the Berkeley area, devoting one day a week to teaching creative writing at the request of the faculty. Son Craig is a dentist in Long Beach. Son Court teaches in Manitowoc and is head of NEA there. Son Roger is President of the family bank in Wisconsin and daughter Jean, the wife of a Washington, D.C. doctor, has composed and published three musicals which have been staged in both that area and in Boston. Six of her thirteen grandchildren have already won college scholarships. One grandson is an exchange student in Europe and a granddaughter has taught handicaps in Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Her sisters and brothers have received outstanding recognition in various endeavors in the fields of conservation, foreign affairs, music and drama. Achievers, every one.

The first year Olive and her husband came to Leisure World, he passed away and in her loneliness she reached out to the warmth and friendliness of the community where, she says, we were at that time just one big happy family. "We were a close knit group helping one another and helping the community to grow through our individual strengths and determinations." She joined the church choir and substituted as an organist. At that time all church services were held in Clubhouse I and she says she played for just about every denomination at one time or another. She was also a member of World War I and American Legion groups and as the area grew, she played for the dedication of Clubhouse II. She joined and held office in the Chorale orchestra and became the musician for the Melody Men, Harmonaires, Wahines, Wisconsin and California Clubs. Later she played for service and other state clubs.

Olive played for all Production Guild programs and joined the Dick Currier and Ralph Carmichael Combo. Later she often accompanied such outstanding vocalists as Harry Babbett and opera singer Peggy Fleming. "Our town was always so blessed with talent that we needed no outside entertainment," she says.

She helped organize the Community Concert Association and joined the small group that has become Opera-100 helped to stage the big and successful Wine Festival with a special program in the gazebo featuring opera costumes from the Laguna Beach Lyric Opera Association. She was a charter member of the Federated Music Club, Philharmonic; Organ and Keyboard Clubs and played for the Golden Rain Foundation annual parties and for the dedication of Royal Savings, Home Savings, Beverly Manor and Saddleback Community Hospital as well as other clubs in the surrounding area.

With a friend, she helped form a ladies combo which was named the Leisurettes and was responsible for staging the first Extravaganza Ball at Clubhouse I which raised about \$1,600 for the new Saddleback Hospital.

She was on the Community Board for the construction of Clubhouse III, meeting weekly for about three years. Through her efforts, a nine-foot Steinway piano and a fine organ were purchased for future concerts and with her help \$20,000 was raised to pay for both within two years.

Her charming manor at 351-C Av. Sevilla is filled with memories. Photographs of her family grace the baby grand piano, albums and pictures of friends who shared those distant peaceful times, and other memorabilia are piled on a table within easy reach. A Conn organ awaits her talents.

Olive Leonard has indeed left her mark on Leisure World, stamped with a philosophy that defies defeat: "It is better to attempt a great deal and fail than to attempt nothing and succeed."