

Lever loves the water

Honoree works with handicapped

Ask her about her contributions, and she'll talk about the programs for the blind, crippled and ailing. Ask her about her role in these programs, and she'll praise the initiative of those around her. But ask anyone who has been touched by Lillian Lever what she has meant to their life and you begin to see what a giant contribution and enrichment to thousands of Leisure Worlders she has made.

The Leisure World Historical Society and Home Federal Savings have chosen Lillian Lever to be honored as December's Leisure Worlder of the Month. December seems a fitting time for Lillian, since it's traditionally a month of family togetherness and goodwill. And goodwill is one word that fits in the story of Lillian Lever.

Her ceremony may interrupt her regular routine at the pool, however. It commences at 10 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 2 in Clubhouse 6.

Lillian and her husband, Herman, came to Leisure World 16 years ago and for the last 14 years, Lillian has been teaching "water appreciation."

Lillian's first classes were exclusively for the blind.

"With the help of the Aquadettes and some other accomplished swimmers, the first class was started," she said. "This class proved so successful, that a class of water exercise was begun for the handicapped. The handicapped class turned out to be so successful, that a wide cross-section of Leisure Worlders joined in."

Soon the demand became greater than anyone could have anticipated. Lillian enlisted the help of many of the high school personnel to help out. Unfortunately, the realities of proposition 13 soon quelled this. When the school district was forced to abandon its support, the Leisure World Recreation and Education Di-

vision stepped in. The monetary crisis of high schools was not that of community colleges though, and soon Saddleback College took over sponsorship of the program, offering for the first time, college credit.

"The classes continue, better than ever," said Lillian. "Although they don't need any publicity, they are over enrolled every semester."

Lillian's "volunteer career" began long before she came to Leisure World. In World War II, she taught occupational therapy to wounded veterans at Valley Forge Army Hospital. She served in much the same capacity in the Korean War.

Here at Leisure World, her students grapple with many types of disabilities that are detrimental on land, however, in the pool, it's quite another matter.

"Water is a great equalizer," said Lillian. "People are able to do all sorts of things in the water that they can't possibly do on land."

"It's the support, the weightless feeling," she continued. "Those on crutches and using walkers are helped into the pool. We even have some in wheelchairs who are lowered into the water in much the same way as a boat is launched."

Over the years, Lillian has taught several hundred people to swim and really enjoy the water. Amputees, the blind and numerous others have been shown a great way to exercise. Stroke and polio victims are taught right along side of those who just want a fun way to stay in shape.

She recalled one man from a family of eight, all of whom had a "king sized fear," of water and water activities. The man wanted to learn to swim. He had tried several instructors, but each time he was unsuccessful. Through Lillian's expertise and patience and the man's determination and perseverance, he became water safe. "Today," she said, "he is



Lillian Lever

delighted with his acquired swimming skills and thoroughly enjoys the pools."

Lillian's suntan graphically attests to her minimum of five days each week in the water. Her classes are always full, up to 60 swimmers at a time.

But you'll never convince her that it's too much work. According to Lillian, "I get more out of it than they do. I've enjoyed every minute of it."

The Lever's home is decorated by another of Lillian's talents, oil paintings, although she confesses that perhaps watercolor might be more appropriate. That, she says, she just does for fun, too. And adds, "I'm just not interested in selling."