

Janet Nelson McLaughlin

“Newlywed gets Valentine month nod,” was the headline when the Leisure World News announced that Jan McLaughlin would be the Historical Society’s Honoree for February, 1999. The article went on to state that Jan “would concentrate on fighting for cityhood.”

At that time Jan was the immediate past president of the Golden Rain Foundation, and could claim a distinction not duplicated by any other GRF president. She started her term of office as Jan Nelson, and ended it as Jan McLaughlin. Jan was also a former Aquafollies star, United director and at that time she was only the second woman in the history of Leisure World to become the president of Golden Rain.

Jan was born in the Nebraska town of Osmond. Subsequently her family moved to Lincoln and it was here that Jan received her primary and secondary education. She spent some time at the University of Nebraska, since she graduated from high school at 16 and was too young to begin nurses training. After a year of college, she enrolled in the Nurses Training Program at Lincoln General Hospital where she obtained her Registered Nurse Certification (R.N.) in 1946, and finished first in Nebraska on the state’s professional nursing examination. Following completion of her R.N. she returned to the University for another year since, despite her extraordinary test score, the state deemed her too young to begin work as a nurse.

Ralph D. Nelson and Jan were married in 1949 and their family eventually included son Dan and daughters Karen and Kirsten. After the children had grown to maturity, Jan launched herself into a nursing career.

During 19 plus years (1968-87) Jan was employed at Bryan Memorial Hospital starting as staff nurse and ascending the ladder to Assistant Head Nurse, Head Nurse and, for the final 14 years, Director of Nursing Services.

Community and civic activities were also beneficiaries of Jan’s participatory bent. She was a 4-H Leader, a Den Mother, PTA Secretary, President and Council Member and Church Administrative Board Secretary. In her profession she functioned as a Red Cross “on call” Disaster Nurse and was a member of the American Nurses Association, the Nebraska Nurses Association and the Nurses’ Association of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She was also a member of the University of Nebraska Alumni Association.

Over the span of time the Nelson family grew to include two son-in-laws, a daughter-in-law and 11 grandchildren. Three additional grandchildren came along with Jan’s marriage to Charles McLaughlin late in 1998.

Despite all her activities Jan found time to travel extensively in the U.S. and enjoyed overseas trips to England, France and Hawaii.

In 1987, she discovered Leisure World on a visit to California and thought it heaven in comparison to the cold snowy winter wonderland where she lived. Leisure World became the recipient of Jan Nelson’s interests and activities when she and Ralph moved into the community in 1987.

She became an active member of the Saddle Club as columnist (‘88 and ‘89) and secretary (‘90 and ‘92), She lent her swimming abilities to the Aquadettes and also functioned as vice president (‘91) and president (‘92) before retiring from “active” swimming in 1997. Jan was a member of the Nurses’ Emergency Task Force, American Ballroom Dance Club, the Laguna Canyon Foundation the Historical Society and the grassroots, anti-airport organization Taxpayers for Responsible Planning.

She served on the United Mutual Board and was vice president in ‘93 and ‘94. Afterwards she served on the GRF Board and held the offices of secretary (‘96 and ‘97) and president (‘98). During her board membership she was active on a variety of committees. Her enthusiasm was jolted by the loss of her husband, Ralph, in early 1990.

Jan married former United Director Charles McLaughlin in 1998.

After serving on the governing boards of the Village for 6½ years and as chair of the City’s Community Services Committee, she was elected to the Laguna Woods City Council in April, 2000. She immediately

made the headlines by tripping while stepping off a curb enroute to a League of Cities Conference and becoming the city's first workers compensation case. Jan served as our Mayor in 2002.

A fiscal conservative, Jan viewed the widening of the El Toro sidewalk as one of her most notable accomplishments. She was also the first councilperson to promote the suspension of the Franchise Cable Fee. Jan represented the city on the Joint Insurance Powers Authority and the Orange County Library Advisory Committee. She completed her term in office in November, 2004 and was quickly appointed to the city's Planning Advisory Committee.

In 2006 she was again elected to the United Board. She served as First Vice President during 2006-7. She resigned from the United Board for health reasons in May, 2008. Our good friend, Jan's husband, Charles E. McLaughlin, 83, passed away on June 13, 2008 following a fall that had resulted in a broken hip.

Jan lived in the community 21 years and contributed to its welfare and growth by serving as an elected member of the Laguna Woods City Council and by serving on the governing boards of the Village for eight years. In June, 2009 she moved to Austin, TX in order to be close to her family.

Janet Nelson McLaughlin passed away on November 2, 2010. A memorial reception to celebrate her life and accomplishments will be held in one of the Village clubhouses in mid-January, 2011.

I will be asking the Council to adjourn today's City Council Meeting in memory of Jan McLaughlin.