



www.ocregister.com/lagunawoods

LEISURE WORLD NEWS

Thursday
Jan. 29, 2004

February is 'Miller Time'

Historical Society
names former forensic
scientist as honoree

By Cheryl Walker
The News

What's brand new, worth more than \$1,000 but can't be sold or given away?

Ed Miller knows the answer to that question only too well. It's an Uzi machine gun sitting in a box in his manor.

He purchased it as part of his job as a criminalist and forensic scientist to help solve a murder case.

Miller's job was to determine if the alleged murderer could hear when the gun was engaged. The accused claimed he could not. But Miller demonstrated to the jury that there was no way the accused could not hear and so the accused was eventually convicted of the homicide.

Miller, though retired from working on literally thousands of cases with the Berkeley, Riverside and Los Angeles Police Departments, is still on-call as a consultant in tough-to-crack cases where his cool head and deliberate thoroughness spell results.

But even though still "on call" it hasn't stopped him from standing up to volunteer to help Leisure World on the Golden Rain security committee and as a director and officer of the United and Golden Rain Boards.

He also is a member of the Audubon, Aero-Space, Rod and Gun, Canine Club, Lions Club and the Historical Society which, in February will make him Leisure Worlder of the Month.

He further was active in the Laguna Woods cityhood cam-



Ed Miller, active in community governance, and still on call as a forensic scientist, will be honored by the Historical Society on Feb. 4.

News photo by Rod Veal

paign and the city's planning advisory committee. He even co-chaired the community-wide planning effort Project 21, which he assumes is the reason the Society offered him its singular honor.

Former Golden Rain Security Committee Chairman Seymour Wellikson says that in the decade Miller has lived in the community, he has unfailingly placed his time and talents at

Please see **MILLER** Page 10

the disposal of Leisure World. "He's been of invaluable assistance to us with his law enforcement background and we're very lucky to have people like him in our community."

Former colleague on the United and Golden Rain Boards Bob Miller, the man Ed credits with urging him to get involved in board activities, also praises Miller's generosity. "Ed has a tremendous interest in the community and has contributed his vast computer knowledge to many (including me); he's simply a great guy!"

Background: If it wasn't for lacking one credit, the Society's honoree said he might have become an engineer instead of following a life in law enforcement.

But, when informed that he needed one credit to get in the engineering school he decided to let his fingers do the walking through his academic catalogue. There he found a major where the pesky credit wasn't needed: criminalist and forensic scientist.

The discovery, he said, seemed to combine all his interests in one career. Said Miller: "Everything clicked."

And when he graduated, with a bachelor of science in criminology from the UC Berkeley, he started working and loved every day on the job since every case was different and a challenge to his creativity and little grey cells to determine what happened. Says Miller, "You couldn't help but be intrigued."

He recalls one murder case where a body was found with little green objects all over it. Little bits of oily Douglas Fir. What could they be? After research it was learned that such items are used by janitors to

Ceremony facts

Who: Ed Miller

What: Leisure Worlder of the Month

Where: Clubhouse 6

When: 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, Feb. 4

Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society with funding by Renaissance at the Regency and at the Wellington.

MILLER

FROM 1

get up dust when they are sweeping up floors.

So how did they get on the murder victim?

Miller soon discovered that the answer was due to a corruption in the forensics lab itself.

Winding cloths for bodies were stacked on the floor. The janitor in the building used the fir bits while sweeping near the cloths and unwittingly got them on the winding sheets!

Details, details, details were so important.

Take for example the murder case of film star Ramon Novarro, where two brands of cigarettes was found in the house where he was slain. The butts, they hoped, could tell who was in the star's bedroom beating him to death and the other making long distance phone calls from the hall.

The cigarettes were distressingly similar. But Miller decided to cut them open. One had numbers in the filter, the other did not.

On calling the manufacturers, he learned the cigarettes with the numbers were Marlboros meaning the man on the phone was the brother of the murder who calmly sat and chatted with his girl friend while his brother bloodied Novarro in search of wealth hidden by pictures. In truth, the

murder was all for naught since Novarro had nothing stashed away.

Miller, who trained the famed coroner to the stars Thomas Naguchi, was also called in to help solve the Tate-LoBianco murders where the pregnant wife of famed film director Roman Polanski, Sharon Tate, was also slain.

Miller was asked to determine if the knot used to tie up her body could indicate the profession of the murderer.

Miller's investigation proved the knot was the work of an amateur: crude but nevertheless very effective.

One of the reasons Miller's expertise is still in demand is his common sense and thoroughness, qualities that he brought to community governance throughout his decade here.

"I want to help, address the needs of residents and enhance our lives here in Leisure World. I really love this place."