
Leisure Worlder of the Month

Lewis Minkel

LAGUNA HILLS — The term “upwardly mobile” has been used and applied to a great portion of young America. It’s the definition of the “Yuppies” a group on the fast track to success and the road to happiness.

But Leisure World has had its own version of someone who’s “upwardly mobile” since 1970. To honor his accomplishments before and after retirement, Lewis Minkel will be honored as “Leisure Worlder of the Month,” for January. His special ceremony is Wednesday, January 8, at 10:00 a.m. The monthly program, which is held in Clubhouse Six, is sponsored by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society. The public is invited to attend.

Lewis and his wife Marcella, his childhood sweetheart whom he married in the Hollywood Methodist church in 1930, moved to Leisure World in 1973. He became active in community affairs at once, was elected a director of Mutual 61 and served until it was merged with Third Laguna Hills Mutual. He was appointed to various committees as resident advisor until he was elected a director of Third Mutual in 1980. On that board he served as Secretary, Vice-president, and President, and on various committees on Golden Rain. During those years he was also active as a member of the Mens Golf Club as a committee chairman, Director, and President. He is also a member of the Rod and Gun Club, Saddle Club, Travle Club #1, and Opera 100. His other main interest is in the affairs of Saddleback Hospital where he serves as a Director of The Associates of Saddleback Hospital, and past Vice-president.

In January of 1985 he had an opportunity to be of service to a larger area than Leisure World and was appointed a Director of El Toro Water District for an unexpired term. In the November general election he was returned for a full term. In December he was elected Vice-president of the Board.

However, that impressive list just scratches the surface of Minkel’s life.

As a youngster he lived in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Lewis was the eldest of five children and his father served as the local Superintendent of schools. From age fourteen he worked after school and on weekends and holidays to save money for college. He attended Fort Dodge Junior College for a year and then transferred to the University of Iowa. While at the University he waited on tables in the girl’s dorm, worked in the school library and served as a lifeguard at the swimming pool.

He won all-university and inter-fraternity welter-weight boxing and wrestling championships and a campus-wide physical proficiency contest. To finance his last year he secured a job at the Green Bay, Wisconsin YMCA instructing in his favorite sports, returning to Iowa for summer school. The following year he was Physical Director in the Tucson, Arizona YMCA again returning for summer school to complete his degree.

After a short stint as a Flying Cadet in the Army Air Corps at March Field, California, Lewis joined the Southern California Telephone Company as a file clerk in their Los Angeles office. He rose through the ranks to become District Commercial Manager.

Lewis’s career then took a turn. He joined Studebaker Corporation as Los Angeles District Manager, and rapidly rose to Regional Manager, then West Coast Sales Manager. In 1953 he was transferred to South Bend, Indiana as Studebaker Marketing Manager. Now things were really on the move. In 1955 he joined Mack Truck Company as Vice-president of Sales in New York, but eventually returned to Studebaker as Vice-president of Foreign and Domestic Sales. Ultimately Minkel was named President of Studebaker Automotive Sales Corp. a wholly owned sales subsidiary of Studebaker Corporation.

In addition, Minkel served as a Director of the National Highway Safety Foundation and the American Truck Association Foundation. A complete list of his positions and board memberships was included in Who’s Who.

His avocations are golf, gardening, cards, and playing the piano for friends’ “sing-a-long.” He and Marcella divide their travel time between their son, who lives in Wilmette, Illinois, who has two boys, and their daughter in Chatham, New Jersey, who has two girls and a boy.

“Leisure” is the one thing no one has enough of in “Leisure World”.