

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

JOHN MORLEY

He's been called "Marco Polo Morley" by Lowell Thomas and listed as one of the three most dynamic speakers to appear at San Francisco Town Hall, alongside two fellows named Sir Winston Churchill and Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. His 21 awards for lecturing and reporting include the National Speakers trophy voted by professionals at their international convention and the Senior League's National Platform Award in Washington, D.C.

Heady stuff. Yet when John Morley returns home to Leisure World from one of his national speaking tours or foreign news gathering trips, he hits the podium once again to share his experiences with service and philanthropic groups in the community.

The son of an American diplomat and a Frenchwoman, Morley was born in Paris. He spent his childhood absorbing the local history and many of the languages of his temporary hometowns, which included Berlin, Vienna, Cairo, Beirut, Rome, Madrid and Athens. This background, combined with his dark complexion, enabled Morley to move freely about the world in his later career as an accredited news correspondent. "I can pass for almost any nationality except Chinese, and this enables me to overcome foreign resentment," he says.

In the latter category one might list his 1960 adventures in Russia, where he climbed over the back wall of the dacha where Boris Pasternak was under house arrest and interviewed the ailing author of "Doctor Zhivago." His subsequent story revealing the Nobel Prize winner's belief that he was being poisoned by the Soviet hierarchy resulted in Morley being barred from Russia for three years. It also won him a string of new clients for his internationally syndicated "After Hours" and "I Believe" newspaper columns. "I took a gamble and it paid off," he shrugs. "At other times it resulted in communist arrests and worse."

An energetic youth who swam for the Illinois Athletic Club with Johnny Weissmuller and Buster Crabbe after his return to the U.S., Morley qualified for the 1932 Olympic swim team but opted for matrimony instead. Shocked friends predicted a short term marriage for the 16-year-old John and Lucile, now married over 50 years.

Despite his small stature, young Morley also played football, basketball and baseball. "In those days I'd rather play ball than eat," he says. He earned enough money as a professional athlete to attend the University of Chicago, Blackstone College of Law and Oxford University, earning an LL.B., J.D. and LL.D. in international law.

Morley's job as a reporter during his law school days led him to buy an Illinois suburban newspaper following graduation. Turning publication duties over to a capable editor, he soon took off on his first overseas assignment as a *Chicago Daily News* stringer in Hitler's Berlin. Years later Morley returned to the German city and grimly witnessed the construction of the Berlin Wall. "I watched it grow from one-foot concrete blocks to a height of 12 feet, all in a period of 15 days," he recalls.

His newsbeat as an accredited free-lance correspondent included coverage of the Korean and Vietnam wars plus interviews with Hitler, Nehru, Nasser, Ben Gurion, Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek, Arafat, Begin and other world leaders including nine American presidents. On his recent 43th trip abroad Morley addressed the Institute of International Relations in Taiwan and met privately with officials of Free China and the People's Republic. Previously he has lectured on international affairs at the American University in Beirut and a score of other educational institutions throughout Europe and the Orient.

One of his most cherished commendations is the Los Angeles Philanthropic Foundation Award he won for news analysis and support of American ideals. Past recipients include Ronald Reagan, Omar Bradley, J. Edgar Hoover and John Wayne.

In 1967 the Morleys moved from Pacific Palisades to Leisure World, where he became a director of United Mutual. He has maintained membership in the Rotary Club and Shriners since 1937.