



Sarah Reingewirtz/The News

Now that he is no longer president of the Golden Rain Board Walter Penn finds time to relax on the golf course.

Society lauds former Golden Rain president

By Cheryl Walker
The News

He learned the art of cool-headed, tough dealing when buying horses, and the value of discipline, hard work and personal initiative growing up on a Missouri farm and later building a career in banking and agricultural investments.

Most recently, he put those qualities to work for the residents of Leisure World when, for 30 months, he headed the Golden Rain Foundation Board as a two term president.

Yet the day his term ended, Walter Penn was back on the golf course with a big smile on his face.

"When I end things I get out," says Penn who adds he's very happy in his retirement from the board.

When Leisure World's Historical Society contacted Penn to say he was the choice for Leisure Worlder of the Month he argued that he'd already had his day in the sun.

Penn will be honored at a ceremony at 10 a.m.

Wednesday, March 6 in Clubhouse 6.

Golden Rain Treasurer Charles Hellmann says Penn made "outstanding contributions to the community" during his years in office.

After praising his colleague's intelligence, professionalism, ethics, keen sense of fairness and aggressive protectiveness of the interests and concerns of residents, he noted his terms were marked with "significant successes."

Among the successes, says Hellmann, were streamlining the annual budget process, reorganizing and improving the efficiency of Golden Rain's committee structure and personally conducting a physical inventory of the community's tools, equipment and vehicles.

Co-worker and Golden Rain First Vice President Robert Morton, adds Penn was an "excellent leader . . . down to earth, meticulous and the hardest-working man I ever saw."

Former United President Matt Magidson adds Penn "loves to portray himself as the

'country bumpkin' (but) don't major and weekly tournaments and special events . . . he's just a great person."

Penn says he's never had a job he didn't like because he's always "had the privilege of being associated with intelligent people."

And, as for his own skills, the Missouri native and youngest of five children says he gives the credit for any good ones he possesses to heredity - a father who was a good farmer and manager and a mother who was a dedicated educator.

Penn says that if the depression and World War II hadn't intervened, he likely would have followed in his dad's footsteps.

But, after gaining his bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Missouri, studying executive management at New York's Columbia University Graduate School and completing three years' in the U.S. Coast Guard, he decided to put his farm experience to another use.

Working with Equitable Life, he started supervising agricultural loans and acquisitions in individual

states and eventually all such investments for the United States and Canada.

Except for six years owning his own savings and loan in Spokane, Penn stayed with Equitable while contributing liberally of his off time to organizations like the United Way, Kiwanis and Elks Clubs.

After coming to Leisure World in 1979, Penn joined the Washington State Club, Leisure World Bowler's Club, Los Amigos Bowling League and the Laguna Hills Men's Golf Club before getting involved in committee and governance work with Third Mutual and Golden Rain.

Penn says he took his posts very seriously - attending as many committee meetings as he could to learn and give moral support to his chairpersons.

Now, however, he leaves that kind of vigilance to those who remain in power.

Wife Ruth points out that when Penn held the presidential post their home phone never stopped ringing - with legitimate and crank calls. "Now, we don't get those kinds of calls anymore."