

# Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

## LEOTA PETERSON

In trying to emulate the goal of all creative artists based on a creed that art must be neither naturalistic nor idealistic, but both . . . that style be neither traditional nor original, but both, Leota Peterson strives to achieve what the Chinese call "inner reality."

The liltng name Leota appropriately describes this incredible lady whose artistic talents seem to have no boundaries. She is at once a musician, a stringed instrumentalist with the violin, chord harp and several ethnic instruments; and a painter, proficient in oils, water colors, pastels, acrylics and pencil renderings, holding degrees in both fields and having done extensive research in ancient Chinese music, poetry and painting.

She is the recipient of an award in the form of an ancient parchment scroll with the official government seal, date unknown, considered the highest honor awarded a musician in the Confucian Temple Service, presented by a group of Chinese professors for having performed in concerts on ancient Chinese musical instruments.

A native Californian, her musical talents were discovered at an early age and she began private lessons at ten, first on the violin and then on the piano. In high school she also studied cello and viola.

The principal sent her to other schools in the district to play the violin and talk about the history of violin making. Through an association with a famous violin maker, she started her own violin collection which grew to 25 fine instruments.

For most, one talent would be sufficient, but in her younger years there was still that untapped creativity buried in this remarkable little girl. A teacher recognized this talent and arrangements were made with a Chinese professor of art from Peking, China to accept her as his student. Under his guidance she learned the delicate and fragile techniques of Chinese painting. She became expert and attracted the attention of a local Chinese association and was invited to play in the homes of wealthy Chinese, receiving customary gifts of scroll paintings or musical instruments in appreciation.

Mrs. Peterson received a Bachelor of Music and Associate of Arts Degrees from USC and did graduate study in New England Conservatory of Music, Boston. She also received Certificates from the California Public School System in music and art and from Sherwood Music School, Chicago.

At the University, her science study was botany and a professor introduced her to the art of pencil rendering and arranged for her to have instruction in botanical-scientific art.

It seemed inevitable that Mrs. Peterson would expand her horizons, and in addition to being a musician of considerable note, would teach others from her vast store of knowledge. Great pride is taken in the fact that many of her young students chose music or art as their professional careers in later life.

Mr. Peterson took an early retirement and he and Leota moved to Leisure World not knowing that this new life would unfold many wonderful opportunities for her to express her natural gifts for music and art. "To stop teaching was a traumatic experience," she recalls and leaving behind the years devoted to children and teen-agers was a difficult adjustment.

Little did she anticipate a phone call in 1967 from the Education and Recreation Department asking if she could arrange a concert in Clubhouse One lounge. "From that moment on I knew this lovely community would be our home," she stated, "and I am grateful for the opportunity Leisure World has given me to continue doing the things I enjoy most."

Prior to becoming a resident here, Mrs. Peterson was a member of the Woman's Committee, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra from 1932 to 1940 and was one of the radio commentators on Los Angeles Station now KFAC and Long Beach KFOX.

During her ten years in Leisure World she is most proud of presenting exhibits, Fine Art films and concerts. Among her outstanding contributions to the cultural enlightenment of Leisure World include two years as producer/narrator of the Channel 6 program "Fun With The Fine Arts"; the presentation of "The Twelve Concerts To Christmas" by Leisure World musicians and talent from nearby communities; bringing to Leisure World the first, full length, unabridged production of an opera; viewing and reviewing Fine Art books; giving numerous concerts for various Leisure World organizations; presenting a Beethoven Bicentennial salute at Clubhouse Two; acting as coordinator/director of a film festival dealing with motion pictures about art, artists, music and composers; coordinating daily musicals for the opening of Saddleback Community Hospital; producing a series entitled "Meet the Artist" which exhibited work of outstanding Leisure World painters, potters and sculptors; and a part in the mini-concerts for the schools sponsored by the Orange County Philharmonic Society.

She has been invited to present a series of classical programs for the 1977-1978 College Concert Circuit in Orange County and her tireless efforts continue to enrich the lives of others as well as her own.

She is a member of the Board of Governors, Chairperson and Program Coordinator, Program Committee, Leisure World Festival Association organized to present in cooperation with the Education and Recreation Department, the First Annual Spring Festival in 1979 to celebrate the opening of Clubhouse Five.

For Leota Peterson, reminiscing is often delightful . . . often wistful. The memories she has stored away in a very special corner of her heart will not fade with the passage of time, but flourish as she draws upon them to enhance the future.