

April Leisure Worlder of Month:

Musician Peterson Honored

Leota Peterson understands creativity. She has spent her entire life pursuing that quality in her work and her art.

The noted musician and artist of Leisure World has spent much of the 11 years that she has lived in the retirement community trying to bring creativity to the lives of other residents. Her efforts were honored recently when she was named Leisure Worlder of the Month for April.

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, holding the honor of "first chair" in the school's symphony orchestra during her sophomore year.

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 instruments.

For most, one talent, such as that possessed musically by Mrs. Peterson, would be sufficient, but in her younger years there was still that untapped creativity buried in a remarkable little girl which needed only to be uncovered.

A teacher in the public school 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, working with bamboo brushes, ink stick for black and sticks of many colors, painting on large sheets of rice paper. Gradually she became an expert and attracted the attention of a local Chinese association. Through her friendship with a musician member she met other Chinese musicians and painters 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 required her to spend three summers to complete the project in the California side of the High Sierras.

IT SEEMED INEVITABLE that Mrs. Peterson would expand her horizons, and in addition to being a musician, would teach others from her vast store of knowledge. One little boy who came to class hating music, now holds a master's degree and is a university professor of music as well as a performer.

Mr. Peterson took an early retirement and he and Leota moved to Leisure World not knowing that this new life would unfold many 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 teenagers was a difficult adjustment.

"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."

