

For April

Leota Peterson named LWer of the month

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

Selected as Leisure Worldeer of the Month for April, a portrait of Mrs. Peterson will hang in the rotunda of the Rossmore Leisure World sales office during this period and will be presented to her and Mr. Peterson on May 1 at 10 a.m. in an informal ceremony to which her friends and neighbors are invited.

The lilting 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 color, 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 10, 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 fine 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 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 an associate of art degree from USC and did graduate study in New England Conservatory of



Leota Peterson

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 under the supervision of a university professor and his wife, sponsored by the Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department. At the end of the program, she had finished 500 studies which were filed in their office.

It seemed inevitable Mrs. Peterson would ex-

pand 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 late life. 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 wonderful opportunities for her to express her natural gift for music and art.

"To stop teaching was a traumatic experience, she recalls and leavin-

g behind the years devoted to children and teenagers was a difficult adjustment.

Much of the material, photos and news write-ups were discarded in the move. "I wanted to start fresh with new friends in a new environment," she said. Little did she anticipate a phone call in 1967 from the Education and Recreation Dept. asking if she could arrange a concert in the Clubhouse 1 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 10 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 12 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 Bi-

Centennial salute at Clubhouse 2; 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 1977-78 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 of the Leisure World Festival Association organized to present in cooperation with the Education and Recreation Dept. the First Annual Spring Festival in 1979 to celebrate the opening of Clubhouse 5.

For those who have never heard Leota Peterson in concert, she will present a musical program with other Leisure World musicians on Sunday, April 16 at 2:30 p.m. in the Gold Room lounge of Clubhouse 1 to which all residents are invited.

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.