



LEISURE WORLD NEWS

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Hitting all the right notes



Janine Swiatkowski/The News

Betty Phillippi takes her music seriously and enjoys membership in many groups, most having to do with music.

By Cheryl Walker
The News

There's only one word for Betty Phillippi's schedule of participation in Leisure World clubs and organizations: exhausting.

Her colleagues know that Phillippi's designation at the Historical Society's Leisure World of the Month for December is well deserved.

Joan Nugent, who with Phillippi is on the Philharmonic Committee and Minnesota Club, says her fellow club member is a "superb presenter, she has such presence when she presides over a meeting - so dynamic and charming - but anything Betty does she does well."

Fellow member of the California and Ballroom Dance

Clubs Joe Bruno agrees. "I think she's great: she's a very strong person, she knows what she wants and she does what she needs to get it."

Betty Hohweiser, who's worked with Phillippi in the Philharmonic, Saddle Club and Theatre Guild, calls her friend an "enthusiastic, delightful person - and a tireless and dedicated volunteer - when she believes in something there's no stopping her."

Philharmonic President Lenore Hunter agrees, pointing to Phillippi's work as a gala organizer, docent, program usher, fundraiser and more. "She's one of our best members and hardest and most efficient workers; I like her very much."

Background Phillippi, an only child, was born in a little Pennsylvania town that George Washington really slept in:

York.

Her first notable record of community involvement was when the Daughters of the American Revolution awarded her a \$10 gold piece for her essay on the history of her beloved hometown.

She also acted as her grandfather's scribe, recording for posterity the former Zoave member

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CEREMONY FACTS

Who: Betty Phillippi
What: Leisure Worlder of the month for December
Where: Clubhouse 6
When: 10 a.m., Wednesday, Dec. 3
Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society

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of the Army of the Republic's personal memoirs of his years in a Georgia prisoner camp during the Civil War.

And music, she says, was always a part of family fun and community activities.

Music's virtues of bringing enrichment is one of the reasons she takes very seriously her work with the Philharmonic Committee, bringing musical education to more than 300,000 Orange County school children. "Music is the common language," explains Phillippi.

"I played the piano, sang (even played Carmen in high school) and won a community concert ticket when I was a child.

"I went to all the plays and operas and saw all the great stars of my day like Robert Merrill, Laurence Tibbet, Beverly Sills."

Interestingly, that love of talent is one of the reasons she finds her work with Opera 100 so rewarding, especially when one can point to a present day superstar like Deborah Voight and know your group helped launch her into the operatic stratosphere.

Phillippi won a scholarship to Penn State University but, since her family objected to her going to a co-ed school, she worked her way through a local business college ending up valedictorian with a degree in accounting and secretarial skills.

Although Phillippi said music was never out of her mind and she loved the entertainment field, when she entered the real world she opted for the security of a job as an accountant.

But on her off hours, she became active in community drama and musical productions, in Lutheran Church activities and in the Pilot Service Club which helped raise funds for blind children and the handicapped.

She came to the Golden State in 1944 and, while working as a secretary, helped entertain service men at USOs and met her husband, Chuck (now deceased) who she married in 1946.

They subsequently moved to Alhambra where they spent the next 29 years and had a daughter (who is now a successful landscape contractor and designer).

Motherhood didn't slow Phillippi down. After her daughter was born, she worked as a probate secretary, became a Laubach Literacy tutor, earned a degree in night school in English literature and drama, served as Brownie and Girl Scout Troops leader and sang in her church choir, the Sweet Adelines and the William Hall Chorale.

Since moving to Leisure World in the early 1980s, she's donated time and talents to the Philharmonic Committee, Hymn Sing-Along and American and Ballroom Dance, Minnesota, California, Opera 100, World on Film, Ebell and Lawn Bowling clubs.

She also has taken advantages of opportunities to continue her education and is taking courses in art history, Spanish and calligraphy.

Now that her professional career days are over, Phillippi says doing things musical, learning and helping others achieve their potential will continue to be her overriding passions.

"I do have a hectic schedule, but I enjoy people and I'm interested in things; and, I believe, if we are active, we're more interesting too."