

Early settler in community named LWer for August

There's only a trace of the gold that once gleamed from her once red tresses but the glint of her dark brown eyes is a bright reminder of the years Viola Sanders was prominent in many Leisure World spheres of activity.

One of the community's first settlers who played an active role in more than a half dozen organizations along with serving on the Golden Rain Foundation board, Mrs. Sanders has been selected Rossmoor Corporation's Leisure Worlder for the month of August.

On Wednesday, August 1, her framed color portrait, will be hung in the rotunda of the Rossmoor Leisure World new sales office at 10 a.m. in an informal ceremony. Her many friends are invited to attend.

It was as a thespian that perhaps Viola has left her most prominent imprint on the community when, as a member of the Theater Production Guild she played the feminine lead in "The President," "Was a Lady," and "The Curious Savage," a three-act play in which her role was that of an eccentric multi-millionaire, among others.

Viola also compiled and narrated "The Story of Easter," which she told with eloquence for more than half a dozen years in what once was an annual Palm Sunday Leisure World religious feature, first at Clubhouse 1 where the Lutheran Church held their services and later in the new Church of the Cross on El Toro and in clubhouses.

Mrs. Sanders also has a flair for things artistic. "I only painted in watercolors until we moved to Leisure World." She was one of the early members of the Art Association and soon learned to work on canvas with oils.

While pictures of her daughter, son, husband and six grandchildren take precedence on the walls of the Sanders home, her paintings are scattered through the house, along with objects of art that have resulted from her handicraft.

In addition to the Art Association and Theater Production Guild, Viola was in on the beginning of such other Leisure World clubs as Latin American, Great Books, Foreign Policy, Democratic Club and California Club.

A critical illness resulting in open-heart surgery has forced her to become inactive in recent years.

She served as secretary and the chairman of the community relations and other committees of the Golden Rain Foundation from 1969-72. In 1975 Mrs. Sanders also was president of the Lutheran Church Women of the Cross and in 1976, president of the

Saddleback Valley Churchwomen United.

"My husband, John and I first tried to sign up for a home in Leisure World six months before the sale opened," says Viola. "We were first in line when the sales finally started."

Their home had been in Long Beach where her



Viola Sanders

husband had worked for Shell Oil Company 28 years.

Viola isn't sure, but suspects her Golden State heritage goes farther back than many of her fellow California Club members.

Her father's name was Feliz. Her great-great-grandfather, one of the original Spanish immigrants, married an Indian girl. Her mother's parents came over from Belfast in 1846 after the potato famine and crossed to California in a covered wagon in 1849. There's a ring of pride in her voice as Viola tells of her heritage.

Viola, lived through two major earthquakes...San Francisco and Long Beach.

The 1906 San Francisco quake occurred when she was a child, but she remembers their home was tilted off its foundation and "the furniture piled in heaps against a wall. Thank goodness it struck at five in the morning before our wood stove was lighted or our house would have burned.

"The Long Beach quake fortunately was at six in the evening, not during school hours, because most schools were completely destroyed and hundreds of school children would have been killed."

Mrs. Sanders isn't sure from which side of her family the flair for acting came but she recalls as a child that an aunt used to put her on a cracker barrel in a corner grocery in San Francisco and she recited poetry amid a shower of coins and candy.

She earned her board and room working for the YWCA while attending San Jose Normal; taught kindergarden mornings while attending classes in the afternoon at California (Berkeley).

The debating team she was on at San Jose beat both Stanford and Santa Clara, she recalls. At Berkeley her thespian urge took her to Oakland where she performed at the Community Playhouse.

Her first teaching assignment was in McGill, Nevada, an Anaconda copper-mining town. It was there she met her husband, who was superintendent of the power plant.

In Long Beach, Mrs. Sanders did substitute teaching in most of the primary schools and also taught adult education classes.

In 1939 she obtained a real estate broker's license and had her own business for 12 years. In addition she was active in Red Cross, Community Chest and PTA, served three years on the board of directors of Childrens Psychiatric Clinic and was president of the Long Beach Business & Professional Women's Club. All this while raising two children.

Friends say only on doctor's orders has Viola slowed down.