

Rossmoor honor goes to Reagan colleague

When Mason City, Iowa, is mentioned, the first name it conjures is "Music Man" Meredith Willson. Bring up the subject of Des Moines and radio in the same context these days and everyone thinks of Dutch Reagan.

Wayne Tiss, Rossmoor's Leisure Worlder of the Month for January, played a cornet in the same municipal band with Willson. He managed two radio stations in the Iowa capitol city at a time when the current president-elect of the United States was broadcasting sports there.

Tiss frankly admits he didn't envision the future success of either Willson or Reagan any more than they expected that this tall son of the Hawkeye state would one day make a profound impact on Hollywood, radio and television.

As vice president of Batten Barton Durston & Osborn, the prestigious ad agency known worldwide as BBD&O, Tiss became famous as the man who made both clients and listeners happy by airing such programs as The Jack Benny Show, Amos and Andy, Burns and Allen, Cavalcade of America, General Electric Theater (hosted by Ronald Reagan), Hit Parade with Frank Sinatra.



Wayne Tiss

Tiss named Leisure Worlder for January

Private Secretary with Ann Southern, Lassie, The Phil Harris-Alice Faye Show, and a host of others.

With such a background, it is understandable that after moving to Leisure World in 1970 Tiss would contribute time on the board of directors of both the Laguna Moulton Community Playhouse and the Lyric Opera Association of Orange County. He also was chairman of the community relations committee during 1973-76 as a Golden Rain Foundation director.

Wayne's host of friends are invited to be present at the Rossmoor New Sales pavillion at 10 a.m. Friday, Jan. 2, for the informal ceremony at which time his color portrait, framed in gold, will be prominently placed on a wall. At a similar ceremony on the morning of Monday, Feb. 2, it will be presented to him.

Tiss says his life's axiom is to "try to do a little good each day and have a little fun," and his years on a first name basis with stars of the entertainment field has made that philosophy even more pleasurable to those with whom he rubs elbows.

Beginning with those Mason City days of his youth, Wayne bubbles with stories about his life.

"In high school Meredith and I organized a quartet with a couple of other friends. We called ourselves 'The Jones Brother,'" he said.

Successful years later, when Tiss and Willson would lunch at the Brown Derby, like the E. F. Hutton line says, "everybody listened" to their funny stories.

Meredith went to the John Philip Sousa band and Tiss enrolled at the University of Iowa where, as a journalism major, he became editor of the school paper and paid for his education by forming a dance band. "I called it by the catchy name of 'Wayne Tiss and His Music.'"

Fresh out of college in 1925 he became promotion manager of the Des Moines Register and Tribune and program director of radio stations KSO and KRNT.

It was after the Cowles Newspapers made him promotion manger of the Minneapolis Star that Tiss moved up to national advertising and eventually to "the Hollywood jungle" as he calls it. There he was placed in charge of all of BBD&O's broadcast operations.

Wayne refuses to take credit or blame for the origin of singing commercials but admits some partial guilt. "We had acquired the Gallo wine account and I presented this singing commerical to Ernie and Julio. I hummed it for them and Julio said, 'Yes, but will people remember it? Can you remember it?'"

"I said 'I ought to. I wrote it.' Instead of getting sore, they laughed."

In putting into action his creed of "doing something for fellow man," Tiss served on the board of trustees of College (now University) of the Pacific; lectured on advertisng at the universities of Minnesota, Iowa and Drake and gave a paper on pay television at Stanford.

Once, in a graduation address at the Los Angeles Art Center School of Design, Tiss posed this ques-

tion: "Do fools rush in where angels fear to tread?" Answering himself, he said, "You bet they do. That's why people get someplace. They don't know enough to be afraid."

Wayne was the first non-actor to serve on the board of directors of the Screen Actors Guild Pension Fund; was one of the early organizers of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and served on a variety of committees from 1957 through 1960.

He is the proud owner of an honorary Emmy but if you visit his home you have to ask to see it. Wayne keeps it in an oblong box, just as he has closeted much of his past successes and muted the trumpet that helped get him started at Mason City with a piccolo player named Meredith Willson.