
Leisure Worlder of the Month

George Wain

His former students hold positions in symphony orchestras; on university faculties; and in public schools throughout the nation.

Leisure Worliders have heard his clarinet on numerous occasions at church and in the Leisure World community.

To show appreciation for all he has done, George will be honored as "Leisure Worlder of the Month," on Wednesday, April 1. His special ceremony will be held at 10:00 a.m., in Clubhouse Six. The public is invited to attend the program, which is sponsored jointly by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society.

George Elbridge Wain was reared on an Iowa farm. He attended a one-room school and graduated from high school in Cedar Rapids. Further down the academic road, he received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business from the University of Iowa. Still later, he earned two advanced degrees from Northwestern University in the music field, one in the Performing Arts, and the other in Music Education. George showed an early interest in music, starting probably, he says, from the soothing lullabies in his infancy sung by his mother, and later his curiosity for the clarinet.

"My father, an industrious farmer, was also a capable clarinetist who played in the town bands and in the Iowa 53rd Regimental Band," said George.

While he labored in the fields young George would take his Dad's clarinet from the closet, and experiment, sometimes breaking the delicate reed, "to my Dad's anguish," he confided. Later, as George became proficient on the clarinet, through the high school and university levels, his Dad was proud and supportive.

After University and further study in New York, he was sure that music performance and teaching were to be his future. His knowledge of all the band and orchestra instruments allowed him to "run the gamut," of teaching elementary orchestras in Cedar Rapids, Io.; later, high school bands and orchestras in Urbana, Il.; and doing specialized teaching of the woodwinds, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and saxophone, at the University of Illinois.

From Illinois he moved to the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music in Ohio, where he remained as a faculty member for the next forty years, until retirement in 1969.

"The move to Southern California proved to be only semi retirement," George recalled.

Semi retirement, because from Glendale, where he and his wife, Elsa, resided, he filled a teaching position in Performing Arts at the University of Southern California. And after their move to Leisure World in 1973, he continued teaching at Chapman College for seven more years. This might sound like the coda, if you'll pardon the pun, to George's story, but not so.

According to George, forty progressive years at Oberlin can hardly be summarized in a few words. As a clarinetist and woodwind specialist in orchestras, bands, and chamber music his specialities took him to many parts of the country, which lead to a very busy life, and he admits that his golf and bridge games suffered.

"During this period in history, phenomenal growth in all phases of music in the schools was taking place," he said.

George was a pioneer in his field, organizing contests and festivals; serving as an adjudicator; arranging and editing suitable music materials; prodding publishers to provide conductor scores for their ensemble publications; serving as clinician and appearing as clarinet soloist in many concerts.

Happily, this all lead to listings for George in "Who's Who in Music," and in "Leaders in Education."

During many of the forty years, Oberlin College did not have summer school, so George and family were free to accept appointments in several universities. The travelled from New York University in the east to USC and Oregon in the west. The only exception came during the Pearl Harbor years when George did war work at ship building in Lorain, Ohio

Any long career must have certain high spots. George says his are these: A performance in 1935 by his Oberlin student woodwind quintet at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York for the Music Educators National Convention, which probably brought him his first national recognition.

George recalls that the students were quite excited to be using Lawrence Tibbett's dressing room for their warm-up!

He has been a contributing editor and writer of a woodwind column for "Instrumentalist Magazine," since its inception in 1946.

He's active in Ohio music affairs he was the recipient, in 1959, of the Distinguished Service Award by the Ohio Music Education Association.

He served as president of the National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors in 1953-55. Interestingly enough, 17 years later, his son, Dr. Ronald Wain, followed him in the same position. Son Ron is a professor at the University of Georgia in the same field as his dad.

George is the editor and arranger of forty published compositions for woodwind solos and ensembles, several of which are widely played in school contests and festivals.

His latest recognition came only a short time ago when at the National Convention of the American Bandmasters Association he was chosen for the Edwin Franko Goldman Memorial Citation.

At the convention's awards presentation, the ABA president said of George, "The Edwin Franko Goldman Award is the highest tribute that is bestowed by the American Bandmasters Association. It is given to the very few individuals who have been instrumental in determining the course of music in our hemisphere. It is with great pride the American Bandmasters Association presents this prestigious award to you. [George] We thank you again for giving your life to music."