

Ceremony orchestrated for honored clarinetist

March 26, 1987



George Waln

His former students hold positions in symphony orchestras, on university faculties and in public schools throughout the nation. Leisure Worlders have heard his clarinet on numerous occasions at church and in the community.

To show appreciation for all he has done, George Waln will be honored as Leisure Worlder of the Month on Wednesday, April 1. His special ceremony will be at 10 a.m. in Clubhouse 6. The public is invited to attend the program sponsored by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society.

George Elbridge Waln was reared on an Iowa farm. He attended a one-room school and graduated from high school in Cedar Rapids. He received a bachelor degree in business from the University of Iowa and later earned two advanced degrees from Northwestern in music education and performing arts.

Waln 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," says Waln.

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." Later, as the youngster became proficient on the instrument, his dad was proud and supportive.

After university and further study in New York, he was sure that music and teaching were to be his future. His knowledge of all the band and orchestra instruments allowed him to "run the gamut" of teaching in Cedar Rapids, then Urbana, Ill., and even later 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 40 years, until retirement in 1969.

"The move to Southern California proved to only semi-retirement," Waln recalled.

Semi-retirement because from Glendale where he and his wife Elsa resided, he filled a teaching position

in performing arts at USC. After their moved to Leisure World in 1973, he continued teaching at Chapman College.

According to Waln, 40 progressive years at Oberlin can hardly be summarized in a few words. "During this period in history, phenomenal growth in all phases of music in the schools has taken place."

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

Any long career must have high spots. Waln says his includes a performance in 1935 by his Oberlin students woodwind quintet at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York for the Music Educators National Convention, which probably brought him his first national recognition.

Waln recalls that the students were quite excited to be using Lawrence Tibbett's dressing room for their

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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 and was the recipient in 1959 of the Distinguished Service Award by the Ohio Music Educators Association.

He served as president of the National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors in 1953-55 and 17 years later, his son, Dr. Ronald Waln, followed him in the same position.

George Waln is the editor and arranger of 40 published compositions for woodwind solos and ensembles, several of which are widely played in school contests and festivals.

Additional recognition was accorded him not long ago when at the National Convention of the American Bandmaster's Association he was chosen for the Edwin Franko Goldman Memorial Citation, "given to individuals who have been instrumental in determining the course of music in our hemisphere."