

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

HAROLD D. WINN

"With all the entertaining I do," laments Harold Winn, "people are always asking me if I'm related to Ed Wynn. I just smile and say, no, he spells his name wrong."

It's that kind of dry humor mixed with a healthy dose of music, that has kept him in the spotlight for years. For his non-stop devotion to his audiences and his undying commitment to the art of music and laughter, Harold D. Winn is September's selection as Leisure Worlder of the Month. He will be presented his award at a ceremony co-sponsored by Home Federal Savings and the Leisure World Historical Society.

Winn and his wife of 64 years, the former Mabel Sanford, came to Leisure World in 1965. "I decided to definitely retire and wanting the best, we moved here," he said.

Winn spent his professional life in the newspaper business. He began at age 14 in his hometown of Charles City, Iowa as the "printers devil" at the local daily. In 1923 he accepted a position at the Hollywood Daily Citizen and he and Mrs. Winn were California bound. Although he had several offers, Winn remained with the Citizen throughout his career, retiring as assistant business manager.

But it's his extra-curricular activities he most likes to reminisce about. "I was on the Hollywood Bowl's Easter Sunrise Service committee for 30 years and I produced the service for 12 years," he said.

Winn was associate director under the noted musical director Hugo Kirchoffer for the "Hollywood Sing" series. He proudly remembers that when Kirchoffer was detained or ill, he would request Winn to take his place. Through his many affiliations, Winn was able to work with dozens of celebrities, including: Judy Garland, Burns and Allen, Charlton Heston and Elizabeth Taylor.

In addition to his production talents, Winn himself is an accomplished performer, having been both a vocal soloist and a choir director. "Once, I sang 'Ragtime Cowboy Joe' with Roy Rogers and the Sons of the Pioneers," he beamed. "Another big thrill was leading an audience of 25,000 in our national anthem with the accompaniment of the Marine Band."

Winn's big break nearly came one night as he was singing at the Hollywood Lions Club. A talent scout from MGM was among the crowd. After the show, the scout introduced himself to Winn and invited him to MGM for a tryout. According to Winn, "I was, of course, flattered, but I avoided making the contact. A few weeks later, a secretary from MGM called and convinced me to come by and audition. After I sang a couple of songs, the MGM scout came out and thanked me for my time, assuring me he'd be in touch. That was 45 years ago and I'm still waiting for his call."

Since coming to Leisure World, Winn has served as president of the Leisure World Chorale, as vice president of the Leisure World Community Concert Association and as the director of the Sunday Morning Sings. In his estimation, he has served as Master of Ceremonies at more than 150 different occasions, ranging from birthday parties to concerts by the Leisure World Orchestra.

Calling upon his professional expertise, he worked as circulation manager for the Leisure World News for five years.

In addition to all these activities, Winn has found time to be active in various fraternal associations too. He was made a Master of the Hollywood Masonic Lodge on his 65th birthday. He served as music director for the Wilshire Kiwanis Club for 22 years and has been a member of the Saddleback Kiwanis Club for 12 years.

Winn is now 85 years old and says he's, "as vibrant as ever, still goin' strong." He shared some thoughts on how this came about. "My friend, Vincent Price, recently said, 'I don't worry about getting old, I am old. It's marvelous. Age is just a number.' "

"That's the way I feel," Winn continued, "I didn't jump into maturity, but here I am. Now I feel that everything before age 70 was just a warm-up."