

Great World

By Ross W. Cortese
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Ross Cortese's guest columnist today is Catherine Wright, former Leisure Worlder of the Month and founder-director of the Leisure World Library.

Who can catch a rainbow? Who can make a rose? But we can have a dream, a goal, and achieve it through dedication and effort. Leisure World as a community is a good example of such a goal, and so is our Leisure World Library.

The original overall plans for Leisure World included clubhouses, handicraft shops, many outdoor sports facilities, but no library. The nearest one was in Laguna Beach. A about a year after Leisure World opened the Panhellenic Club was organized. I happened to be president of the 12 member group. We decided we'd like to make a contribution to our community.

A library was the very logical choice for two reasons: the need to exchange books, and a place to donate volumes for which we no longer had room in our homes.

The Golden Rain Foundation agreed we had a good goal and assigned us what had been a game room in Clubhouse 2. In February 1966 we opened with about 50 books contributed by our members. The Leisure World News carried an appeal for workers and book donations and results were staggeringly gratifying. From its inception the Library has been a community, volunteer project. All workers have been volunteers; not a penny has been spent on salary.

Contributions of old books continued, but how to get money to buy new ones which our readers began requesting? An appeal was made and we instituted fines for overdue books; all fine moneys go toward the new book fund. Then we started the concept of book memorials with suitable bookplates which still continues.

We originally had no hopes or plans of becoming a regular departmentalized library. At first most of our books were fiction; they were not catalogued, simply separated into a few classifications and alphabetized by authors. Gradually we acquired re-

ference volumes and non-fiction books. The Dewey Decimal cataloguing system was instituted. We also expanded with thousands of paperbacks, many magazines and jigsaw puzzles. In short, we grew and grew, through larger quarters in the old Snack Shop, twin trailers and finally, in November 1976 into our splendid new building.

Whenever we needed help the community and clubs of Leisure World came to our assistance. For example, the GRF allotted \$210,000 for our new building which included a \$15,000 item for new shelving. But an overrun of building cost ate up that sum and we faced the prospect of using old shelves, inadequate hand-me-downs and even discards from the Orange County Library.

The Library Board authorized me to write to the 160 clubs in our community asking for contributions. The Leisure World News published a public appeal. Within six weeks individual and clubs had contributed \$18,000, providing the needed sum plus a tidy surplus for furniture!

With our present 4,000 square feet of space we now have about 18,000 hardcover books, more than 25,000 paperbacks, hundreds of jigsaw puzzles. We have a good reference section, many current magazines and a growing department of large-print volumes. An average of 12,000 items is checked out each month. More than 1,000 hours are contributed monthly by 118 volunteer workers. Clubs and individuals continue their contributions; we could not continue to grow without them.

We feel the Library has done much for our community, but the community has certainly "made" the Library.