

LEISURE WORLDER OF THE MONTH

Theresa Zuffante

February, 1993

The Leisure World Historical Society is pleased to announce the selection of Theresa Zuffante, Leisure Worlder of the Month for February, 1993.

The event is sponsored by the Leisure World Historical Society, supported by the Ross Cortese Commemorative Fund.

In preparing a background summary of herself, Theresa Zuffante says, "I was born a long time ago on the near West side of Chicago!" With that, she moves on to recount elements of her formative years in which she enjoyed the comfort of a very close knit Italian family of modest means. Besides her parents, Theresa has two brothers and two sisters. She attended a public grade school, high school and junior college of Chicago with ambition to go on to study medicine. Because of financial constraints, she was prevented from applying to medical school. She enrolled at the Lewis Institute (now known as the Illinois Institute of Technology) to continue her education. She took courses in biology, psychology and mathematics, in the hope that improved financial conditions could put her "back on track" without too great a loss of time. When it became evident that this would not happen, Theresa decided on the next best thing - a career in nursing. She enrolled at the Mother Cabrini Hospital School of Nursing from which she graduated with a nursing certificate. Theresa started her nursing career at Mother Cabrini. Her diligence and ability were quickly noted and she was promoted to the position of Relief Supervisor over all departments.

Her next assignments were in the State of Illinois Civil Service, first in a Pathology Laboratory setting and then advancing to do research on R.E.M. (Rapid Eye Movement) experiments connected with sleep disturbances. At the conclusion of this work at the Illinois Research Facilities, Theresa moved on to the Federal Civil Service, accepting an assignment at the Veterans' Hospital in Hines, Illinois. There, her responsibility as scrub nurse for the surgeons in orthopedics, urology, neurology, general abdominal and reconstructive surgery gave her contact with many notable physicians, including Dr. Royal Davis, better known probably, as Nancy Regan's father.

Now, having had ten years of professional service, her sweetheart from high school days, Frank Zuffante, persuaded her to settle down to marriage and the responsibility of raising a family. By the middle of the 1950's, the Zuffantes with a son and two daughters, moved to California. When the children were of school age, Theresa returned to the nursing profession. To accommodate their family needs, she limited her work assignments to night duty. Happily, job opportunities in the Glendale area, in which they had settled, were good, and Theresa moved rapidly up the career ladder. She went from Glendale Adventist Hospital in ICU, then on to Glendale Memorial as Emergency Room Supervisor and Night Supervisor. When a new hospital, the Lutheran Hospital was opened in nearby Pacoima, Theresa moved there as Night Supervisor.

The enjoyment of her continuing professional advancement and husband Frank's prosperous insurance business was suddenly struck down by a series of tragic events. The untimely death of Frank, Jr., in December, 1970, coupled with the trauma of the catastrophic 1971 earthquake to which they were subjected, proved too much for Frank, who succumbed to a massive heart attack on December 4, 1971.

Theresa took up residence with her sister and continued her professional work. A chance stopover on a trip to San Diego in 1973 brought her to Leisure World. Thinking ahead to retirement, she made a down payment on a manor. Frequent weekend visits convinced her that this was the place for her and so she took up full-time residence in 1979. Her ability to organize and lead, and her willingness to share and serve have brought her to the hub of all social activities here. Whether the activity be labeled service, social, recreational, intellectual or professional, Theresa Zuffante has been either a charter member, its president, a director or a major contributor.

If one were in search of a prototype for service to a community, no one could prove more worthy than Theresa Zuffante, the Historical Society's Leisure Worlder of the Month for February, 1993.