

Retired nurse organizes quake assistance group

Cheryl Walker

The News

It's hard to find a medical specialty that retired nurse and Leisure Worlder Theresa Zuffante hasn't mastered.

At private and government hospitals in Illinois and California, serving in staff, administrative or supervisory positions,

LEISURE WORLDER CEREMONY

Who: Theresa Zuffante
When: Wednesday, Feb. 3
Time: 10 to 11 a.m.
Where: Clubhouse 6
Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society

she's fine tuned her professional skills in urology, neurology, obstetrics, substance abuse and tuberculosis treatments, geriatrics, childhood crippling diseases, hematology, oncology, nutrition, sexually-transmitted diseases, intensive care, trauma and surgery.

"I was nosy, always nosy," explains the 14-year resident and Chicago native who originally wanted M.D. to follow her name.

When family finances wouldn't permit that dream, Zuffante embraced her second choice, nursing, with passion.

Throughout her career, that passion's never flagged with Zuffante constantly expanding her areas of expertise and striving to stay abreast of the latest medical advances and techniques.

Chicago, parapsychology, bocce, garden, American-Italia, Irish-American (although her heritage is Italian, she's an honorary daughter of Erin) and People for a National Health Program.

She's a founding member of one of Leisure World's newest clubs, the Windy City, for bonafide residents or ex-residents of her hometown.

She also finds time to be active in St. Nicholas's Catholic Women's Council and Italian Catholic Federation participating in a variety of projects notably a scholarship program for young people and fund-raising efforts to provide necessities for area poor.

Putting that expertise at the disposal of the Golden Rain Earthquake and Disaster Preparedness Task Force as its nurse coordinator, however, isn't the sole reason Leisure World's Historical Society chose Zuffante as its February Leisure Worlder of the Month.

As Society President Irving Goldberg explains "If one were in search out a prototype for service to a community, no one could prove more worthy than Theresa Zuffante.

"Whether the (community) activity be labeled service, social, recreational, intellectual or professional, . . . (she) has been either a charter member, . . . president, a director or a major contributor. She's always a helping hand."

Fellow nurse and member of Zuffante's task force, Irmgard Axe says her colleague is a "very devoted person, a good organizer and very efficient.

"But she's a good listener: warm, gentle, patient . . . she never loses her temper--though she's not weak either. We're lucky to have her."

Zuffante's participation in Leisure World clubs and organizations began before she moved here in 1979.

After her husband's death, she visited the community with a friend in 1973, liked what she saw and put a deposit on the manor she wasn't to occupy for six years.

In the interim, she attended

St. Nicholas's Father Ted Olson says of Zuffante, "she's an active parishioner and a real asset to the community."

Zuffante credits her family with instilling her with a desire to be of service.

"My family was religious and close, but generous," she recalls. The extended family is still very much part of her life.

She lives with her sister Mary and has five other close relatives who call Leisure World, home.

She also keeps close tabs with family outside Leisure World, like the Cortese family. Her Aunt Frances was the mother of Leisure World's founder Ross Cortese. "The Cortese girls and I



Don Leach/The News

Theresa Zuffante, organizer of the nurses task force part of the community's earthquake preparedness effort, will be honored on Feb. 3 as Leisure Worlder of the Month.

dances particularly on Sunday nights.

At the gatherings, the Arthur Murray Dance School alumna displayed the fancy footwork that garnered her more than a dozen first place ribbons. (Her

favorite dance was the cha cha.)

Once a resident, Zuffante joined dance groups of all kinds and clubs of all kinds including square and round dancing,

used to take classes together. We were good friends."

Although Zuffante's life has been filled with challenges and successes, it's had its share of sorrows too. Her only son died tragically young and she had the ill luck to have been living in the San Fernando Valley in 1971 when the 6.5 earthquake hit.

Perhaps marrying her childhood sweetheart, Frank, had something to do with her infectious energy and sense of humor.

When the temblor hit, their home suffered more than \$10,000 worth of damage including the loss of Zuffante's prized china collection.

When she chokingly pointed

that out to her husband, Zuffante said, he replied with a smile and that she should look on the bright side: "At least I know what to get you for Christmas!"