

Laguna Woods History Center
Community Oral History Project
Recording Log

NARRATOR: Joan Long

INTERVIEWER: Jennifer Keil

VIDEOGRAPHER: Cindy Keil

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LOCATION: Laguna Woods, CA

PROJECT: Laguna Woods History Center

VIDEO: https://youtu.be/Zp2i1q3_AWM

ABSTRACT: Joan shared about her transition as a stay-at-home mom for nineteen years to working at Leisure World. She joined the Recreation Department from 1968 to 1975. She saw growth in program offerings including the building of a new fitness center. Her role as a community liaison allowed her to learn about the needs of the community and to manage programs for them. She retired from this role to become a realtor from 1984 to 2011. Joan began volunteering for the Leisure World Historical Society in 1978 and supported the membership program with dues. She currently serves as a Laguna Woods History Center Board of Trustee.

00:00:00

Introduction

Born in Akron, Ohio on March 4, 1928. Great Depression childhood and father's work at Firestone tire; grandparents' farm with Jersey cows; college at Akron University where she met twenty-one year old Bill Long, a GI Marine. She didn't earn her degree, but got married instead at seventeen Bill's dad and Clark Gable were cousins and he resembled Clark Gable

Keywords: Ohio; Great Depression; Akron University; Clark Gable

00:04:38

Moving to California

Moved to an apartment in Orange County, California in 1964 to Tustin; orange trees and orange groves; bought our home in Mission Viejo; August of 1967 her son John had just turned 16 and he got a job at Clubhouse 2 in Leisure World; Joan started working in Leisure World in 1971 in Clubhouse 3; Vera Johnson, who was the manager of Clubhouse 1, was appointed Theatre Manager and she was hired as the front office

manager; Theatre performance with Lawrence Welk Troop¹ and West Point Cadet Choir; reassigned to Clubhouse 1 as a supervisor, at Clubhouse 1; left to pursue a career in real estate and sold this community for 28 years

Keywords: Tustin; Clubhouse 2; Clubhouse 1; Theatre Manager; real estate

00:13:25 **Recreation Department**

The parade was at Clubhouse 2 on Moulton Parkway; Zola Arnold and the Fourth of July parade with grand marshall Harry von Zell who was Jack Benny's announcer; Marian Knott of Knott's Berry Farm connection to Andy Devine; Contacted Harry Babbitt who had been the singer with Kay Kyser's band on the radio; husband owned a used car lot in Santa Ana and convertible that belonged to June Allyson used for the grand marshall in for the parade with Harry Babbitt; final parade due to the insurance company liability with closing part of El Toro Road; Monday night Globe Twirlers.

Keywords: Parade; Grand Marshall; Globe Twirlers

00:18:58 **Part-time Supervisor at Clubhouse 2**

Worked on Monday night when the clubhouse was open from eight in the morning until ten at night; Roundalers Dance Club, Globe Twirlers, and square dancers; three gentlemen that stopped by her office were Admiral Beery, one was General Schaefer, and one was Judge May; Ross Cortese dinner dance at Clubhouse 1 while she was the supervisor there; lighted candelabra and fire marshall uniform altered them to be encased in the glass globes in 1974; barbed wire on all the fences and the wall on Moulton Parkway leading into Clubhouse 2 area was raised higher

Keywords: Roundalers Dance Club; Ross Cortese; globes

00:31:44 **Clubs & Organizations**

Orchestra formed under the leadership of Leota Peterson; theatre seated almost 900 people; Opera 100; increase in physical activities and recreation additions like the lawn bowling green at Clubhouse 1 and constructed an additional one at Clubhouse 2; enclosed, shuffleboard court, bocce ball courts; Clubhouse 4 was completed and became the arts and crafts center which previously had been at Clubhouse 1; the supervisor, Skip Stone worked to establish a physical fitness center with partnership with Doctor DeVrees, who recommended equipment such as the initial couple of stationary bicycles and mats; Diane Edwards ran the program who had a degree in Physical Education and developed the exercise program; Diane eventually earned her Ph.D, wrote a book, and appeared on national television as an expert; new community center was built up on El Toro Road at Town Center Drive

Keywords: theatre; physical fitness; exercise; Clubhouse 4

¹ The Lawrence Welk Show people performed Big Band music with an orchestra.
https://youtu.be/95sluopO_Bk

00:38:24

Initial Visit to Leisure World

“JL: Well, I didn’t know much about Leisure World except what my son had told me. And of course he added that evening at dinner when he said, ‘Why don’t you go to work at Leisure World, Mom?’; She had been a stay-at-home mom for nineteen years until she began working with the recreation supervisors; at the time, there were the two clubhouses. Clubhouse 1, our recreation office, was in the upstairs part of Clubhouse 1.”; three-story apartment complex housed the newspaper, security, the physical fitness, physical properties, and *The Leisure World News*; became a real estate agent in 1983; husband retired at 62 years old and they moved in December 1988; the community had a golf course and the stables with the riding trails and tennis courts; husband played golf every day for eighteen years; Joan cut back on my work in 1978 and started to volunteer for the [Leisure World] Historical Society² when it had an annex that was connected to the library prior to that it was a small space in the black glass building; the President of the historical society was Evelyn Shopp and the secretary’s name was Gene, who Joan sold her house when she moved back to Wisconsin; became a volunteer at the Historical Society and became charge of membership and managed the dues; charged clubs for archival storage

Keywords: recreation; golf; Leisure World Historical Society; volunteer; membership

00:53:33

Community Changes

JL: “Well, you know, the older you get the more you resist changes. That’s just a fact. That’s the way it is. And yet if you’re realistic, you know that change is going to happen. And as this community has changed, now I’ve been involved in this community in one way or another, for 50 years, since 1968. That’s 50 years. Oh my goodness!”; An amphitheatre was built outside Clubhouse 2, fitness center, and a third fitness center was constructed; heard that the Clubhouse 3 may turn into a performing arts center; when she moved into this community in 1988, there were “many residents who were original owners from 1964 and ’65 and ’67. My cul-de-sac was finished in 1967 and many of the residents in there that I became friends with were original owners.” Shift with residents being part of the Baby Boomers and the Rock and Rollers; new pickleball center and new tennis facility due to residents with a different type of entertainment at Clubhouse 3

Keywords: community; residents; entertainment

01:00:34

Cityhood

JL: “I knew about it, of course. And there was a huge faction that was anti-cityhood. You know, if it ain’t broke, why fix it. There was also a huge faction that was in favor of cityhood. And obviously that faction won out. Well, it’s worked out fine. It’s fine. We’re a small city. Our city director is, I understand, the youngest in the county, happens to be a friend of mine. He was our curator here at the History Center.”; debate at a time when El

² This organization is now the Laguna Woods History Center.

Toro Marine Base had closed to become an airport, but became the Great Park instead due to political action

Keywords: cityhood; El Toro Marine Base; Great Park

01:02:50 **History Center**

History Center president, Evelyn Shopp³ was loved her dearly. She was followed by a gentleman by the name of Bob Ring⁴ who was described as a powerhouse and former mayor. After Bob and his wife retired and moved, Dean and Gail Dixon managed the Laguna Woods History Center; Golden Rain board, United board changes and the Third Mutual changes.

Keywords: Laguna Woods History Center; leadership

01:09:28 **90th Birthday**

54 years ago, she took a drive with her husband in Akron, Ohio when their son, John, was about 12 years old then, was having medical problems and needed a warmer climate; they settled in Tustin, CA for three years and bought their new home in Mission Viejo in 1967. “John turned 16 and went to work at Leisure World at Clubhouse 2...So, the rest is history.”

Keywords: Ohio; Mission Viejo; birthday

³ OH 02 Evelyn Shopp’s Oral History: <https://youtu.be/DRKjc6VYwng>

⁴ OH 03 Bob Ring’s Oral History: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHRnHIMAN5E>