

This Little Old Lady more than a 'golden oldie'

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IOWA TODAY



Gazette photo by Rita Reed

Lenore Woodward, the official "Little Old Lady From Pasadena," waves as she leaves the Cedar Rapids Airport. The grandmother of two will be the official hostess for the "Little Old Lady From Iowa Contest" at 5 p.m. Saturday during the "World's Biggest Beach Party" at Williamsburg.

'Little Old Lady From Pasadena'

Arrives to crown Iowa counterpart at huge beach party

By Kurt Rogahn
Gazette staff writer

"The Little Old Lady From Pasadena" is more than just a "golden oldie."

She's a real "granny," Lenore Woodward, visiting Iowa this weekend for the "World's Biggest Beach Party" at Williamsburg.

But "Little Old Lady From Pasadena" is also a registered trademark — and the name of an enterprise — for Dr. Don Altfield, now of Pacific Palisades, Calif., a co-author of the song.

Altfield, who was on hand for Woodward's arrival Thursday at the Cedar Rapids Municipal Airport, said he was in medical school with Jan Berry (of Jan & Dean) when he came up with the idea for a song based on a line used by California used car salesmen.

"They'd say the car used to be owned by a little old grandmother from Pasadena who only used it to drive to church on Sunday," Altfield said. "I just inverted the phrase from 'grandmother' to 'little old lady' to turn her into a hot-rodder, the 'terror of Colorado Boulevard.'"

Jan & Dean's single, "The Little Old Lady From Pasadena," cracked the nation's Top 10 almost exactly 22 years ago. It hit No. 8 on the music surveys for the week of July 11, 1964. And it's selling copies again — discovered by a new audience.

Now Altfield is getting ready for a movie based on the character. It's tentatively scheduled for release at Christmas in 1987. Filming starts next March.

Altfield, by the way, practiced medicine until he left Hawaii in 1979 to sponsor a music contest.

"I'd call up people and say I was a doctor, and they hung up the phone," Altfield said. "When I said I was co-author of 'The Little Old Lady From Pasadena,' they'd invite me to the house, tell me, 'Come to supper, meet the kids.'"

SUCH IS fame. But Lenore Woodward, 71, looked as if she could handle fame as she met the knot of reporters and photographers at the airport.

Wearing pink high topped basketball shoes with black laces, a black flowered print dress with a white lace collar, a pink knit shawl, and topped with a black pillbox hat, she posed on the leader of Iowa Citian Jim McFall's customized '34 Ford Coupelet and later answered questions in the shade of the terminal.

A grandmother of two, Woodward has been "The Little Old Lady From Pasadena" for the past 1 1/2 years.

Actually, she's a part time newspaper reporter who no longer gets really involved in a story. "Heck, no!" she grinned.

"I was working for the Pasadena Star News. They called me up and told me there was a 'Little Old Lady From Pasadena Contest' and they assigned me to cover it and write the story. So I wrote the story." She also entered the contest and won.

The contest was held at the Sheraton Hotel in Pasadena and attracted a lot of media attention, Altfield said, along with a parking lot full of cars.

Woodward, meanwhile, won't say what kind of car she drives (in the song, it was a "brand new, shiny red superstock Dodge"). But she can boast a nearly flawless driving record — just a ticket for an improper turn 20 years ago.

And she really is from Pasadena (but was originally from somewhere in the Midwest).

She's been all over the country since winning the title, appearing at car shows and other events.

AT THE World's Biggest Beach Party "The Little Old Lady From Pasadena" will be the official hostess for the "Little Old Lady From Iowa Contest" at 5 p.m. Saturday. The winner — selected from contestants from across the state — will be judged on audience appeal.

The rest of this weekend's "Beach Party" events:

SATURDAY — Parking lots open 9 a.m., exhibits and concessions and beach games open 11 a.m.

12:30 p.m. — Hot Rod, Chevy Keys and the Feedback Band

1:15 p.m. — Hot Rod, Chevy Keys Contest, open to kids under 12.

1:30 p.m. — Johnny Tillotson.

2:00 p.m. — Gen. Tony Branstad and opening ceremonies.

2:45 p.m. — Tommy Roe.

3:45 p.m. — Classic Songstman Contest.

4 p.m. — The Ventures.

5 p.m. — Little Old Lady From Iowa Contest.

6:15 p.m. — Jan & Dean.

To 8 p.m. — Kibitzin, concessions, beach games (volleyball, tug-o-war, foot, soap, dice). Check at information booth for exact listing of beach games. For register by calling (815) 888-2542 or register at the information booth at 11 a.m. Saturday.

SUNDAY — Parking lots open 9 a.m., exhibits and concessions and beach games open at 11 a.m.

12:30 p.m. — BETZ.

1:40 p.m. — Hot Rod, Chevy Keys Contest, open to kids under 12.

1:45 p.m. — Hot Rod, Chevy Keys and the Feedback Band.

2:45 p.m. — Lightest Part of Legs Contest.

3 p.m. — Gary Lewis.

4 p.m. — Wickedest Touch of Girls Contest.

4:15 p.m. — Ventures.

5:15 p.m. — Ho-Mat and Wonder Woman Contest.

5:30 p.m. — Jan & Dean.

To 8 p.m. — Exhibits and concessions open. Beach game winners announced.

NOTE: Some contests are subject to change. Times, arrangements, and rules will be posted at the information booth.