

# Decorating her home— a continuing project for artist housewife



View of the entry hall of the Aljian home from the living room. Garfield looks right at home in the classic surroundings.

By CORINNE ABATT

**T**he Andrew Aljian family of Birmingham has been living in their Norman-style home with two-story living room, beautiful natural woodwork and casement windows for seven years.

During all of those seven, Mary Aljian has been actively decorating the home both inside and out. While running the home and family, which includes two active sons, Matt, 10, and Andy, 13, she has been carrying a full schedule of classes at Oakland University and hopes to complete her degree in fine arts at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit.

Only the distance between here and Lansing stands in the way of her long-term goal to earn a degree in landscape architecture.

Her interests in the arts and landscaping are everywhere evident in the home which she said reflects "what we are."

Mrs. Aljian's Welsh background is the basis for her fondness for Gaudy Welsh china. She has used the colors typical of it, brilliant reds and blues with splashes of gold, as the basics in the living room.

But choosing colors to work from was the beginning of what has become a continuing and welcome search for interesting pieces.

Mrs. Aljian said, "I go to garage sales, antique shops and stores. I read the want ads. I don't think I'll ever finish decorating, but if I do, we'll probably move, because the fun will be gone."

The bright Gaudy Welsh colors pull the large living room together. With other than these, the high ceiling room with an abundant supply of dark wood trim and paneling and the two-story fireplace wall might look like an empty castle.

Each piece in the living room, accessory or major item, was chosen for what it could add to the room and say about the occupants.

The ornately carved Scotch cornice board, Mrs. Aljian regards with particular fondness because not only does it symbolize a part of her heritage, it is large enough and well-positioned to bring down a ceiling "that would otherwise float off the room."

Two small rugs that her husband's father brought back from Armenia happen to have the brilliant colors she likes so well plus standing as meaningful examples of Andrew Aljian's Armenian forebearers.

The Oriental-type rug in the cen-

ter of the room has the same warm, dark blue in it as the couch and it will stay until the perfect Oriental rug shows up to take its place.

It took her several years to find just the right patterned fabric for the table covers. She first found a picture of what she wanted and later found the real thing through a Birmingham decorator.

She explained with a smile, "The Garfield bust is there (in a corner against natural wooden paneling) for no reason at all except that we thought the living room needed a bust." Since Mrs. Aljian looks for interest and quality rather than particular periods, she doesn't hesitate to mix her treasures, regardless of birthdate.

The living room is on a lower level than the main entry hall, and the two are separated by a wrought iron railing. In the living room under the railing is an in-laid Regency sofa covered in orange-gold. It leads the eye through the rail to the hallway where one corner houses a fine Biedermeier armoire that serves as a hall closet for coats and hats.

It was only when she first looked at the Biedermeier piece that Mrs. Aljian knew she had found just the right one for her hallway, and it took several years to locate it.

Because she is an artist who plans to complete a degree in painting, Mrs. Aljian arranges accessories into artistic units.

Two antique lady's fans are displayed with a collector's plate that has a hand-painted fan design. Two old-fashioned umbrellas are at home in a hall umbrella stand of their vintage. Several pieces of cloisonne will be grouped to show off the intricate workmanship in the Chinese art.

The landscaping, most of which Mrs. Aljian planned herself, again shows her more than superficial interest in the subject. She plans carefully for color, contrast and continuous blooms from early spring to late fall. Her taste for the unusual shows up in the choice of a camperdown elm in front which she said will probably not reach maximum beauty for many years.

As a veteran volunteer on school site committees in Birmingham, Mrs. Aljian said, "I buy all my annuals and perennials from the school plant sales every spring."

The vast array of colors outside, like the brilliant touches inside, are the striking brushstrokes which Mrs. Aljian applies to the white stucco backdrop for warm and dramatic effect.



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The cover color photograph of the living room of the Aljian home was taken by staff photographer Dick Kelley. This home furnishings section was compiled and edited by Corinne Abatt. Keith LaRouchelle was art director and Margaret Shateb, special sections coordinator.