

Franklin couple celebrate 60th anniversary

By JOE MARTUCCI

When it comes to having roots in the community, Art and Cora Kreger of Franklin may hold a record.

The Kregers, possibly Franklin's best-known couple and the longest continual residents, last week celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

What makes the milestone even more noteworthy is that the Kregers still live in the same, immaculate Greek Revival farmhouse on Scenic Highway where they began married life in 1918.

The couple's roots in Franklin go back much farther than that, however.

Mrs. Kreger, for example, was born and raised in the old Shirley Farms house on Wing Lake Road. Her forefathers were big landholders, owning much of the land now within village borders.

Mrs. Kreger's grandmother, Mrs. John German, was the second owner of the Daniel Broughton House, where village officers and the police department are now situated. Mrs. Kreger's mother was married in the parlor of the house.

The Kreger's house is believed to be 130 years old. It was given to them then newly married couple in 1918 by Mrs. Kreger's father, C.W. Johnston. Both of the couple's children were born in the house.

Despite its age, the house is a showplace—a tribute to the care bestowed on it by the Kregers.

"CONSTRUCTION was my business," said Kreger, who still holds a builder's license. "We've been very careful when we've remodeled the house or added on to maintain the same style (of architecture)," he said. "I've built quite a few homes and I like rejuvenating places. I'd rather make a home for somebody than just a house."

If there's such a thing as a patriarch in Franklin, Kreger fits the bill. He built many of the homes still standing in the village and has been active in community organizations.

He was among the founders of the volunteer Franklin Community Association, which was formed before the village incorporated to give residents some say in governmental decisions affecting them.

The still-vigorous Kreger was honored recently by community association officers, who made him an honorary lifetime member of the civic organization.

Kreger's been active in the Franklin Cemetery Association, and he's still president of the group's board of directors. Founded in 1925, the cemetery association gave rise to many other volunteer activities in the village and also served as the basis for early social life in the village.

The community association, volunteer fire department and volunteer police department were all offshoots of the cemetery association.

Kreger also served for several years as village building inspector and, during the 1930s, was a member of the local school board.

In those days, schools were under county control. Kreger helped set up the system that allowed Franklin children to continue past eighth grade by paying tuition and attending high school in Birmingham.

Kreger's also been involved in youth work, serving as president of the Birmingham Hi-Twelve.

BORN in Royal Oak, Kreger moved at an early age to his parents' 90-acre farm near Maple and Adams in Troy—where Pembroke school is now.

His grandfather, William Mills, farmed land that boasted a tollgate at the corner of Fourteen Mile and Woodward. Every traveler using the road had to pay two cents.

Although now both in their 80s, the Kregers have given no thought to moving to a warmer climate. Their weekly list of activities includes bowling with a local church group.

"We like it here," Kreger said. "I've always enjoyed changes in the season, and my wife and I are both perfectly happy to stay here and be a part of Franklin."

"If you think you're young, that's what's important."

What they miss most from the old days—when Thirteen Mile was a path in the forest—is the camaraderie and neighborliness of a farming community.

"It was just a beautiful place to live," Kreger said.



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Simms Elementary School in Southfield has been chosen to test a program to get youngsters to read more. Reading is Fundamental (RIF), used in schools across the country, features book-related activities and free distribution of inexpensive paperback books to students taking part.

The program was kicked off at a student-author reception earlier this month at the Southfield Public Library. During the reception, parents were able to view children's books on display and pick up more information

on the RIF program.

Classes will be visiting the library regularly during the course of the program, including the summer months. Special buses will pick up children at Simms and take them to the library for Summer Reading Club programs and to circulate books.

RIF is partially funded by the federal government which matches funds put up by the district. Funds in this case were appropriated by the Simms Elementary School PTA and the Friends of the Southfield Library.

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