

# Famous hall was his home

Thursday, January 10, 1980

(F)13C

"I was never overwhelmed by living in Meadow Brook Hall. I thought that was the way everybody lived."

Dick (Richard) Wilson, the adopted son of John and Matilda Dodge Wilson, soon learned differently. However, he still maintains his love for his childhood home.

"My greatest joy at Christmas time is seeing Meadow Brook all decorated. I really think it is a unique house and should be enjoyed for generations. Lowell Ecklund and Margaret Twyman have done a terrific job running Meadow Brook," he said.

ADOPTED by the Wilsons at Chicago's famed Grade adoption agency when he was 1 1/2 years old, the youngster was joined by an adopted sister, Barbara, a year later. Both children were adopted, Wilson said, at the urging of Frances Dodge, Mrs. Wilson's daughter by automotive pioneer John Dodge, her first husband.

"Barbara is now living in Scottsdale, Ariz.," her brother said. "She has five children." Wilson is the father of four children by his first marriage. They are Larry, 28, with whom he will start the L & R Plumbing Co., in January, and Barbara, 26, named for his sister; Linda, 24, and Patti, 20. All are now living in Florida.

"At the age of 50, I'm starting a new decade in life," he said. "I became a grandfather two months ago and I'm starting a new career with my granddaughter's father, my son Larry."

Frances Dodge was 17 and her brother, Danny, was about 14 when Dick was taken into the Wilson home, he said. The four youngsters got along

well, Wilson noted, despite the age difference.

"I remember Danny putting me in a car and racing around the driveway at Meadow Brook and telling me 'hang on tight, Dick,'" he said.

Wilson describes Danny as a brilliant man who formed a diesel company before his death on his honeymoon.

"MOTHER WAS never the same after Danny's death," he said. "His casket was displayed on the stair landing and his funeral was held on Meadow Brook grounds. There were 28 days of mourning for him. His bedroom was padlocked for 10 years after his death, after which I was moved into it."

"Frances had her doll house and Barbara and I had ours, too," Dick said. "It was what is now the starter's shack on the university golf course. We played there a lot since we had nobody else to play with."

Watched over by governesses, the children took riding lessons at a young age. "Frances always loved horses," Dick said, "and with her own funds from the Dodge estate supported her own stable."

In later years, Wilson said, Frances owned a horse farm in Lexington, Ky. She and her second husband, Frederick Van Lennep, also purchased the Detroit Race Course in Livonia.

"I HAVE MANY Christmas memories," Dick stated. "I remember Frances and her first husband, Jim Johnson, pulling up to Meadow Brook on Christmas morning with a horse and sleigh full of bags of gifts."

"I can also remember having Christ-

mas dinner at the big table in the hall's dining room. There was a big sleigh in the center of the table with three strings attached for each child. After each course, we children would pull a string and find a gift on the end."

Mrs. Wilson was very active in the Salvation Army and the Denby Home for Orphans on Detroit's west side, Wilson said. "We would go to the orphanage on Christmas Eve and watch a play put on by the children and have cookies and milk. Mother would always take gifts for the 50 or 70 kids."

Returning home, he recalled that the family decorated the ceiling high balsam tree in the "right corner" of the living room.

"THE TREE ALWAYS touched the ceiling," he said. "Mother would stay up until four or five in the morning wrapping gifts. She also addressed by herself the 1,500 Christmas cards the family sent out each year. We were never allowed to go to the third floor where the wrapping took place."

Wilson also remembers going with his sister Barbara to downtown Hudson's to buy Christmas gifts for all the farm's employees. They were accompanied by a governess, of course.

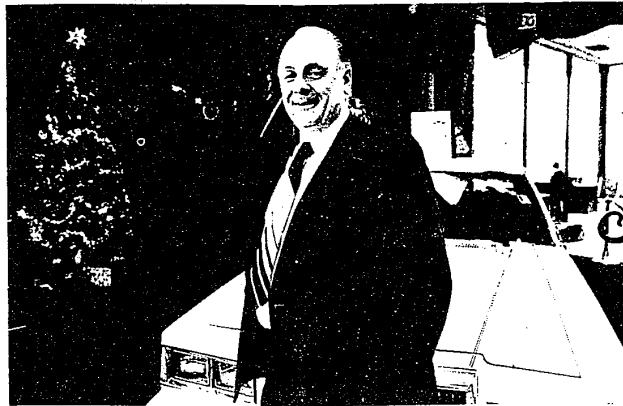
As a child, Wilson attended Brookside School for four years, then Vaughan School for the fifth to eighth grades. He remembers the Wilson's eight-door station wagon chaffering the Vaughan football team to the school games. Later he graduated from Culver Military Academy in 1947, then went to Connecticut Westland College for two years. He returned to Michigan

to complete a degree in agricultural economics at Michigan State University in 1951.

"I was to manage the Meadow Brook farm," he stated, "but married a girl of whom my parents disapproved. So I set out on my own."

SINCE THEN HE has held several different positions. A couple of years ago, he explained, he moved to Florida with his second wife, Jane, where he bought into a printing business. But, "I became so lonesome for Michigan we came home."

Dick still owns an antique toy dump truck his grandfather, Samuel Wilson, who was a Presbyterian minister, gave him. "It carried dirt and had a steering wheel and was big enough for me to sit in. I've repaired it and it is still in my basement at home," he said.



Dick Wilson, adopted son, remembers early Christmases at Meadow Brook Hall where dinner was served at the big table in the hall's dining room.

Ladies ... Men ... Enroll Now and Save!

## Special PRE-OPENING CHARTER Rates

available for a Limited Time!

Silhouette / American HEALTH SPAS

PREVIEW CENTER Now Open!

30000 Telegraph and 12 1/2 Mile  
Open Daily 10 to 10 • Phone 356-6700

Phase 5 Charter Memberships are available!

Save 30%

... on Charter Preferred Renewable Memberships. Phase 5 charter renewable membership rates now average only \$3.50 per week on 24-month pre-opening special prepaid cash rate. Regular rate \$5.00 average per week.

shape up free!

Hurry! Enroll now and in addition to money-saving rates, you'll receive unlimited FREE use of our other Spas until our new Telegraph Spa opens. This exclusive offer available only to residents E. of Novi Rd., N. of 8 Mile, W. of Southfield to 15 Mile to Woodward. So drop in! See the new \$1,000,000 Spa we're building in the Bloomfield/Birmingham area featuring luxurious swimming pool, whirlpool, sauna, fabulous fitness equipment, and more!



## La-Z-Boy® SHOWCASE SHOPPES

### JANUARY SALE AND Clearance

January is bargain month at each La-Z-Boy Showcase Shoppe—it's the month for us to balance inventories and it's the month for you to cash in on tremendous savings. Not only the listed chairs at right are in the offering but numerous "1 or 2 of a kind" at even greater reductions.

All chairs include La-Z-Boy's famous lifetime warranty on mechanism.

SAVE AS MUCH AS \$120.00 OFF OUR REGULAR LOW PRICE

MICHIGAN'S LARGEST SELECTION OF LA-Z-BOY® CHAIRS & SLEEP SOFAS



### TREMENDOUS SAVINGS SAVE \$60 to \$120

Many below listed chairs are fresh from the cartons—some styles and some fabrics have been discontinued and must be sold at once to make room for 1980 arrivals.

DISCONTINUED STYLE Big, plush, contemporary style LA-Z-ROCKERS® with large comfortable saddle arms. Rust acrylic velvet. Showcase Price each \$239.95 11 units available

Clearance \$179.95

DISCONTINUED STYLE Luxurious contemporary RECLINA-ROCKERS® with flared arms and magazine pockets. Choose brown napa/velvet, gold or rust geometric print acrylic velvet. Showcase Price each \$339.95 12 units available

Clearance \$229.95

DISCONTINUED FABRIC Classic traditional tapered back RECLINA-ROCKERS® upholstered in long wearing scotchgard nylon velvet. Select green, gold or beige. Showcase Price each \$309.95 24 units available

Clearance \$209.95

DISCONTINUED FABRIC Plush, flip pillow back RECLINA-ROCKERS® Transitional design covered in durable scotchgard nylon velvet. Choose green, gold or dark brown. Showcase Price each \$359.95 39 units available

Clearance \$239.95

DISCONTINUED STYLE Large, upholstered wing back colonial style RECLINA-ROCKERS® Box pleat skirt adds to this rustic design. Available in green scotchgard nylon velvet only. Showcase Price each \$319.95 10 units available

Clearance \$239.95

DISCONTINUED STYLE Slimline contemporary RECLINA-ROCKERS® accented with oak arms and wings. Stacked pillow back adds to this modern design. Select gold or green plush scotchgard nylon velvet. Showcase Price each \$349.95 11 units available

Clearance \$249.95

ALL CLEARANCE CHAIRS SUBJECT TO PRIOR SALE

La-Z-Boy® Factory Authorized Showcase Shoppes

OF METRO DETROIT