One man's goal

Creating pleasant places for people motivates Yamasaki

By KATHLEEN MORAN Troy editor

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His buildings have changed the skyl-ines of cities from New York to Los Angeles and in countries from Japan to Saudi Arabia.

Angeles and in countries from Japan to Saudi Arabia. But it isn't the resulting fame and recognition that drives architect Minoru Yamasaki. It's his all-consuming love of people and of architecture. In everything he designs, whether an apartment building or the famed World Trade Center, his brilliance is seen in creating bright inviting places in which people can work and socialize. "Buildings ought to be more human—more inviting and friendly," said the Troy architect. "They should be pleasant places which give you a feeling of comfort and happiness."

His philosophy is reflected in the pools and public gardens around buildings like the McGregor Memorial Center built in 1958 at Wayne State University.

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The challenge for Yamasaki is not just to design buildings that provide 2.8 million square feet of office space — as was his assignment with the Century Plaza Towers in Los Angeles. The challenge was to provide 'pleasant' offices and reserve enough of the small site for gardens and outdoor gathering area. After months of wrestling with that assignment, Yamasaki literally dreamed up the solution. He advanted in the state of the

PEOPLE ARE EXTROVERTS," he said. "That's one of the nice things about life. They like to meet other people and talk. It's unfortunate that cities haven't been planned better to give people more places to go to enjoy nature." "PEOPLE ARE EXTROVERTS," he

are. Architecture is the ideal profession, Architecture is the ideal profession, said Yamasaki. "An architect gets involved in the emotional side of life," he said. "The environment for me is home for everyone. Nature is the most beautiful thing we have. It must be incorporated into what we do."

Meet the Artist

Frank Lohan

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In his recently-published autobiography Yamasaki notes how an architect's sob is much more than designing a foulding for a client. "A general assessment of what I have learned in my practice is that the purpose of architecture is to create usable, livable areas where man can lead his life both productively and happily ... the architecture we design should give man an aesthetic, emotional fulfillment, so that when he goes from home to work or to other activities, he can anticipate with pleasure his arrival at his destination."

As if it's an obsession, Yamasaki talks about what the world could be like if people would take time to enjoy heeping ear driven by morey and material things," he said. "It kind of makes me sick. There are so many beautiful things in-nature to enjoy, These are the things that bring happiness.

HIS APPRECIATION of nature and

HIS APPRECIATION of nature the "simple pleasures" may have been heightened by his life's experiences. Born in Seattle, Wash., in 1912, Yamasaki enjoyed the beauty of the forests and mountains, but also encountered the discrimination directed at the

tered the discrimination directed at the "mise," alganese-Americans.
His most polgnant experiences with discrimination occured while he was working his way through the University of Washington architectural school. The young Yamasaki spent summers working in the soulor of salmon canning factories in Alaska, where the filth, hunger and exploitation of Japanese laborers; left scars on his memory.
"I had never experienced anything like the drudgery, harshness and seeming dehumanization of the working conditions at the canneries," he states in his book.

at the canneries," he states in his book.
"But the lessons of those summers, plus the repugnance I felt for the way we employees were exploited; conjunced me that, under such oppression, I could not live with any degree of personal pride, or inspire those whom I was associated with to perform and achieve to their capabilities. This has remained the touchstone by which I have guided my life, my career, and my own office."

YAMASAKI'S ARCHITECTURAL career began in New York City, but he moved to the Detroit area to work for

Smith, Hinchman and Grylls. Once in this area, Yamasaki found the Japa-nese weren't welcome in Birmingham or Grosse Pointe. Instead, he'moved his wife, Teruko, and three children to a farm in Troy, where they lived for 27

ears. Later he found Birmingham eager to

Later he found Birmingham eager to accept the office of the then-prestigious architect — and he didn't experience discrimination in 1972 when he built a home in Bloomfield Hills.

His Troy office on Big Beaver was built in 1987, reflecting his attitudes about employees. The office is bright and cheerful with rooms looking our over trees and flowers. He has kept his staff at 80 — a manageable and personal size.

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When his small firm was selected for the \$280 million jbb of creating an office could be selected for the country of the country of the per and the country of the co

of world trade to this country ... and become a physical expression of the universal effort of men to seek and achieve world peace."

He decided the 14 blocks which surrounded the site would be better consolidated into one 17-acre parcel in which small streets could be loosed off and a wider perimeter road constructed to facilitate traffic flow.

The two 110-story buildings featured technological achievements of which Yamusaki is proud. The Virerandeel trusses which were tused in construction of the c which wilder period on an article of which yamasaki is proud. The Vierendeel usses which were used in construction of exterior of the buildings as well as shock-absorbing materials, mean that the buildings will sway only eight inches in a 100 mile an hour wind—almost an insignificant amount. While the top floors of other New York high rise buildings. Which is the prevention of exterior of the buildings as well as shock-absorbing materials, mean that the buildings will sway only eight inches in a 100 mile an hour wind—almost an insignificant amount. While the top floors of other New York kight rise buildings and evacuated in strong winds, that hasn't been the case in the World Trade Center very sear."

ALTHOUGH YAMASAKI is soft spoken and friendly, he also can be stub-horn. His insistance that the foundation for the World Trade Center building be sufficiently as the world trade Center to the world trade Center to the world trade center of the state of th

several months. "They finally said, 'Yama's not going to change his mind, so we'll have to find a way," he laughed. The result was the discovery of a method for dredging out the foundation without allowing the excavation to fill with water. It also resulted in adding three floors of hadly-needed basement space to the structures. The other innovation invalided at

ings, he said.

Although the architect looks back on the trade center with a feeling of pride, he can't name a "favorite building."

NEXT IN LINE, at the moment, is the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agent bead office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, scheduled for completion in 1981, that structure. Vymasaki sought rollef from the intense sunlight and attention assisted and the structure in which the structure in the struct NEXT IN LINE, at the moment, is

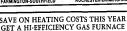
from the congregation must have pull with the government," he said.





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