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Meadow Brook readies for the show

by LETHA D. WILLIAMS

Meadow Brook Hall's country estate atmosphere intrigues Jack Parish.

"Each room has its own personality, it's own spirit," the Doll Hospital and Toy Soldier Shop owner said.

Parish will join nearly 30 florists, specialty shop owners and special exhibiting groups in decorating the Avon Township Tudor-style mansion for the 10th annual Christmas Walk. Thousands are expected to tour the 100-room estate Dec. 3-8.

Walk proceeds will be used to preserve the former home of Alfred and Matilda Dodge Wilson. Now a designated historic site, the \$4 million home is a conference and cultural center for Oakland University.

Last year, the walk attracted 17,000 visitors and raised \$90,000 to preserve 50-year-

old Meadow Brook Hall. Staff members say some of this year's proceeds will be used to repair chimneys throughout the home.

Each exhibiting group will decorate a specific area of the home. Some were invited back from previous years while others, like David Schroeter, will tackle the project for the first time.

SCHROETER owns Schroeter's Flowers and Gifts in Farmington Hills. He will use mostly greens and fresh flowers to decorate the front entrance and hallway leading to the hall's lavish Great Room.

"My work will be the first thing they (the visitors) will see," the 19-year-old said.

Schroeter's Flowers and Gifts is a small family business, opened 10 years ago by Schroeter's mother. Although he's participated in state fair competition, Schroeter finds the Meadow Brook Hall display particularly challenging.

"There are so many thousands of people who go through," he said. "I've never done any decorating like this."

Like Schroeter, owners of Blossoming

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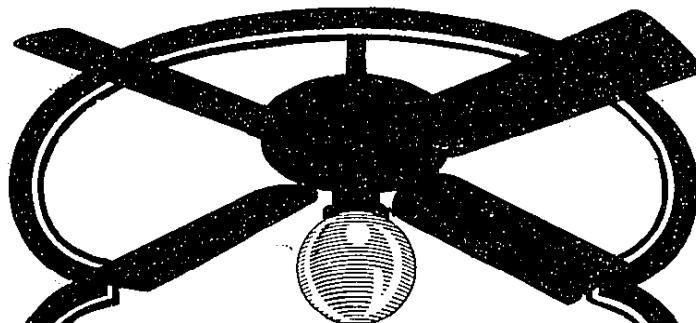
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