

'Friends' group bolsters restoration

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

The Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Affleck house of Bloomfield Hills, is undergoing careful restoration with strong support from the recently organized Friends group.

Under the leadership of Ivabell Harlan of Bloomfield Hills, the Friends of the Frank Lloyd Wright/Affleck House, have undertaken a fund-raising campaign to raise \$16,000 for repairs to put the house back into top notch shape.

Among the projects, some of which are already underway under the guidance of Dr. Earl W. Pellerin, chairman of the restoration work committee are repair of cracked glass and leading forms in the skylight, repair of cracks in the cement floor, repair of outside decks, siding refinishing and replacement and sash replacement.

In addition, the wood paneling throughout the house is being stripped and refinished or replaced.

The man doing a major part of the repairs is Ron Kelly who came here from Kalamazoo where he worked on all restoration projects on all eight Frank Lloyd Wright houses in that area.

Kelly and Pellerin, retired dean of the Lawrence Institute School of Architecture and a student as well as acquaintance of Frank Lloyd Wright, share a great deal of knowledge about the man who had such a major influence on American design and architecture.

THE AFFLECK house, which Wright designed for the late Gregor and Elizabeth Affleck, was completed in 1941. It was given to Lawrence Institute of Technology and its School of

Architecture in 1978 by the Affleck children, Mary Ann Lutomski and Gregor P. Affleck.

Saying that the Affleck house cost about \$20,000 to build (not counting furniture or lot), Pellerin recalled, "Wright told the Afflecks to 'find a lot that nobody else wants' and give me a complete survey."

Pellerin added, "In this difficult site to work with, the original price was amazing."

He said Wright liked the challenge of unusual sites plus the savings which could be made on the purchase of lots which others considered undesirable.

Pellerin said, "In considering the site, Wright considered not only the land and the sun, but the prevailing winds. . . His use of architecture, light and art in combination — it's a philosophy he carried out in all his houses."

Kelly explained that the Affleck house is a Usonian house, a word which Wright coined and which refers to the last great period of his work. It is a way of building a structure in harmony with the site.

Pellerin said of Wright, "After designing these remarkably large houses, the Depression came along. He built the Jacobs house in Madison, Wis., for \$5,000. . . and he built a system of ideal houses which the average family could afford."

Wright devised a system for very modest houses, "usonian automatic" which could be loosely described as an early "do-it-yourself" house.

Kelly, who worked on usonian automatic houses in the Kalamazoo-Galesburg area, said they were built of four foot concrete blocks which were poured on the site with holes so



Ivabell Harlan of Bloomfield Hills, a strong supporter of the arts, heads the recently organized Friends of Frank Lloyd Wright/Affleck House.



Ron Kelly, on the stepladder, gives Karl H. Greimel, dean of the architecture school of Lawrence Institute of Technology, an on-the-site progress report. They are in the atrium of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Affleck House, which Kelly is working on now. Greimel was instrumental in arranging the gift to the school from the Affleck children.

Wright authority to speak at LIT

The first project planned by the Friends of Frank Lloyd Wright/Affleck House will be 3-5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 11 in the architectural gallery and auditorium at Lawrence Institute of Technology, 21000 W. 10 Mile, Southfield.

The display will feature large photographs depicting the history of the Affleck house shown on multi-screens along with a display of Wright including samples of the china which Wright designed for his Imperial Hotel in Tokyo.

This will be followed by a talk by Dr. Leonard K. Eaton, professor of architecture, University of Michigan, author of four books and countless articles and reviews of the history of art

and architecture. He did his undergraduate work at Williams College and received his master's and doctor's degrees from Harvard.

One of Eaton's books is "Two Chicago Architects and Their Clients: Frank Lloyd Wright and Howard Van Doren Shaw," M.I.T. Press, 1969.

There will also be a tour of the newly acquired Albert Kahn Library. The \$5 per person charge may be applied toward a membership in the Friends if desired.

For reservations, call 356-3138 no later than Sept. 8. The Friends will also host a tour of the Affleck house sometime in October.

they could be attached after they were stacked like Leggo blocks.

HE POINTED out that the concrete floors of Affleck house are arranged in four foot squares, a measurement modulate which Wright favored.

In the master bedroom Kelly demonstrated some of the hidden features which Wright often included and which Kelly described as "very subtle elegance" — a small dressing table with a hidden storage area underneath, with three full length, vertical mirrors on the wall.

The two outer mirrors are hinged to the center one with piano hinges, (which Wright also used on the skylights) and can be adjusted so a person can have front and back views at the same time. Behind this wall is a large closet, which isn't apparent at first either.

Kelly recently removed, repaired and replaced all of the skylight windows in the atrium type hallway, so now they are completely leak proof.

Other special things about the Affleck house which make it special, Kelly said, are that Wright specified not just cypress, but Tidewater cypress, which isn't easy to find for replacements. And only screws, no nails, were used in the construction.

Harlan said there will be many educational and cultural uses for the house once restoration is completed. She said that in addition to serving as a teaching resource for local and national architecture students and a place for lectures and seminars, "We expect to be able to make it available for tours by interested community groups."

Speaking with her on the Friends board of governors from Bloomfield Hills are: Mr. and Mrs. Gregor P. Affleck, John M. Harlan, Dr. and Mrs. Karl F. Lutomski, Chester F. Malby, Howard Lawrence Preston, Mr. and

Mrs. Melvyn Maxwell Smith and Mr. and Mrs. David A. Stulberg.

From Birmingham, those on the board are: Karen Knudsen, Joyce H. Scott, and Mr. and Mrs. John C.S. Street. From Southfield, the board members are: John I. Bloom, Earl W.

Pellerin and Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert B. Silverman along with Mr. and Mrs. Anthony C. Gholz Jr. of Troy, Mr. and Mrs. William B. Palmer of Ann Arbor and Louis G. Redstone of Detroit.

Those interested in joining the Friends of the Frank Lloyd Wright

Affleck House or helping with the restoration should call, Ed Darling, coordinator of the campaign, at LIT, 356-3138.

Darling said there is a particular need for garden club people who would like to take on the lawn and plantings as a special project.

Close harmony

Community Chorus tunes up for its 21st year

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

The Oakland University Community Chorus, just may be the most dependable institution around these parts.

What begins its 21st consecutive year Tuesday, Sept. 13, on the Oakland University campus, its director, John Dovorras, will be starting his 18th year with the group which has any number of "firsts" it can call its own.

Dovorras said, as far as he knows, this community chorus is the first of its kind in the area. Now, he added, there are at least six, but none of these has affected the membership which is usually around 100.

Among the other firsts are a number of premieres of choral works, one of the most memorable of which was "The Gates of Justice" by Dave Brubeck, done in 1969 with the Dave Brubeck Trio, and the composer himself at the piano.

BRUBECK is one of many musical greats members of the Community Chorus have crossed paths with over the years. Dovorras said, adding names such as Aaron Copland, composer/conductor; Sisten Earling, conductor; McHenry Boatwright, bass; and Alan Hovansky, composer.

Dovorras said toward the end of the semester, he combines the Community Chorus with the Oakland University student chorus for final rehearsals as a major presentation which this time will be the Dec. 3 concert featuring Peter Menzies' cantata, "The Christmas Story" along with a Christmas carol singfest.

During the winter semester, the two choruses together will join the Pontiac-Oakland Symphony in two performances of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana," April 7 in Clarkston and April 8 in Orchestra Hall, Detroit.

The Oakland Community Chorus will also participate in the Contemporary Music Festival, April 15, performing the cantata, "A Day in Our Land," by David Ammann with the Pontiac-Oakland Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer.

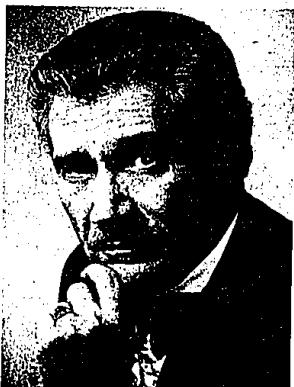
Dovorras said of combining the generally older, more experienced voices in the Community Chorus with the talented, young student voices, "You know, it's been compatible from the very beginning."

One source of pride for Dovorras has been that the repertoire for the chorus is always from the standard choral classics, "We don't mix in contemporary or show tunes and I'm proud of that."

THE SIZE of the enrollment and the people who sign up year after year adds credence to his belief that there's a place for pure classical choral works.

When Dovorras conducted the chorus for the first time in concert in 1965 at Christ Church Cranbrook in 1965 for a performance of Bach's "Magnificat" one of the violinists was Ida Kavafian, a seventh grader — the same Ida Kavafian who was guest soloist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at this summer's Meadow Brook Music Festival.

In the chorus for that ambitious Bach work were three singers who still sing with it, Ed Bondy of



John Dovorras said singing societies in this country date back to the Pilgrims. His Oakland University Community Chorus is making its own niche in history as it starts its third decade.



photos by ANOIE MCKINTYRE/staff photographer

Singing family

Five members of the Frank Irwin family of Avon Township will be returning again this fall to sing in the Oakland University Community Chorus. They are (standing from left): Frank Irwin, bass, Sylvia Irwin, soprano and Michael, 28, tenor. Seated are Mary, 24, soprano, and John, 21, baritone. Frank and Sylvia Irwin, who have two other sons, also are regulars in the choir of St. Andrew Catholic Church of Rochester. Mrs. Irwin said they continue in the Community Chorus because they all love to sing, and John Dovorras, conductor, "has been an absolute pleasure to work with." The three young people pictured are all active in the Rochester Jaycees. Mary is president of the Jaycees.