

Roof leaks at memorial prompt lawsuit

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

A lawsuit has been filed in Oakland County Circuit Court against the architect and contractor of the 2½-year-old Holocaust Memorial Center in West Bloomfield charging design and construction defects. But the defending architect maintains the leaks in the roof of the memorial are caused by new construction of a garden at the adjacent Jewish Center which is directly over a portion of the sub-surface Holocaust Center.

"All of those leaks were corrected," architect Leonard Siegal said, "but what has happened is over the winter significant construction was done on the Garden of the Righteous."

The garden is constructed at ground level in the area to the west of the Holocaust center doors along the hill which links it to the Jewish Community Center.

THE SUIT was filed April 23 on behalf of United Jewish Charities, the non-profit organization that raised the money to build the \$5 mil-

lion museum and library, seeking to force the architectural firm of Siegal, Tuomala and contractor Cronk and Tocco to fix a leaking roof and the damages it has caused.

A tour Monday led by the center's director, Rabbi Charles Rosenzweig, showed peeling ceiling plaster, ceiling tile stains, walls with calcified dripping deposits, stained carpets, soggy drywall and a single photo exhibit which has fallen from the wall.

"Every time there is a heavy rain, the ceiling leaks," Rosenzweig said. "It is not a dangerous situation. The television stations erroneously gave the impression that the center was falling down, that the place was sinking. It's not, but there are problems."

The problem has existed since the building's completion in 1984, Rosenzweig said. He is concerned that more of the exhibits themselves will be ruined if the situation continues.

Doug Busbey, attorney for the center, said the lawsuit was a last resort. "If we could've solved this short of litigation, we would've."

FRANK GALGAN, attorney for

the general contractor, said his client had assumed all repairs had been made successfully, and has had no communication with the center since December.

"The problem may be a rooftop garden they've installed with limestone monuments," Galgan said his client advised the center to check with the architect when he discovered the garden on the roof.

"The roof is sturdy. It's five inches of concrete, but you can't put the Eiffel Tower on it. If there's a problem it's probably because of it." The garden, he said, could be putting stress on the area, disturbing the waterproofing system.

"They've got a problem and they're trying to find someone to blame."

SIEGEL SAID Cronk and Tocco paid for another roofing contractor to repair routine leaks and that was assumed all problems were resolved.

He said a 1983 letter to the rabbi cautioned against heavy construction on certain portions of the roof. "It shouldn't have been done before we were consulted. We were not consulted."

"I don't know who authorized the garden or who signed the complaint, but if it's the same person he should be suing himself."

The center documents the murder

of six million Jews and the destruction of 4,500 European communities by the Nazis between 1933 and 1945. It also highlights the culture and history of the Jewish people.

More than 250,000 people, most of them non-Jews, have visited the center in the first two years of operation. Admission is free. A \$100,000 annual state grant helps defray the

cost of operation. Statewide, this week has been proclaimed Holocaust Remembrance Week, with the official celebration planned for today.

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