



The rear of this Farmington Hills home built in the late 1960s employs many of Whiting's concepts, particularly the spectacular use of nature both within and without the glass-framed house.



The interior of the home demonstrates the use of space, while the wide sweeps of glass bring nature inside as the owners desired.

Architect leaves legacy of beauty and function

By LYNN ORR

The legacy of Farmington architect Hal Whiting, who died at the age of 60 last November, is statewide.

Many Farmington residents are aware of Whiting's structural contributions to the area: The First Farmington Savings and Loan on Orchard Lake Rd., the Christian Science First Church of Farmington on Grand River, the addition to the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Farmington on Halstead, and a multitude of residential homes in the area.

A functional and economical use of space and a love of nature characterized the buildings Whiting designed in over 30 years of work. Much of that work was done in Farmington where Whiting had been a resident since 1946.

But his concepts spread to other areas including Friends School on St. Aubin, Joe Muer's restaurant on Gratiot; the Ponchartraine Wine Cellar on Larned in Detroit; Fabriteel Products, Inc. in Southfield; many of the Butterfield theatres across the state including the Campus Theatre in Ann Arbor; and private homes in Bayview,

Crystal Lake, Indian River, and Traverse City in northern Michigan.

"AN ARCHITECT cannot create out of the times in which he lives," Whiting told his friend and neighbor Lee Peel. But that statement could be applied only in a broad time perspective to much of his work, which reaches back to Stouffer's restaurant on Washington Blvd. in Detroit.

"That was his first big job," recalls his widow Jane. The success of that job for the Carnegie Institute graduate led to more Stouffer's work in Philadelphia, New Jersey and the Eastland restaurant in Michigan.

His early commercial designing was done employed with an architectural firm, including a string of Butterfield theatres and the interior renovation of Joe Muer's.

In 1946, he struck out on his own. "He always had his pockets full of little stubs of pencils," Mrs. Whiting said. The pencils transferred ideas to paper, and ideas are what Whiting carried to his work.

"If you knew exactly what you wanted, Hal would say you'd already

designed it—you didn't need him," says a longtime friend Keith Willoughby, a 29-year Farmington resident.

Design was his major interest, which didn't prevent him from relating function to lifestyle.

"Because he was so interested in people, he was more receptive to their needs," said Mildred Willoughby. "When he designed, you suggested things you would like, but he had pure control."

"As an artist, he had to be free to do the things he liked."

WHITING designed two homes for the Willoughbys, one in Biddestone subdivision in 1957, and then a few years ago, their present home in Traverse City.

The Farmington home relates to the woods around it, with a glass wall that allows nature indoors, Mrs. Willoughby explains.

"It's a fun house, and Hal was completely responsible for the concept. He knew we loved nature and wildlife, and it was his way of bringing the outside in," Willoughby adds.

Every client was an individual with individual needs, just the way every piece of ground was different, Mrs. Whiting explains. Coordinating the needs, grounds, and function into an aesthetic form was Whiting's major accomplishment in his work, Willoughby believes.

Whiting-designed homes do interesting things with space, and the Willoughby homes aren't exceptions.

"You walk in and never know until you get in the house what's going to be there," Mrs. Willoughby said.

"The spatial quality in every house is a delight," Mrs. Whiting added.

George and Hope Nahstoll's Farmington home, built in 1962, is a good example of how Whiting combined the needs of the client with form and surprise.

"IT FITS LIKE a glove," says Mrs. Nahstoll, long associated with the Farmington Players and American Association of University Women (AAUW).

"We like to have a party at the drop of a hat," she explains. With that thought in mind, plus several maga-

zine clippings of homes the Nahstolls liked, Whiting came up with an unusual concept—a basically rectangular simple house from the outside that reveals a dramatic living room and balcony den.

The east end of the main floor is devoted to a double height living room raised from the dining room adjacent to it. The dining room, with sweeping windows showing the foliage outside, is lined with a window seat on one side and a raised fireplace hearth on the other.

Taking a cue from the farmhouse the Nahstolls previously owned, the kitchen became a part of the entertainment area in the Whiting design, so Mrs. Nahstoll isn't isolated during her preparations.

ANOTHER FARMINGTON home captures the intimacy and privacy prized by its owners. A quarry-tiled floor, a Whiting trademark, cathedral ceiling and walls of glass, an abundance of built-in birch cabinets and shelves for a book collection, and recessed lighting all contribute to a tight use of space.

"On the lower level, you feel you're

on the ground. In the living room, you feel like you're in the trees," the owners say.

Whiting built his own home in Farmington in the mid-fifties, using the same concepts he brought to other homes in the area.

"He always designed the shell of the home and figured out where things went inside," Mrs. Whiting said. "He knew how every house would work. This is true of this house as well as the others."

"Hal always said this house was Victorian, the same kind of vertically—high ceilings and long windows."

Like many of his custom homes, landscaping is restricted to natural surroundings without lawns and many levels of ground with railroad tie steps for the walker.

With an interest in Greek Revival architecture, he designed an "Old Michigan Farmhouse" for Betsy Northrup in Norville.

"It was fun for him to do because he liked the period," Mrs. Whiting recalls.

COMMERCIALLY, Whiting was (Continued on page 15A)

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

"HERE IS a gem that ought to make your day the next time you sit down to have a piece of cherry pie. Michigan is the largest tart cherry producing state in the nation. For the seventh consecutive year, the Michigan Crop Reporting Service will measure the size of the state's tart cherry crop. The winter wonderland produces 76 per cent of the total U.S. crop in 1977. The 1978 production estimate will be released on June 22. You can bet, the INSIDE ANGLES will pass on that information."

"WATCH OUT, air travelers. Motorists traveling to Detroit Metropolitan Airport should avoid westbound I-94 between Beech Daly and Merriman now and both east and westbound I-94 in that stretch beginning April 24. The Automobile Club of Michigan warns that you could miss your flight by being stuck on that stretch of road because of delays ranging up to one hour because of construction."

"KRISTI ANN KUSHNER, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kushner of Farmington, will be off to Washington DC, May 4-6. The 11-year-old Grace Elementary School student will be taking the trip thanks to the Automobile Club of Michigan. The patrolmen are scheduled to meet U.S. Senator Don Riegle (D-Michigan) and take part in a national rally and parade during the trip. They also will tour the White House and Capitol building."

"INTERESTED IN SCIENCE? The Detroit Science Center now is open to the public six nights a week, Tuesday through Sunday, 7:30 p.m. Evening showings of the film, "Cosmos" in the Science Center theater are at 7:30 and 8:30 p.m. Science Center daytime hours are Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. The center is located at the corner of John R and E. Warren, Detroit. Admission is \$2 for visitors 6 and older. Persons under that age are admitted for \$1."

"IF YOU'VE always wondered what the state capitol is like, wanted to be a drug investigator or a fire training coordinator (whatever that is), now is your chance. The Michigan Department of Civil Service is accepting applications for those jobs until May 1. No specific experience or education is required of people interested in obtaining a position as a capitol guide. Minimum qualifications for those interested in applying for drug investigator are one year's experience as a state investigator, including investigations of violations of the Controlled Substance Act, or three years of recent law enforcement or criminal investigation of the Controlled Substance Act. The fire coordinator position requires either a minimum of three years' experience as a firefighter and a bachelor's degree, or five years of experience as a firefighter

an associate degree in fire science and technology, or seven years' experience as a firefighter, two years of which were spent as a firefighter trainer. Happy job hunting."

"LOVE BOAT FEVER seems to be hitting the area, since the television program of the same name has hit the airwaves. The Birmingham Community House has planned an 11-day New England coast cruise. The Community House, in conjunction with the Grosse Pointe War Memorial, has reserved all staterooms aboard the American Cruise Line Independence. Mark it on your calendar, the trip is Aug. 19-29. Reservations are being accepted at the Community House, 644-5832."

"THE BIG GAME obviously is in the eyes of the beholder. Take DAVE WEINER, for instance. The youngster gave us a call the other day, collect no less, from Farmington Hills' Hillel Day School to let us know that the sixth and seventh graders will be competing in a baseball game on April 30 at 12:30 p.m. The competition will be at Eagle Elementary School. Lemonade will be offered at 10 cents a cup. All proceeds will go to the Holocaust Center in Farmington Hills. Dave warns us to bring a blanket in case we've got to sit on the grass."

"THINKING about doing some work on your beach or out in the water in front of your Michigan lake or river property? You should know that almost any work you plan to do beyond the "ordinary high water mark" and some kinds of work above that line, require a permit from the Department of Natural Resources under the Inland Lakes and Streams Act or the Great Lakes Submerged Lands Act. If in doubt as to whether your proposed project fits under either of these laws, you should ask the Department of Natural Resources first before proceeding. Proceeding without a permit can be costly, and could involve you in needless expense and delay. You could even be required to undo what you have already done."

"BARBARA STEVENS of Farmington Hills won a top award at the 38th annual Block and Bridle Club Horse Show conducted recently at Michigan State University. Stevens, a sophomore majoring in animal husbandry, took first place in the hunt seat equitation event. The event required her to run her horse through a series of paces which were judged by how well she rode and controlled her horse. A 1976 graduate of North Farmington High School, she is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stevens, 33154 Gary Drive, Good riding, Barb."

Don't forget. Drop us a note at INSIDE ANGLES, P.O. BOX 49, SOUTHFIELD 48037.

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