Eklund marks 25 years at OU

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

Lowell Eklund never expected to spend 25 years in one job.

"It's too long for anyone to be in one place," insists Oakland University's director of continuing education, who just started his 26th year on the Avon Township campus.

For Eklund, though, staying put sure didn't mean standing still. In 2½ decades, the Bloomfield Township resident has seen both the university and his division change completely.

Today, 10,000 people pass each year through OU's continuing education courses or conferences. The offerings range from plastics engineering and legal assistance to creative writing and sewing.

As well as on campus, the credit and non-credit courses meet in 10-12 satellite locations in area high schools. They also are offered in historic Meadow Brook Hall, which has become a passion with Eklund since he took over its management in 1970.

But when Eklund first arrived in Oakland County on July 1, 1958, Oakland was just a fledgling extension of Michigan State University

Eklund's MSU boss Durward Varner — who became OU's first head — sent him to the outpost to "get some activities going."

"I was sent there to launch a program," said Eklund, who had been in charge of MSU's Detroit extensions and then ran the school's conference programs out of Kellogg Center.

Working out of converted chicken coops on Meadow Brook Estate, Eklund and fellow MSU employee Roy Alexander opened up an extension offering some non-credit courses. One of the first was efficient reading, which attracted OU founder Matilda R. Wilson.

"She came and sat through the classes in her little old chicken coops. The press got quite a kick out," recalled Eklund, adding that the chicken coops had ceramic tile up the wall and a reinforced concrete floor.

ON THE WAY to a job at Chrysler Corp., Eklund stopped off in East Lansing to visit MSU's John Hannah. The university president suggested Eklund talk to another administrator and within two weeks he signed on at MSU instead.

"I never had reason to regret that decision," said Eklund, who admits the opportunity was "strictly happenstance and a little providence."

For Eklund, who doesn't like to teach, the job in continuing education was a chance to do the kind of thing he's interested in in education.

"I enjoy administration and the mission objective of continuing education to motivate adults to go back to school," said Eklund, who sees Michigan State as one of the "classic pioneers of all time in continuing education."

Eklund said the continuing education idea didn't really take hold until after World War II, with the need for more technical and professional education.

"It became obvious that what we learned in high school and college just wasn't enough," Eklund said. "Universities began offering technical and professional courses and cultural education so people could become better citizens and parents."

Original offerings were classes like efficient reading, management, personnel relations or in the areas like engineering and business education.

As well as a bachelor's of general studies degree for non-traditional students who usually attend part time, the division offers credit and non-credit areas in a wide range of areas. Some of the newest are legal assistance, computers, accounting assistance and quality assurance.

Eklund's expertise in the field got him appointed by former president Jimmy Carter to the National Advisory Council on Continuing Education

WHILE OVERSEEING continuing education programs, Eklund in 1970 took on another area which has become a prime interest. He became executive director of Meadow Brook Hall, the stately mansion which Matilda Wilson bequeathed to OU.

DAVID FRANK/staff photographer

Along with running Oakland University's many continuing education programs, Lowell Eklund oversees historic Meadow Brook Hall. The Avon Township showplace is now self-supporting through conferences, special events and tours.

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Ethan Allen crescent shaped sofa. Beautiful brown quilted fabric. Brown with melon accents. Reg. $1375, Sale $688.

Traditional Tuxedo arm style sofa.Reg. $1199, Sale $838.

Traditional sofa. Quilted fabric, beige background with floral print. Reg. $1099, Sale $668.

Roll arm lawson sofa with beige country print and bordered skirt. Reg. $899, Sale $620.

Traditional sofa and matching love seat. Tuxedo style, brown quilted fabric with floral and butterfly print. 2 pcs. Reg. $2298, Sale $1598.

3 traditional loveseats. Values to $1140, 50% Off.

Hendredon traditional multi pillow back sofa. Extremely comfortable. Reg. $2324, Sale $948.

Henredon wood frame French style sofa. White floral print. Reg. $2429, Sale $999.

Cane back occasional chair. Antique white frame with brown velvet upholstered seat. Reg. $379, Sale $199.

Ethan Allen wing chair. Salmon floral with green accents, contrasting green velvet outside back. Reg. $799, Sale $488.

Harden tub chair on castors. Coral textured fabric. Reg. $689, Sale $348.

Hendredon roll arm lawson styled sofa. Charcoal background with bird print. Reg. $2309, Sale $1288.

Henredon slope arm traditional sofa. Brown and coral print. Reg. $1951, Sale $898.

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Sherrill pub sofa. Navy textured fabric with beige wheat pattern. Reg. $1399, Sale $898.

Tuxedo arm sofa and 2 matching lounge chairs. Blue plaid. 3 pcs. Reg. $1788, Sale $1088.

6 pc Traditional modular pit. Beige with small diamond pattern. Reg. $3470, Sale $1999.

LaZBoy recliner rocker. Brown velvet. Reg. $493, Sale $299.

Blue velvet Barcolounger recliner. Wing style with Queen Anne legs. Reg. $660, Sale $449.

Ethan Allen solid pine recliner. Persimmon tweed fabric. Reg. $491, Sale $298.

Ethan Allen all upholstered recliner. Brown tweed stripe. Reg. $503, Sale $298.

Queen size sleeper sofa. Beige textured herculon fabric. Reg. $1199, Sale $839.

Camel Back queen size sleep sofa. Beige crewel like fabric. Reg. $1199, Sale $839.

Genuine leather sofa. 80" tufted back and seat sleep sofa. Reg. $2400, Sale $1388.

Top grain leather lounge chair that reclines. Reg. $1399, Sale $788.

Henredon genuine leather tuxedo style sofa. Crimson leather. Reg. $3495, Sale $1899.

Harden Wing chair. Soft celedon print with salmon accents. Reg. $915, Sale $598.

Ethan Allen Mister and Mrs. chair. Green print with coral accents. 2 pcs. Reg. $1449, Sale $988.

60" Camel back loveseat with Queen Anne legs. Teal flamestitch fabric. Reg. $1495, Sale $898.

73" Harden 18th Century Chippendale sofa with fret work on legs and cross stretcher. Cream ribbed fabric with slate blue pattern. Reg. $1582, Sale $1098.

Pair of wood trim occasional chairs. 18th century style with coral fabric. 2 pcs. Reg. $1228, Sale $798.

5 pc. Rattan grouping. Sofa, love seat, cocktail table, sofa table, and end table. Reg. $2713, Sale $1888.

OCCASIONAL PIECES...

Henredon drop leaf Pembroke lamp table. Reg. $651, Sale $298.

Assorted bleached oak Queen Anne living room tables. 40% Off.

2 Rattan like etageres. Open with glass shelves. 2 pcs. Reg. $716, Sale $449.

Bisque finish 45" lighted curio cabinet. Fret work on doors and glass shelves. Reg. $2500, Sale $1588.

Light fruitwood ladies desk with satin inlay on doors. Reg. $1150, Sale $798.

Hekman 30" 2 door curio cabinet with lighted interior. Fruitwood with gold trim. Reg. $1913, Sale $1328.

Trend solid cherry floor clock. Bonnet top. Reg. $1744, Sale $988.

Howard Miller cherry floor clock with matching burl overlays. Reg. $1530, Sale $888.

Solid cherry curio. Adjustable shelves. Queen Anne style. Reg. $689, Sale $478.

8 panel black oriental screen. Imported and hand decorated. Reg. $5995, Sale $3988.

Sligh Limited Edition secretary desk. Crotch mahogany, fruitwood finish. Reg. $3334, Sale $2333.

54" Canted side credenza. Antique white with antique yellow trim. Reg. $899, Sale $499.

Nostalgia Golden Oak ice box. Reg. $599, Sale $399.

Century country french window chest. Fruitwood top with antique white trim base. Reg. $1099, Sale $599.

Sligh 36" open bookcase with storage base. Reg. $899, Sale $499.

Tudor Manor 30" wall unit. Open top, drawer base. Reg. $700, Sale $499.

Henredon dropleaf secretary with bow front. Fruitwood burl with satin wood inlays, lighted interior and glass shelves. Reg. $4018, Sale $2999.

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BEDROOM...

Solid brass full size poster bed. Dent in one post. Reg. $2390, Sale $999.

Ethan Allen cherry door chest, night stand and queen size headboard. Reg. $2984, Sale $1388.

Ethan Allen Painted CRP 7 pc. group. 2 twin size spindle beds, 1 drawer base, 1 door base, 2 glass door tops, and 1 corner piece with storage drawers. Reg. $2367, Sale $1649.

Ethan Allen Classic Manor 5 pc. group. Triple dresser, mirror, door chest, night stand and queen size fretwork bed. Reg. $3608. Sale $2488

Henredon Folio 15 bedroom. 74" Bombay dresser, mirror, armoire, night stand and king size short canopy bed with lights in canopy. Reg. $8970, Sale $5488.

DINING ROOM...

5 pc. Rattan dinette. 42" glass top table with 4 arm chairs. Reg. $527, Sale $369.

Mobile server. Parchment finish with accents. Top opens with laminated serving surface. Reg. $999, Sale $688.

Solid cherry 5 pc. grouping. Oval extension table, 2 arm chairs, and 2 side chairs. Upholstered seats. Natural. Reg. $2970, Sale $1688.

Ethan Allen cherry dining room group. China, oval extension table, 4 side chairs with cane backs and upholstered seats. Reg. $4088. Sale $2848.

72" Mahogany buffet. Center puts out to be an extension table, extending to 86". Reg. $2380, Sale $1388.

Ethan Allen pine 6 pc. dining room group. 48" round pedestal table, 4 mates chairs, and 40" dry sink. Reg. $2248. Sale $1548.

Ethan Allen mobile tea cart. Maple decorated top accented with off white decorated base. Reg. $439, Sale $298.

Shaker style dark pine dining room group. Buffet with open top, oval extension table, 4 side chairs and 2 arm chairs. Reg. $3799, Sale $2288.

Hickory American Masterpiece oval extension dining room table. Mahogany with satin wood border trim. Mark in table top. Reg. $1275.Sale $799.

Henredon Hampton Mews mobile server. Storage compartment in base. Top opens with laminated serving surface. Reg. $1399, Sale $799.

Ethan Allen Class Manor 66" buffet, rectangular extension table, 4 side chairs and 2 arm chairs. Reg. $3178, Sale $2148.

Henredon Pan Asian Parsons dining room table. 2 side chairs and 2 arm chairs. Reg. $4190, Sale $2498.

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Crystal bowls, 4 sizes. Reg. $21.95, $16.95, $26.95, Sale $15.00, $11.00, $18.00.

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Ceramic candle holders. Reg. $22.00, Sale $15.00.

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