

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1993

SUBURBAN LIFE

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THE SCENE



GRETCHEN HITCH

Patrons view Villa Baronna

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The ultimate Detroit Symphony Showhouse had its spectacular preview Oct. 1 with patrons first stopping at First Security Savings Bank to have cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and to catch the shuttle van to the palatial Villa Baronna. Co-chairwomen Lidija Grahovac and Carmen Dellas greeted arrivals at the foot of the winding staircase along with boutique chairwoman Patricia Auer and preview chairwoman Linda Piljan. People crossed the marble courtyard with its two two-car garages flanking the entrance.

On the lower level we met the owner-builder Jozef Gurka and architect-designer wife Vlasta Siler, both glowing with pride in their baroque creation of a French Chateau in Bloomfield Hills.

Gurka told us, "Once a year we build a spectacular house, showing our understanding of European culture." The couple fled Czechoslovakia when the Soviets came 20 years ago and moved to California. Gurka said that eight years ago they came to this cultural area of Bloomfield Hills and Grosse Pointe, where where people would appreciate historic and classic architecture, European style.

Gurka observed, "We are two parts—my wife the designer is Czech and I am Slovak." The builder was a professor of engineering at Slovak University, while his wife Vlasta had lived in Prague and holds a master's degree in architecture.

The Gurkas live in Bloomfield Hills and built the Villa Baronna on speculation at a cost of more than \$2 million. Gurka said, "For us, this is a hobby." They seek to keep traditional design in architecture and craftsmanship of detail in their constructions.

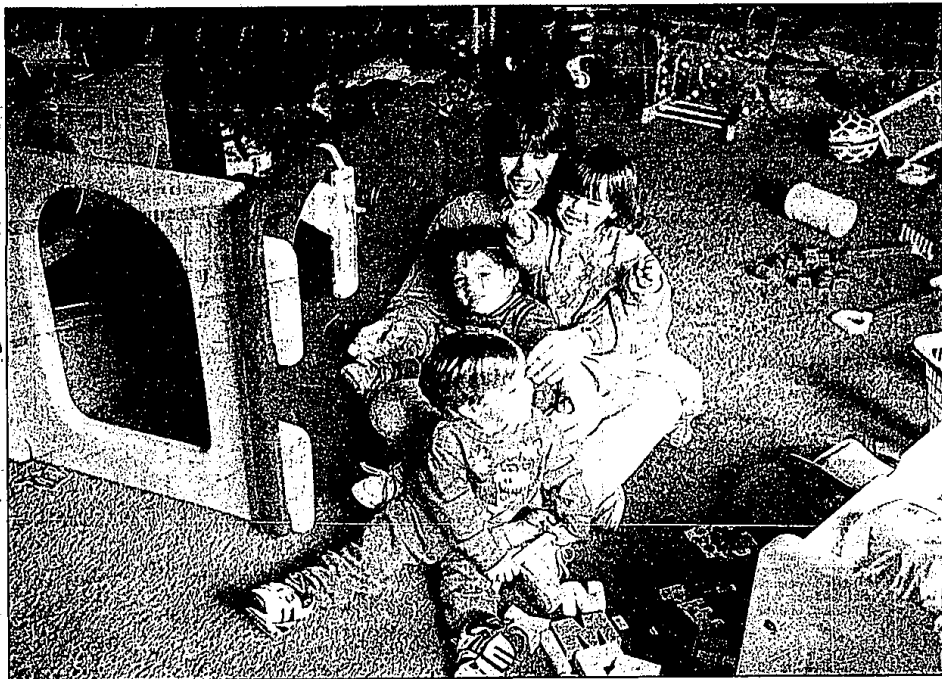
In Europe, only aristocrats such as barons can live in a home like this, but in "open" America, anyone who has the money can live in traditional classic beauty.

Earlier at the bank reception, we met Dr. John and Annette Ballan of Rochester, who were talking with Dr. Reza Mohajer about his recent letter from President Clinton.

Mohajer, a gynecologist who practices at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, wrote to the President saying he could save the United States \$1 billion a year with his own pap smear test, which he calls Cell-Sweep. The margin for error is zero, the doctor attested. There have been news and television stories on the high margin of error under present testing for pap tests. It had taken three months to get an answer to his letter, but it fits into the President's health care reform, said Mohajer.

We ran into Gudrun Letica—who with her husband is building a magnificent home in Bloomfield Hills on Island Lake—with her daughters Mara Letica and Suzanne Letica Hogan and her granddaughter Kate Johnson. Mara had been named Ambassador to Yugoslavia under President Bush, but that appointment was over when Clinton was elected.

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JOE RIDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Playful kids: Dianne Raftopoulos of Rochester Hills has her hands full with 2½-year-old triplets Andrew (clockwise), Nicole and Regina. She jokes that she stands a lot because when she sits down she gets "attacked."

Mothers of multiples

Area moms see double, triple or more



Having more than one new baby in the house can be a real challenge. Some moms belong to a support group, the Greater Oakland Mothers of Multiples, where they can get advice and share their experiences in child raising.

BY ETHEL SIMMONS
STAFF WRITER

Taking care of one baby is enough to put a new mother in a whirl. But when it's double, triple or even more births at one time, moms really need to know how to cope.

The strategy of Dianne Raftopoulos of Rochester Hills is to keep laughing, although she says that sometimes she finds a private place and screams. It's hard to imagine this when you talk to Raftopoulos, who has a ready smile and a cheerful response to her 2½-year-old fraternal triplets.

On a recent afternoon, Andrew,

Regina and Nicole clambered over play equipment and had fun with other toys they had strown in the big family room. Mom, who works at home as a graphic designer, sat down with the visitor and declared, "It's an experience. They keep me running all the time. If it's not one, it's someone else. One instigates the other."

There was no sign of kids behaving like the "terrible twos," an age level where children are traditionally thought to really act up. The triplets played together harmoniously, and Andrew laughed out loud from time to time.

3 little helpers

They plied the visitor with wooden puzzles, stuffed dinosaurs and other cuddly animals. They even handed her her coat and her umbrella, from the sofa, when she was ready to leave.

Raftopoulos said the toughest part of parenting triplets is "trying to keep them from fighting with each other, and trying to keep them out from under my feet. You miss one and turn around, and there's a baby!"

Their toys are always underfoot, and it's easy for her to slip on them. Also, as a means of self-protection, "I don't sit down a lot. I get 'attacked.' I stand a lot. It's safer."

But this mom (who is an identical twin herself) actually welcomes the trio's antics, having undergone in vitro fertilization at Benumont Hospital in order to become pregnant. She

knew triplets were on the way, about four weeks ahead of their birth.

Husband Andrew, who is a senior project engineer at General Motors Tech Center in Warren, helps the triplets' mom stay in good spirits. One day he brought home a little toddlers' creed that read in part, "I was playing with it. It's mine." She said, "That's definitely the stage they're into."

Last year, Raftopoulos joined the Greater Oakland Mothers of Multiples, Inc. (called GOMOMs "go moms" for short). She attends monthly meetings held at the Troy Community Center where mothers of multiples can compare notes on child raising and also hear speakers talk on a variety of subjects, such as a mother's mental health—how to take time for yourself.

See MULTIPLES, 2C

Headache sufferers find relief at leading pain institute

BY ETHEL SIMMONS
STAFF WRITER

Headaches—everybody gets them now and then. But some people suffer from them big time.

It's these people who may seek relief at the Michigan Head Pain and Neurological Institute in Ann Arbor, which has patients from throughout the United States and the world. "A recurring headache is a chronic illness and an underestimated public health problem," said Dr. Joel Saper, who directs the institute.

Patients referred by such prestigious medical centers as UCLA, the Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins are among those who are treated, either as outpatients or at an inpatient unit at the nearby Chelsea Medical Center.

Luckily, some of the institute's patients don't have to go, often being referred by doctors in the Detroit area. Nancy Viles of Troy, a school teacher; Keith Turner of Farmington, an engineer; and Ryan Carolyn of Birmingham, a high school student, are among people who get help for their headaches at MHN.

Nancy Viles, who teaches at Costello Elementary

School in Troy, started having mixed migraines in college. Her mother also suffered from headaches. "I don't think they had the information back then that they do now," Viles said. "My mother went to several doctors. They'd say, 'Take a couple aspirin.'"

Viles went through allergy testing and visited a neurologist but it wasn't until 1984 that she sought help from MHN. She's on two preventive medicines. "I have wonderful relief," she said. "I still get the headaches, but I have the pain relievers."

One headache trigger for her is changes in the weather in spring and fall. She believes her headaches also have a "hormonal quality, and stress plays a factor too."

He was hospitalized

Keith Turner, an engineer at Acme Manufacturing in Madison Heights, began getting cluster headaches in his late 40s. Each headache would last an hour and he would get a new one every two or three hours. Turner has been going to Dr. Saper for about a dozen years, and in 1986 his

See HEADACHE, 2C



GRETCHEN HITCH

Preview night: At the Gala preview night, co-chairwomen Lidija Grahovac and Carmen Dellas greet patrons for the Designer's Showhouse.