

Theirs Is a Life of 'Firsts'

By EVELINE OEN
Arts Editor

There's something about the Viking spirit—a certain boldness, a daring to launch out in new directions, to enter new areas. Somehow, this spirit, enriched with persistence, knowledge and ability, has—through Bloomfield Hills architect J. Robert F. Swanson and his wife, designer Pippan Saarinen Swanson—left a wake of accomplishments which includes Cranbrook, Oakland University and a string of "firsts" in the field of interior design.

THE TWO MET in Ann Arbor in 1923 when Swanson (who was born and raised near Grand Rapids) was finishing up work at the University of Michigan for his degree in architecture.

Enrolled in a class taught by then visiting lecturer and internationally known architect Eliel Saarinen, Swanson became close to the Saarinen family because he could speak Swedish. He was often called upon in class to translate or explain what the Finnish architect (who could not speak fluent English, but also spoke Swedish) wished to say.

SWANSON began working with the elder Saarinen (a pioneer in city planning) while still a student in Ann Arbor. One of the projects he worked on with him was the Detroit Civic Center plan; Mrs. Swanson also worked on the project.

The following spring, Swanson and Henry Scripps Booth formed a partnership and set up offices in what is now Brookside School. They began preliminary work on the Cranbrook School for Boys and Cranbrook Academy.

Both Swanson and Booth were instrumental in the establishment of Cranbrook and in persuading Eliel Saarinen to return to this country to work on it.

MR. AND MRS. Swanson were married in 1926; Swanson designed and supervised construction of their "honeymoon cottage," a red brick, castle-like structure on a pond-surrounded "peninsula" off Lone Pine Road.

"It was the first house built on Lone Pine between Cranbrook and

Franklin roads. The road was so bad and so narrow then that you could scratch your car on both sides at the same time," said Swanson.

SWANSON continued working closely with the elder Saarinen—at times in partnership, at times through his own firm with Saarinen acting as a consulting basis. Mrs. Saarinens, all the while worked (and still works) quietly in her own area—design of fabrics and furniture and other accessories.

AMONG THE "firsts" to the Swanson's credit are:

■ The first "modern" interior design office in conjunction with an architect's office (opened in 1929).

■ The first "modular" set of furniture (coordinated pieces of

various sizes which have a custom-made look when assembled) designed for Johnson Furniture Co. of Grand Rapids in 1939.

■ The first co-ordinated set of interior "decorations" (from rugs and furniture to glassware and lamps). The items, manufactured by about 20 different firms, went on sale in 1947. The project was of such magnitude that others had to be called in to help design some of the items.

"THERE WASN'T enough modern furniture (furniture which would be fitting with modern architecture) on the market, so we had to design some," explained Mrs. Swanson.

"Now there are many things of good design on the market, but there were not then," she said.

DURING THE war, Swanson did much work on government housing, along with Eliel Saarinen. Willow Run is one of their projects.

"We did all the planning for the town of Willow Run, housing schools—what's new town for 40,000 people had to be developed," said Swanson.

ANOTHER Saarinen-Swanson project was the General Motors Technical Center in Warren.

"In the spring of 1948, when we got to the point where we knew we'd win the war, we were called in by General Motors to submit plans for the Tech Center," recounted Swanson.

"We were given 90 days to come up with plans," he said, pointing out that four other leading archi-

(See SWANSONS, 5-D)



VIEWING SOME of the glassware designed as part of a complete group of coordinated accessories and furnishings put on the market in 1947 are Mr. and Mrs. J.

Robert F. Swanson of Bloomfield Hills. The architect and his wife supervised and did most of the designing for about 50 different objects, from rugs and draperies to lamps.



MRS. SWANSON, who has won several prizes in the field of textiles, has designed many drapery fabrics and rugs which can be used together. In this case they match. The drapery material is linen backed with rayon so that no lining is needed.

Choose Two from Cranbrook

Two students at Cranbrook Academy of Art have been chosen preliminary winners in the 1963 Sterling Today Student Design Competition. They are Michael Lackman, who is from Lansdowne, Pa., and Thomas R. Bambas of 1411 Chapin, Birmingham.

while providing the young designers an opportunity to work with the metal. Lackman made a set of cordial cups; Bambas, a pitcher. Their designs, along with those of five other finalists, will undergo final judging in New York City in September.

The annual event is sponsored by the Sterling Silversmiths Guild of America. It is open to students in design schools throughout the country. Its purpose is to encourage creative design in sterling silver.

Michigan has the oldest State Fair in the nation. This year's the 114th, will run from Fri. Aug. 23 through Mon., Sept. 2.

Long on Character And Short on Plot

Reviewed by CELLA COFFIN ALDERSON

An interesting evening in the theatre was recently provided by the newly opened Raven Gallery at 136 Brownell. Last week (Aug. 13, 14 and 15), the Raven Readers Theatre presented "The Theatre of E. M. Broner."

Mrs. Broner is the wife of Robert Broner whose work is currently being exhibited at the Raven Gallery. She received the first masters degree in creative writing ever awarded by Wayne University. Her play, "Summer Is A Foreign Land" was presented this past season by Wayne as part of the Detroit Arts Festival.

The plays performed at the Raven were all originals. It was their first performance anywhere.

WORKS FOR the Readers Theatre were in the style of dramatic readings and meant to be read from scripts.

It is a difficult medium to be effective in as no staging is involved and the emphasis is on words and the poetry of their meanings.

Mrs. Broner has made characterization her main concern, rather than plot. The emotional and psychological situations of her characters provide the stuff of drama.

FIRST IN THE evening was a series of conversations overheard on the buses of Detroit, "Bus Monologues."

Paul Winters, WXYZ disc jockey played "The Villagers" which was more of an exercise in writing than a composition for dramatic reading. Unfortunately, it was unenjoyed by the acting of Paul Winter.

Mariette Schwartz of summer stock background played "A Present For Mother's Day" she employed a delightfully authentic (See GALLERY, 8-D)

AT NEW GALLERY

Frenchman's Painting Is Subtle, But Bland

Reviewed by ILONA ALTHUISER WEISSMAN

The Kenilworth Gallery, a new comer in Birmingham, is presently exhibiting a small collection of oil paintings by Andre Gisson. This information sheet states that Mr. Gisson is a native-born Frenchman who now lives in upstate New York.

Gisson's works are well known to those who have frequented the art galleries of large department stores and interior decorating studios. His work has been displayed often in and around the Detroit area.

This PARTICULAR collection on view at the Kenilworth is typical of the style in which Gisson paints.

He derives his approach from the paintings of the 19th Century French Impressionists with their airy canvases and softly applied brush strokes.

Gisson's palette, though, is much

more subtle. His colors range from grays to pale blues and greens. His paints are thinly applied, giving a hazy and blurred quality to his works.

The feeling of atmosphere, air and light, which was an important concern of the Impressionist painters concerns Gisson also, but his interpretation is a somewhat bland one.

THESE PAINTINGS are primarily landscapes. The most interesting were the beach scenes, of which there were six on view.

Small, undefined figures play an important part in these canvases. The beach scenes are seemingly deserted with the exception of the few lone figures or groups of figures silhouetted against the gray skies.

Without these figures, the compositions would lose most of their interest.

IN THE landscapes with trees (See PAINTING, 4-D)

SING IN EUROPE

Four Return from Tour with Chorale

By GLORIA JESSUP
Special Writer

The Michigan Youth Chorale, sponsored by the Youth for Understanding teen-age exchange program of the Michigan Council of Churches, returned home last Thursday from its 1963 European tour.

Among this year's group were four local youths. They were Claudia Kesler, Marilyn Mitchell, Jere Stone and Lynda Weston.

CLAUDIA is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth L. Kesler of Safford Road, Birmingham. She graduated in June from Seaholm High School and will enter the Uni-

versity of Michigan this week and study music education.

Marilyn is also a graduate of Seaholm and will attend the University of Michigan this fall where she will major in music education. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John A. Mitchell of Longmeadow, Birmingham.

JERE will leave the latter part of September to begin his freshman year at Michigan State University. His major will be philosophy. He is the son of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Stone of Maple Road. He was also a June graduate of Seaholm High School.

Lynda is a June graduate of Bloomfield Hills High School. She

is the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Earl Weston of Forman Drive, Bloomfield Township. She will attend the University of Michigan, where he will major in vocal music.

THE TOUR consisted of 70 young people, eight staff members including conductor, Lester McCoy and Mrs. McCoy and Mrs. Rachel Anderson, executive director, and an accompanist.

They sang in England, Finland, Sweden, Holland, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Canada, giving 49 concerts in 50 days and 22 incidental performances, sometimes as many as three or four concerts on some days. They gave a special concert for

the president of Finland, sang in two cathedrals than any previous chorale, performed in old people's homes—and even in department stores.

THE GROUP was on three live TV programs and a prerecorded one in England. The chorale also sang on the radio in Sweden. Claudia, Marilyn, Lynda and Jere all reported that they were treated like royalty on their tour; they were treated like one of the family in the homes where they stayed. The families often would take the members of the chorale sight-seeing on tours of the countryside, to plays and to the cricket matches.

MARILYN related an incident with "her family." When they went to the cricket match in England, they took "tea" along with them since they would miss tea time home, she said. To her astonishment, they even took a table cloth and fragile tea cups. Lynda was rewarded with the (See CHORALE, 7-D)

Local Women Named to Top Opera Posts

The appointment of Mrs. Theodore O. Yntema of Bloomfield Hills, and Mrs. Lynn A. Townsend, of Birmingham, as general chairman and general co-chairman, respectively, of the 1964 Metropolitan Opera season in Detroit has been announced.

The appointments were made by Wilbur H. Mack, president of the Detroit Grand Opera Association, sponsors of the Metropolitan season. "We are very fortunate to have the activities headed by two such capable opera lovers and organizers as Mrs. Yntema and Mrs. Townsend. Their leadership of the women's committee and their responsibilities for ticket selling, promotion, opera education and a host of related activities will make it possible for thousands to enjoy the visit of the Metropolitan next May," said Mack.

MRS. YNTEMA served as chairman of the magnificent 1963 season. Mrs. Townsend now joins her in the top leadership, after having been co-chairman of the Birmingham-Bloomfield Hills Opera Committee (See WOMEN, 8-D)



EAGER TO POINT OUT to each other souvenirs from their recent tour of Europe are four members of the Michigan Youth Chorale. They are (from left): Lynda Weston, Jere Stone, Marilyn Mitchell and Claudia



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