

THE SAARINENS

An Artistic Family

By ELIZABETH VAN LOAN
Special Writer

Loja Saarinen (Mrs. Eliel Saarinen) is the widow of a world-renowned architect, the mother of another and an artist in her own right.

Mrs. Saarinen, a small, pretty woman with a sparkle that belies her 85 years, was born in Helsinki, Finland. She met her husband through her brother, Herman, also an architect who was in partnership in Finland with Eliel Saarinen.

Her son-in-law, J. Robert F. Swanson, and grandson, Robert Saarinen Swanson are both architects. Her daughter, Pipsan, is an interior designer.

IN HER DELIGHTFULLY-accented English, she said with a smile:

"With our family, it's a disease."

AMONG THE noted projects of her son, the late Eero Saarinen, and his associates are Dulles International Airport in Washington, D. C., General Motors Technical Center in Warren, the United States Embassy building in London and the TWA building at Kennedy Airport.

Mrs. Saarinen herself graduated from the Finnish Academy of Art in Helsinki. She studied sculpture at the Academy Colarossi in Paris where she was awarded a gold medal.

With her husband she collaborated in sculpture, interior design and town design, but is best known for her textile work. She founded the textile department of Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1928 and was head of it until 1942.

DURING THOSE years she executed numerous commissions, among them rugs for the Fifth Avenue shops of Richard Hudnut and Yardley's. The dining room of Kingswood School is graced by one of her tapestries.

She has held eight one-man exhibitions and participated in a score of others throughout the country and in Paris, at the 1937 World Exposition.

Her most recent creation is a 12 by 27 tapestry, a unique depiction of the Sermon on the Mount, which hangs in the Tabernacle Church of Christ in Columbus, Ind.

THE SAARINENS first came to America in 1923 when Eliel Saarinen won an international competition for architects and was invited by his colleagues to come to Chicago. At the end of six months, they were about to return to Finland when the University of Michigan asked Saarinen to take the post of visiting professor of architecture for a year.

One of his pupils was Henry S. Booth whose father, George Gough Booth, had long contemplated the conversion of his country estate in Bloomfield Hills to public educational use. He invited Saarinen to design the buildings; and so the talented family came to Cranbrook.

WHILE THE buildings were going up, Booth said one day to Mrs. Saarinen: "What are we going to do for rugs and textiles? Why don't you design some for us and let us send them to Finland where they do such beautiful weaving and have them woven on those looms?"

"Why not weave them here?"

countered Mrs. Saarinen. A loom was installed and Cranbrook's textile department was born. From this small beginning, the department grew to encompass 35 looms, three of them master looms, 12 feet in width, requiring the services of three weavers when in operation.

AT THE END of each school year, the Saarinens returned to Finland to spend the summer.

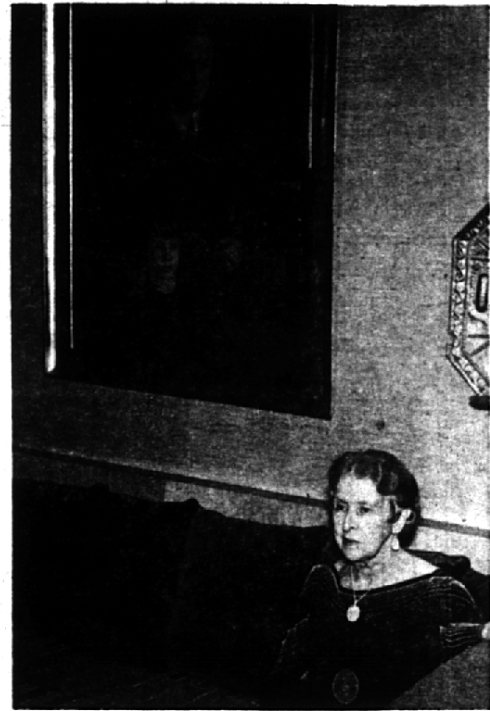
"I must have crossed the ocean 50 times," recalled Mrs. Saarinen. Many of Finland's noted artists, among them composer Jean Sibelius, were guests of the Saarinens at their large country home, Hvittraesk (White Lake), west of Helsinki.

With the advent of the Second World War and the Russo-Finnish War, however, they sold the property and thereafter summered on Cape Cod.

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Saarinen left Cranbrook and moved to a small one-level home on Vaughan Road, built just to her requirements on the old Vaughan homestead which the Saarinens had acquired in the early 1940's.

The beautifully decorated living room expresses completely the taste and personality of its owner.

A LARGE handsome portrait of her husband and son as a small boy, painted by Finnish artist Vilho Sjoastrom and set in a gold frame, faces the entrance and dominates the room. On either side of the portrait are large sconces from a medieval church in Karelia, Finland.



MRS. ELIEL SAARINEN
With portrait of husband, son.

A bust of her husband, executed by Mrs. Saarinen, stands on a tall pedestal. On the floor is another of her creations, a room-sized rug in beige and green.

One wall is filled with books, many in subdued red covers, the colors picked up by a tapestry which hangs on the third wall.

The south wall is all glass, overlooking a green lawn and the courtyard of her grandson's home. There she can watch her three great-grandchildren, Bing, Kippi and Peter, at play. Many happy hours are spent in sewing for them.

Last month, her daughter-in-law, Aline (Mrs. Eero Saarinen), arrived from the East and together they went to Columbus, Ind., for the dedication ceremonies of a church designed by Eero.

Hills Offers Private Schools For All Ages

From a nursery-school child to a handsomely uniformed young lady ready for college the private and parochial schools of the three Bloomfields run a gamut of fulfilling the educational needs of their children.

"I don't have anybody to play with," a universal childhood plea, was met by a few mothers who organized the Bloomfield (Cooperative) Nursery School in the early 1940's. For the past twenty years it has met daily in the rooms of Christ Church Cranbrook.

The mothers administer the business and assist the two paid teachers, Mrs. Virginia Adams and Mary Lou Smith. With emphasis on controlled free play the 24 three-year-olds and the 24 four-year-olds meet on a staggered schedule.

ECHO PARK Nursery-Kindergarten began three years ago when a few fathers purchased the Newcomb estate "The Junipers" in Bloomfield Hills.

With its 90 acres of woodland and three lakes a hundred and thirty small children are picked up by buses door-to-door and spend the morning in the largest nursery school in Michigan.

Under the leadership of Mrs. Florence Duhn and with Dr. James Neubacher as consultant "the curriculum is designed to prepare the pupils for a happy adjustment to elementary school."

Echo Park, a summer day camp attracts 400 children annually from 3½ to 17 years. The school and camp have a commitment to the township to eventually build an elementary school.

A PRIVATE CATHOLIC school, The Academy of the Sacred Heart, moved from Detroit to northern Bloomfield Hills on Kensington Road in 1958.

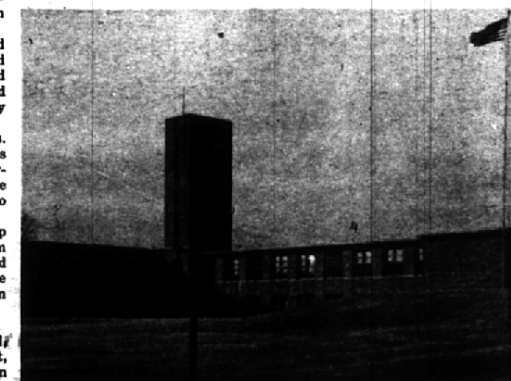
Don Ahrens headed the fund drive and launched the school under the leadership of Rev. Mother Superior Wansboro.

Two hundred and fifty girls only, except for kindergarten boys from upper and upper middle class area families use the school and its 32 acres for study, recreation and meditation.

Headed by mistress general Mother Bautz and 25 teachers, from the Community of Sisters and eight lay teachers the school is large, the girls wear uniforms and the atmosphere orderly.

St. Hugo Elementary School, a Catholic parochial school serving the St. Hugo-of-the-Hills parish, off Opdyke Road, was the gift of Walter Briggs of Detroit in 1941.

Six hundred sixty children from grades 1-8 attend classes under the leadership of the principal Sister Grace-Ellen and the Sister Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



ST. HUGO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
A 1941 gift of Walter O. Briggs.

BLOOMFIELD COUNTRY Day School for girls off Square Lake Road whose headmistress is Miss Marjorie Sallie devotes its curriculum to the college-bound student.

To insure individual attention for each girl the enrollment is restricted to a hundred students. Ninety per cent of the girls from 7th thru 12th grade go to college. In 1956 seven families established the school and it was built in 1959.

Presently a Finnish foreign exchange student and a German student teacher help to create an international academic exchange.

The creative development and encouragement of the gifted child with a minimum IQ of 130 is the prime function of the City and Country School of Bloomfield Hills.

FROM AGE three (nursery) to eight (kindergarten) the children are studied and trained to develop each potential skill to its utmost.

THE SCHOOL was founded in 1941 by George and Annemarie Roeper, who remain as headmaster and director. Founded in Detroit it moved to its present site on north Woodward in the Hills in 1946.

Fourteen acres comprise the property devoted to the daily activities of the 303 children enrolled. Scholarships are provided if financial help is needed for any gifted child qualified to enter.

Children come from as far as Dearborn and Grosse Pointe and next year a ninth grade is expected to be added.

THE WILL-O-WAY Apprentice

Stone Farm Home Date Uncertain

Mrs. and Mrs. George Seyferth have lived at 22030 W. Fourteen Mile Road for 22 years, in a lovely stone farm home. Except for a stone in the smokehouse which is dated 1872, the Seyferths have no clue as to how old their home is.

Mrs. Seyferth remembers an elderly neighbor who recalled watching the home being built. He spoke of seeing horses pulling the largest stones up ramps for placing in the walls.

MRS. HERBERT Masters of Ann Street in Birmingham lived in this home. Her grandfather, Daniel Bassett, farmed 160 acres at the corner of Lahser and Fourteen Mile Road, and her father, Frank Bassett, was born in the first home erected on this land. He would be 105 years old Jan. 1, 1965. She feels the present home was constructed soon after his birth.

She recalls the first house west of them was the Durkee farm. This home still stands at 23400 W. Fourteen Mile Road, but there is no

Theater School was started in 1940 as a playhouse by Celia Merrill Turner and her brother Bill.

In 1949 it was authorized as a trade school and theater. In 1958 it became a school and the enrollment remains at about 200.

The Turners believe in "learning by doing" and a visit to the school is both delightful and rewarding.

Surely the needs of the Bloomfield children now and to come are more than adequately met. Spiritually, knowledgeably, socially and physically the many schools provide all of these things.

As an added gift the human need for artistic expression is met in the theater school.

Hills Old Folk Not at 'Home'

The search for long-time residents of Bloomfield Hills led to Manresa Laymen's Retreat House, Quarton Road and Woodward Ave., as one of a dozen possibilities that had been suggested.

When asked on the telephone the age of the institution's oldest occupant, a youthful male voice answered: "Oh, about 29."

After listening to a flustered explanation and apology, the voice, now sounding younger than springtime, replied: "That's all right. Some people think we're a cemetery."

E.V.L.