

Life Lessons

Couple enjoys living in former one-room school

By **KEN THOMAS**
Home Living Editor

For many, being held back in the same classroom seems like a jail sentence. But for Patricia "Pat" Machkovech and Andy Kirchoff, living in the former Hyland Prairie School on Highway 33 has been a joy. In fact, Pat has been there for 44 years now, and moving to another classroom just isn't in the cards for herself and her long-term boyfriend.

The school hasn't changed much over time, with old fiberboard wall covering and ceiling tiles. A photo from 1954 shows students in their old wooden desks (the holes where they were screwed to the floor are still there, now hidden under a layer of plush carpet).

"They closed this school and built a new one on High Point Road," said Pat. "Daisy Jackson converted this into a home. My husband's mother bought it and her other son, Robert, lived here for a while. After Lenny and I got married we moved in, and that was in 1966."

Jackson had installed a second floor on the blackboard end of the room, with two identical bedrooms on the first floor and another bedroom (now Pat's workshop) upstairs.

"There used to be a library where the kitchen is now and there is a bathroom in the old coat area," Pat said.

In recent years Andy added sliding mirror doors to expand the storage capacity of the closets, and the kitchen and bathroom walls and ceilings were covered with a hand-tooled texture.

The walls are not insulated, but new windows have done a lot to make the home more comfortable. The windows are the same size as the old ones, but now have insulated glass.

"The old windows had little squares in them," Pat said. "We put these new ones in about three years ago, and it has made a huge difference in our heating bills. It was c-o-o-o-l before then."

Although most people would have used smaller windows, Pat was not the least



Pat Machkovech and Andy Kirchoff

bit tempted to do so.

"I love light," she said. "I wanted the windows to be the same size as they had always been. That was important. I wanted to keep the school as original looking as possible."

The original hardwood floors were covered after the birth of Pat and Leonard's children, Mary and Ron.

Carpet was a first step to warming up the place.

Another step was taken just two years

ago, when the huge original furnace was replaced with a new, high efficiency, one.

"Up until then all we had was a big grate in the middle of the floor," said Andy. "That grate really got hot."

"And all the warmth went upstairs," said Pat. "I had to keep the upstairs door closed to keep the warm air down here"

"When we changed the furnace, we put new ducts in each of the rooms, and kept the center grate for a cold air return," Andy said.

"Now I don't have to close any of the doors," Pat said. "It's so nice with the new furnace. I don't know how we lived without it for all those years."

Pat has let her decorating passion run riot, both inside and out. Her favorite colors are gold, white and black. Those colors, incidentally, make the spaces seem larger.

Furniture is best described as "contemporary," although she still has two bedroom sets from the time of her marriage. She also has an antique oak secretary from her husband's family which stands in the living room.

During the holiday season she embellished every surface with her artistry, and put up a 10-foot tree emblazoned with gold, bronze, silver and white ornaments. She added ribbons, flocked artificial twigs and white silk roses to the composition.

"I decorate everything," said Pat.

"All of the wreaths, inside and out, year 'round." I also make arrangements for people's homes and for special events. I've done weddings, anniversaries. I make corsages, bouquets and decorate the place where an event is held. I have done it all."

Her creations are self-inspired.

"It comes out of my head," she said. "I didn't go to school for it or anything. They say it's good for the brain to have a creative outlet, and that's what it is for me."

Storing supplies and the necessities of daily life might have been a challenge in

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such a compact space, but Andy has done much to remedy the problem. By installing shelves and utilizing every nook and cranny, he has overcome a major flaw in the compact house.

He jokes, however, that there can never be enough room to hold the supplies that make Pat's creations such a success.

"Every time I create space it gets filled," he said with a smile.

He is not without blame, however, as his collections take up a good deal of space as well. Along with bar mirrors and mugs, he also collects golfing memorabilia.

It is all displayed to best advantage, and is never cluttered or overwhelming.

Andy also has a talent for doing electrical work, and updated the light switches and outlets himself. The reason was simple - to prevent a fire.

Another display space is the enclosed front porch, which was added at some time in the school's more recent history. Although it is unheated, a new bay window and the wide steps are filled with seasonal warmth. There are two doors; one in the front for children to enter and one on the side to allow access to the playground.

The basement is also extensively utilized, with storage found abundantly there atop a vinyl tile floor. The room created by the removal of the old furnace has also been a big benefit.

With so much activity inside, the residents barely notice the traffic outside. Trucks from the Wal-Mart Distribution Center travel north and south on Highway 1A and Highway 33. The roads are busy most of the time.

The couple, however, barely takes notice.

"You live here so many years and you don't even hear the traffic, really," Pat said. "You don't pay any attention and you go on about your business. You don't hear it unless there's a loud bang or crash - which we do get once in awhile. Otherwise it's pretty quiet."

Siding was installed shortly after Leonard died.

"The paint was getting so bad and I couldn't handle getting up so high on a

ladder any more." Pat said.

The land on which the school stands has become a showplace for creative landscaping, with many areas dedicated to the couple's love of golfing. Features in the yard include a privacy fence at the front entry, a tee box (complete with a golf ball washer), a row of screening arbor vitae, a "bear" fountain, and eight colorful flower beds. It may all be under snow right now, but many motorists look at the beauty the couple has created year 'round.

In the winter a theme of blue and white prevails, and 13 lit deer are placed strategically around the property.

Exterior outlets were installed to make the holiday decorating possible.

"When I first came here there was only one outside outlet," said Andy. "We added many more later on and that makes Christmas decorating a whole lot easier."

"In the summer we have 50 path lights," Pat said.

In the summer decorating isn't quite as necessary, as real deer frequent the field on the north side of Highway 33. They even occasionally come to the cemetery just to the east of

the house.

"We watch them when we sit out on our deck, which is where we spend all of our time in the summer," Pat said. "It's a real thrill to be able to see them so close to home."

At the south edge of the property is a garage that incorporates an older building constructed by Leonard. The newest structure was designed to replace a garage that was moved from St. Peter's Catholic Church in Beaver Dam about 50 years ago. Over time, however, the floor sank, making it unusable. The new garage is as deluxe as any garage has a right to be, and is dubbed "the 19th hole" to reflect its use as a place to relax when weather permits.

Keeping it the same distance from the highway as the old structure, and pledging to side and roof it to match the school, made town board approval relatively easy.

"We kept the back wall I a straight line to match up with the part of the garage we saved, and moved the front out to make it deeper," Andy said.

Although it has been hard work, the shared effort has made it a pleasure

"We work together," Pat said.

"We did a lot of work here," Andy said. "A lotta, lotta, lotta, lotta work."

Although much has been changed, the spirit of the old school still remains. With careful planning and a great fondness for the building, the couple has preserved a monument to a time long past, and a building that has countless stories to tell.

And a warm family home into the bargain.

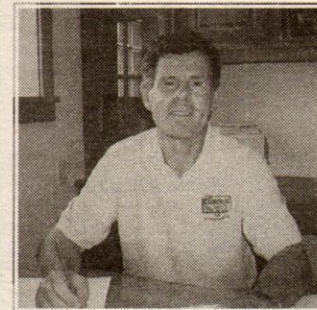
"It has been fun being here, remodeling, adding things and keeping things beautiful," Pat said. "People have said that they appreciate it, and that they love what we do here. When I go into town I occasionally meet people - sometimes strangers - who say they like our flowers."

"We like it here," said Andy. "It's a great place to call home."



Pat created this wreath which hangs in the kitchen.

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Hyland Prairie School has long, storied history

The building at N6890 Highway AI, the former Hyland Prairie School, has a long and uncertain past. According to research done by Hyland family member Polly Knoll, the structure was seen, with the adjacent cemetery, on a map dated 1873. According to the wife of ancestor Hazen Hyland, Harvey George Hyland was born in 1853 and attended the school as a boy. If he started his studies at age 6, that means it must have been there in 1859 or 1860.

There are several photos of the school in the archives of the Dodge County Historical Society. The structures, however, are not a perfect match with the building that stands today. One possibility is that the original structure was raised to install a basement – something not unheard of in its day. That would account for the high foundation in later photographs of the building. The entrance was also reworked at some point, providing a better block from the cold north winds that blasted its face. The current entry has a fieldstone foundation and is clad inside with pine bead boards. No one is certain when it may have been added.

The side windows of the building do not match those



A photo of the school's interior taken in 1954.

seen in early photos. They may have been replaced with taller ones at some time in the building's history, although that again is speculation.

Of the photos labeled Hyland Prairie School one is definitely not what it claims to be. The fact that one mislabeled structure has two windows in the side of the building and windows on each side of the front door suggests that it may be another of the many one-room schools that dotted the area.

In short, the current structure may indeed date back to the 1850s, although obvious signs such as log timbers are not present.

Whether the structure was greatly altered or replaced in the 1930s (another theory documented in a Daily Citizen interview) remains to be proven.

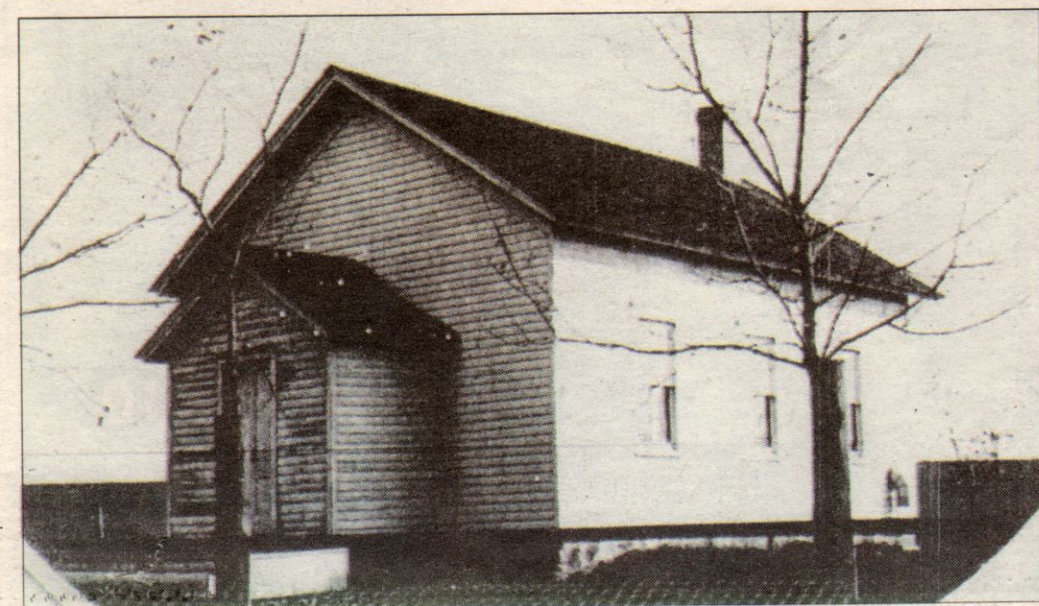
A new Hyland Prairie School was constructed in 1956 on nearby High Point Road. The old structure was closed as a school at that time.

More recently, Prairie View School was built at 510 N. Crystal Lake Road. The later Hyland Prairie School was closed at that time, although it still stands.

The Hyland name was dropped at Prairie View due to the new facility's long forgotten connection with the one-room school on Highway 33.



Hyland Prairie School lives on as the private home of Pat Machkovech and Andy Kirchoff. In this photo and the one below right, it is shown as it stands today. Below left is a photo that dates back to the early 1900s.





The former Hyland Prairie School is decked out for the holidays by silk flower artist Patricia Machkovech. Above, a railing near the front door is brightened with a swag. Below, a bay window is filled with red and white holiday finery. At right, a dinette is part of the living room, adjacent to a compact kitchen. Above right, a large sofa and wall art are seen from the second floor landing.





At left is the Christmas tree designed by Pat Machkovech. Above is a close-up of her artistry. Below is an antique secretary in the living room.





The former school was converted into a home decades ago, but the subsequent owner has been improving it steadily since then. Clockwise from below: A desk in the upstairs room is where the owner works her floral magic. A collection of Teddy bears rests in a corner. The stairway to a former bedroom was added in the early 1960s. A modern television stands at the foot of the stairs.





The former school has become a modern home which still honors its long past. Space is used judiciously, and a deck is a favorite summer spot.

