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420 Lexington Ave., New York 17, N.Y.

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THE AMERICAN IDEA

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IN THIS ISSUE: Herbert Bayer, artist-designer, who helped to revive the "ghost town" of Aspen, Colorado, built his studio on a mountain overlooking it (p. 52). Henry Francis du Pont has brought together probably the greatest single collection of Early American antiques ever assembled under one roof (pgs. 80-89). Mies van der Rohe, prominent figure in architecture, designed 19 campus buildings for the Illinois Institute of Technology, as well as the glass-walled house (p. 44). Thomas D. Church, awarded A.I.A. Fine Arts Medal in 1951, for landscape design, has changed the look of California gardens (cover and p. 50).

ON THE COVER: Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Ducato's charming garden house in California was built by Germano Milono and landscaped by Thomas D. Church. Photographed by Roger Sturtevant. (See p. 50.)
On the next 52 pages we present a wide-angled view
of The American Idea, 1952

America on the move

The day that the recently-built New Jersey Turnpike opened, thousands of motor cars surged down its six concrete lanes at an average (and legal) speed of 60 miles an hour. Thus began another chapter in the story of America-on-the-move. Thanks to the automobile and our superb highways, Americans are able to enjoy the abundant life. We can work in the city, live in the country. Today, in the new Suburbias that are cropping up all over the land we are discovering a new neighborliness. In this 20th-century version, people share power mowers and paint sprayers and floor waxes. In putting the microscope to America 1952, we show you its pluses and minuses. The houses we publish here look different, are different. The glass house by Mies van der Rohe (page 44) represents his concept of today's living. In the city, it would be about as private as the waiting-room in Grand Central Station. In the country, however, it suits its secluded site to perfection. The Ducato pool-pavilion in California (page 50) is a paradise for indoor-outdoor aficionados. The tiny Bayer house (page 52) will appeal to those who hunger for serenity plus. On the minus side, the well-trained maid is joining the ranks of the Vanishing American. But even her disappearance from the scene is being faced with fortitude. With characteristic ingenuity we are inventing new patterns in entertaining—movable meals, electrical appliances that come to the table. And so it goes. Americans face today with resourcefulness; tomorrow with confidence. Which probably explains why our country is at once the envy and hope of the world.

The New Jersey Turnpike noses westward
THE AMERICAN IDEA IN HOUSES:

- A one-story, open plan
- Utility core, replacing basement
- Storage walls, replacing attic
- Automatic equipment that “thinks” for itself
- Glass walls for more sun, more view, more space

A glass shell that “floats” in the air
This may seem a curious house to you—unlike any you have seen before—yet it epitomizes the basic trends already influencing most new houses. Designed by architect Mies van der Rohe, it is one of the most uncompromising modern houses in existence. Basementless, atticless, suspended in air by steel columns, it is a single room, 54' x 28', entirely enclosed in glass. A partly cantilevered porch, (Cont'd on next page)

- Glass walls on four sides catch maximum sun, light, enjoy wide-angled view of fields, woods, river. Such exposure is practical because of modern heating equipment, insulation materials, methods.
- Four steel columns on the two longer sides of house (welded to steel frame of floor and roof) hold house about 4' above ground for best view.
- Kitchen equipment—two refrigerators, dish-washer, sink, waste disposal, two ranges—are fitted under a single stainless-steel-topped counter.
Outdoor living space is planned as precisely as indoor space

- Travertine terrace for outdoor living also serves as entrance. Cantilevered steps lead to porch which provides a sheltered outdoor living area.
- Curtains veil glass walls of living area to shut out night.

and a travertine terrace add outdoor living space. Window walls provide a close communion with the outdoors. They also enlarge the interior visually. An "open" plan creates general spaciousness, allows the space to be used flexibly for entertaining, dining, sleeping. The concentration of utilities in one central "core" leaves the rest of the house free for living. The use of wear-resistant building materials and automatic mechanical equipment is insurance that the house will work for its owner instead of the owner working for the house.

Beyond these trend-setting characteristics, this is a house with a unique architectural spirit. The week-end home of Dr. Edith Farnsworth, it "floats" on a site overlooking woods and river near Chicago. Some five years ago, Dr. Farnsworth decided she wanted a place in the country to relax from her professional duties. She wanted a house that would be aesthetic in terms of today.

She submitted her problem to Mies van der Rohe, the pioneering purist who wrote "architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space." The translation as expressed in Dr. Farnsworth's house is a structure of implacable calm, precise simplicity, and meticulous detail. It could not be built in any age but our own since its realization depends on today's building methods.

- Spaciousness is attained through the simplest possible plan. There are only four parts to this house—a glass-enclosed room, a central "core" to house utilities, an entrance porch, and a terrace.

- The porch (to be screened later) extends living space outdoors. It has the same white painted steel frame, travertine floor, plaster ceiling as indoors.
- Terrace (below) is suspended on steel posts like the house itself.
Double glass doors at front entrance are as simple and unpretentious as house. They ventilate interior together with floor-level windows at opposite end.

Radiant heating coils (laid under the travertine block floor) outline the perimeter of the house and help keep the glass walls warm in winter.

Utility core, organized as a control room, is center of structure. It houses furnace, warm-air heating ducts, flues, vents, water pipes, and drainage.

Bathrooms, at either end of utility core, are enclosed by handsome panels of primavera wood.

Kitchen cabinets run the length of the utility core. Fireplace is on the other side of it.

Wall projections at either end of utility core mark off living, dining, and sleeping areas.
Core encloses utilities in center of room,
leaves balance of space free for living